

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/11
Paper 11

Key messages

- Read questions carefully to be secure in the understanding of key terms and command words before attempting to answer the question.
- Do not repeat points in answers but use the time to support the point made with sociological evidence and then make a new point.
- Reflect the number of marks to be gained from a question in the time spent answering it.

General comments

Many responses displayed a good understanding of basic sociological ideas but would have benefitted from the inclusion of more theory and sociological evidence. Most candidates had a good grasp of sociological concepts and contemporary examples. There were very few rubric errors.

Most candidates used their time well and seemed to leave enough time to complete the essay question. Where poor time management was displayed it was in spending too long on **Question 1(d)** worth 11 marks and then leaving little time for the essay worth 25 marks. Questions requiring a definition should be short and focused though many included unnecessary examples. Candidates who were secure in their understanding of the key and command words in questions were able to answer them soundly but some candidates misinterpreted the question(s).

It is worth noting that when there is evidence of planning for essays they are generally more successful than those without.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The vast majority of candidates attempted all sections of this question.

- (a) A number of candidates gave concise definitions of horizontal structures showing an understanding by both naming specific kin and referring to the intragenerational connections that define the horizontal extended family. A common error was to name members of horizontal families such as aunts and uncles (thereby gaining the first mark) but to make no comment about the level of connections, cooperation or living arrangements in such families that would have gained the second mark. Some answers confused horizontal with vertical family structures e.g. naming beanpole family as an example of a horizontal structure. There was the largest number of no responses to this question than any other on the paper.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify two appropriate reasons, such as rise in divorce rates, but did not always successfully develop them. Other answers to this question displayed evidence of failing to read the question carefully as many answered about single **parent** families rather than single **person** households, thereby gaining no marks. Another misreading of the question was shown by answers which stated reasons for living alone such as death but made no reference to the increase as stated in the question. An uncommon error was to give three reasons for the increase in single person households or use up valuable time by providing over-developed answers which included sociological studies or theoretical perspectives. The majority of candidates understood the question well, quoting such events as divorce leading to individuals living by

themselves. It is worth noting that a number of candidates mentioned divorce but did not then use that information to explain why this resulted in an increase of individuals living alone.

- (c) Most candidates had some understanding of how migration can lead to family diversity. All candidates had an understanding of the meaning of migration but there was a less sound understanding of the meaning of diversity showing a need to be secure in understandings key terms and concepts. Some knowledgeable candidates made the question harder than it was by assessing whether migration does lead to diversity or not. Candidates need to be secure in their understanding of command words as this was a question that did not require assessment so time spent on that could have been more usefully applied to other questions. All that was needed was to explain how migration can influence diversity without the introduction of other factors. Many candidates struggled to provide logical responses, despite demonstrating reasonable knowledge of both migration and family diversity as separate topics. A number of responses presented examples of cultural adaptation (migrant families adopting the family patterns of their host country) to be presented as 'proving' an increase in diversity, rather than the reverse. Similarly, the nineteenth century transition from extended to nuclear families associated with rural to urban migration, was often presented as evidence of diversity, rather than the replacement of one dominant family structure by another. Other responses described the ways in which an individual family might become more diverse by exposure to a range of different cultures. These responses often lapsed into non-sociological speculation about the risks associated with different family types. Many more focused answers cited the examples of black Afro-Caribbean matriarchal/single parent families or Asian extended families adding to the diversity of family structures in Britain. There were also appropriate accounts of the impact on families left behind by migrants forced to become single parent or child-headed families by the departure of a male breadwinner or both parents, though these were rarely supported by sociological evidence. Occasionally candidates wrote about the unsettling effect of migrant families returning home with new ideas.
- (d) This was another question where some candidates had misinterpreted and their answer focused on dominance rather than significance. Although much of the material was the same it was not applied successfully to the question thereby limiting the marks that could be gained in AO2. Less successful responses placed 'today' in the nineteenth century, adding little or nothing about more recent developments. Where 'today' was acknowledged, this often did not go beyond an enumeration of family types found in modern societies or limited references to grandparents babysitting or paying school fees. Others simply described the varieties of modern extended families, such as modified and attenuated, without commenting on their significance. Some answers displayed a great deal of confusion about the nature of the extended family with the beanpole family being quoted as an alternative to the extended family. Some candidates tried to answer the question **why** the extended family is less significant to day rather than **if** it is less significant again showing less successful interpretation of the question. Others assessed whether the extended family was beneficial or not. Many more successful answers made good use of terminology and concepts, such as baby fathers, as well as classical functionalism but some could have benefited from the application of more contemporary work. Many good answers assessed the loss of function in relation to the extended family in some detail. A large proportion of such responses gave accounts of the shift from extended to nuclear families during industrialisation, often well supported by reference to the fit thesis. Most sound answers gave straightforward explanation as to why the extended family can be seen as less significant but there were some excellent assessments of the position of extended families in modern industrial societies. A number of responses included implicit assessment by juxtaposing arguments for and against the declining in significance of extended families in order to improve performance this assessment should be explicit and supported.

Section B

Candidates answered both questions but **Question 3** was far more popular than **Question 2**.

Question 2

Many candidates showed a very good understanding of the concept of childhood as a distinct phase, Aries, Postman and Wyness were quoted as evidence of the developing levels of protection for children and these were frequently related to length of education. Most candidates did attempt assessment of whether childhood is a distinct phase of protection by offering points both for and against the statement, but the sociological support was rarely detailed. More sophisticated answers were able to show how this was not true for all children at all times and in all places frequently quoting the example of Brazilian street children.

More attention was paid to historical attitudes than to modern phenomena such as helicopter parents (sometimes misinterpreted as parents who spend so much time flying around the world in high-powered jobs that their children are neglected). Just a few referred to paranoid parenting and pester power, toxic childhood and child protection or mentioned the continuation of the widespread mistreatment of children across societies with child labour and child soldiers. Only a few developed the points well and in order to improve performance answers need to be tailored to the demands of the question. Some answers were characterised by common sense and a lack of sociological knowledge.

Question 3

Most candidates understood the requirements of the question and were able to show how males benefitted from family life through the unequal benefits then men gain over women. The majority of these went on to juxtapose that to show how family life can be seen as becoming more equal or benefitting all. Once more there was some misunderstanding of the question with some candidates stating that males were dominant but with no reference to benefit. Others argued that the family benefitted capitalism or society with no comparison between males and females. Although the question did not say in modern industrial societies contemporary examples are much more effective than historical ones such as the Nayer and the Oneida. There was some evidence of candidates who had pre-learned essays on gender inequality, with varying success in tailoring these to the specific issue of males benefiting more than females from family life and so their answer was not applied well to the specific question. Some candidates could have used their time more effectively by avoiding unnecessary introductions defining what families are or explaining what women should do to avoid exploitation. Nearly all candidates interpreted family life as referring to conjugal roles in the family and these answers often mentioned wives' double burden and triple shift. Other common issues addressed were decision-making, control of finances and domestic abuse. Stronger responses accurately distinguished between the variety of feminist perspectives on the issue. Although that material is relevant answers which extended their material to include a consideration of gender role socialisation or the treatment of girls as opposed to boys displayed a deeper understanding of the requirements of the question. The elderly were really mentioned. Weaker candidates struggled to make a convincing case against the statement. Better answers drew on the concepts of symmetrical families, joint conjugal roles and new man/new father developments. But few seemed to have much knowledge of the functionalist position, arguing that women could only benefit from family life if men were completely removed from the equation, as in female-headed families. Some essays digressed into discussing women's position at work, without explaining the effect of that on family life. Others covered divorce reform, but failed to take this beyond a weak argument along the lines of 'family life benefits women because they can escape from it'.

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Paper 9699/12 Paper 12

Key messages

- Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure that they answer the question that has been set.
- Candidates need to include relevant contemporary sociology to support their arguments.
- Candidates should ensure that time spent on each question reflects the marks allocated.

General comments

The performance of many candidates was excellent, showing a sound grasp of sociological theories and concepts. Most candidates demonstrated good sociological knowledge and understanding but some need to divide their time more effectively between the questions as answers to **1a** and **1b** were frequently too long. The definition on **Question 1a** does not require examples and answers to this question should be brief.

In order to improve performance, candidates need to be able to apply their understanding to the question that has been set. Too frequently candidates have responded by using general knowledge from the topic rather than selecting knowledge that applies to the specific question. Only the strongest candidates were able to evaluate effectively in questions **1d** and **2/3**. Less successful candidates attempted to demonstrate evaluation by criticising particular sociological studies, rather than evaluating the claim in the question. Candidates need to ensure they support their points with relevant sociological material and that this material is applied to answering the specifics of the question. Many candidates made points that were not directly related to the question. There were few rubric errors and very few questions were not attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates had a good understanding of the term as a living arrangement like a marriage without formal recognition. Some answers displayed some understanding but were vague leaving it possible to interpret the answer as one referring to friends/candidates sharing a residence. A common error was to interpret the concept as one referring to individuals living on their own.
- (b) Most candidates had a good understanding of reasons why people marry at a later age, with many quoting secularisation, increasing length of education or the lessening of traditional practices such as arranged marriage. Again, answers lacked focus on the question; for example, by explaining why people used to marry early in the past rather than why they marry later now or explaining changing social attitudes to cohabitation. Other common errors were to argue that in contemporary societies individuals marry at an earlier age than in the past or to explain why people divorce or do not marry at all.
- (c) There were many sound answers identifying a variety of reasons why the divorce rate has increased in many societies, quoting a variety of opportunities to end marriage that were not available in the past, such as the changes in divorce law and changes in society, such as growing female economic power and changes in attitudes. Common errors included outlining reasons why people do not to marry rather than reasons for an increase in divorce or asserting that the dark side of the family is a new phenomenon. Many answers also asserted that domestic violence or empty shell marriages are new phenomenon in marriage and cause a rise in the divorce rate. Others

confined themselves to reasons for an individual divorce rather than accounting for a rise in the rate. Many answers would have benefitted from including sociological material to support points made.

- (d) This question was well understood by the majority of candidates with all being able to make comments on conjugal roles and many knowledgeable and sophisticated answers outlining a variety of ways in which the roles of males and females can be seen as both equal and unequal, frequently making reference to the work of Oakley, Wilmott and Young and various feminists. The best of such answers took the debate beyond that of the domestic labour debate to include other family members, most notably daughters and sons, using the work of Postman. Those candidates who made reference to grandparents were frequently very successful. A number of responses were characterised by over lengthy introductions about conjugal roles before the industrial revolution that were irrelevant to the question and others answered about the role of the family in society rather than roles in the family. A generally held misconception was that the symmetrical family represents equality as opposed to being equal but different. Many answers did not focus on equal roles but rather drifted into the role of women versus the role of men. Responses could have been improved by making specific evaluation of the question by pointing out which behaviours can be said to reflect equality and which inequality.

Section B

Question 3 was more popular than **Question 2**.

Question 2

There were a small number of excellent answers to this question which analysed the influence of ethnicity on diversity (frequently supporting their answer with the work of Madood, Mann and Bhatti) then going on to contrast this to other factors which influence diversity, frequently supported by the work of the Rapoport or O'Neil. The most sophisticated of these answers outlined the connections between ethnicity and culture. A small number of answers confined themselves to describing the increase in mixed marriages caused by the movement of populations and many of these were repetitive. Other limited answers only addressed diversity referring to matrifocal families; if these did try to explore the factor of ethnicity it was only discussed in relation to religion and little was made of different family roles as well as structure in relation to ethnic diversity. Other answers only discussed industrialisation and the changes it made to families or outlined the fit thesis and offered little else. Some offered vague generalisations about the effect of migration with little reference to the question. Some answers did not discuss ethnicity at all and instead just presented alternative factors. Where candidates did address ethnicity with relevant evidence, they produced more successful answers, comparing different family arrangements between various ethnic groupings. Most answers attempted to evaluate the view that ethnicity is the main factor leading to ethnic diversity by exploring other factors. The most successful answers developed these to explain why other factors, such as social class, were more important than ethnicity. For example, by drawing out the links between class and ethnicity.

Question 3

Most candidates had some understanding of the functions of the family, but some used the terms role and function as if they are interchangeable. In order to improve performance, candidates need to have a sound understanding of terms. Common errors were to give irrelevant explanations of what makes an ideal family, to describe what 'being there' means to different family members or to assess how valid different definitions of the family are instead of considering which is the most important function of the family. A number of answers just described the different functions of the family with no attempt to show which, if any, might be the most significant one. Other answers outlined how the family can be dysfunctional with little reference to the question. A number of responses acknowledged the stabilisation of the adult personality as potentially the most significant function of the family but made no links between it and emotional support, thereby demonstrating a lack of understanding of the material. Likewise, a number of answers described the warm bath theory but did not link it to emotional support. Many candidates did refer to Murdock's four functions and Parsons' two irreducible functions of the family, but often with no reference to emotional support. Many also used Feminist and Marxist views on the role of the family, but only presented these views without application to the question. Successful answers used socialisation as an example of an alternative function that may be more significant than emotional support or used Marxism to argue that emotional support functions to benefit capitalism. However, those that argued the family benefits capitalism, with no reference to emotional support, were not answering the question as set.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/13
Paper 13

Key messages

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General comments

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Most candidates used their time well and seemed to leave enough time to complete the essay question. Where poor time management was displayed it was in spending too long on **Question 1(d)** worth 11 marks and then leaving little time for the essay worth 25 marks. Questions requiring a definition should be short and focused though many included unnecessary examples. Candidates who were secure in their understanding of the key and command words in questions were able to answer them soundly but some candidates misinterpreted the question(s).

It is worth noting that when there is evidence of planning for essays they are generally more successful than those without.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

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- (b) Most candidates were able to identify two appropriate reasons, such as rise in divorce rates, but did not always successfully develop them. Other answers to this question displayed evidence of failing to read the question carefully as many answered about single **parent** families rather than single **person** households, thereby gaining no marks. Another misreading of the question was shown by answers which stated reasons for living alone such as death but made no reference to the increase as stated in the question. An uncommon error was to give three reasons for the increase in single person households or use up valuable time by providing over-developed answers which included sociological studies or theoretical perspectives. The majority of candidates understood the question well, quoting such events as divorce leading to individuals living by

themselves. It is worth noting that a number of candidates mentioned divorce but did not then use that information to explain why this resulted in an increase of individuals living alone.

- (c) Most candidates had some understanding of how migration can lead to family diversity. All candidates had an understanding of the meaning of migration but there was a less sound understanding of the meaning of diversity showing a need to be secure in understandings key terms and concepts. Some knowledgeable candidates made the question harder than it was by assessing whether migration does lead to diversity or not. Candidates need to be secure in their understanding of command words as this was a question that did not require assessment so time spent on that could have been more usefully applied to other questions. All that was needed was to explain how migration can influence diversity without the introduction of other factors. Many candidates struggled to provide logical responses, despite demonstrating reasonable knowledge of both migration and family diversity as separate topics. A number of responses presented examples of cultural adaptation (migrant families adopting the family patterns of their host country) to be presented as 'proving' an increase in diversity, rather than the reverse. Similarly, the nineteenth century transition from extended to nuclear families associated with rural to urban migration, was often presented as evidence of diversity, rather than the replacement of one dominant family structure by another. Other responses described the ways in which an individual family might become more diverse by exposure to a range of different cultures. These responses often lapsed into non-sociological speculation about the risks associated with different family types. Many more focused answers cited the examples of black Afro-Caribbean matriarchal/single parent families or Asian extended families adding to the diversity of family structures in Britain. There were also appropriate accounts of the impact on families left behind by migrants forced to become single parent or child-headed families by the departure of a male breadwinner or both parents, though these were rarely supported by sociological evidence. Occasionally candidates wrote about the unsettling effect of migrant families returning home with new ideas.
- (d) This was another question where some candidates had misinterpreted and their answer focused on dominance rather than significance. Although much of the material was the same it was not applied successfully to the question thereby limiting the marks that could be gained in AO2. Less successful responses placed 'today' in the nineteenth century, adding little or nothing about more recent developments. Where 'today' was acknowledged, this often did not go beyond an enumeration of family types found in modern societies or limited references to grandparents babysitting or paying school fees. Others simply described the varieties of modern extended families, such as modified and attenuated, without commenting on their significance. Some answers displayed a great deal of confusion about the nature of the extended family with the beanpole family being quoted as an alternative to the extended family. Some candidates tried to answer the question **why** the extended family is less significant to day rather than **if** it is less significant again showing less successful interpretation of the question. Others assessed whether the extended family was beneficial or not. Many more successful answers made good use of terminology and concepts, such as baby fathers, as well as classical functionalism but some could have benefited from the application of more contemporary work. Many good answers assessed the loss of function in relation to the extended family in some detail. A large proportion of such responses gave accounts of the shift from extended to nuclear families during industrialisation, often well supported by reference to the fit thesis. Most sound answers gave straightforward explanation as to why the extended family can be seen as less significant but there were some excellent assessments of the position of extended families in modern industrial societies. A number of responses included implicit assessment by juxtaposing arguments for and against the declining in significance of extended families in order to improve performance this assessment should be explicit and supported.

Section B

Candidates answered both questions but **Question 3** was far more popular than **Question 2**.

Question 2

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Question 3

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SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/21 Paper 21

Key messages

- Good responses showed sound knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts and theories.
- Some methods were less well understood than others; for example, laboratory experiments.
- There was some confusion over the meaning of validity and reliability, notably in **Question 1(d)**.
- Many essay responses in **Section B** contained sound knowledge of theoretical perspectives but these were not always applied well to the question.

General comments

Very few candidates made rubric errors and most candidates produced answers appropriate for the questions; i.e. demonstrating appropriate skills and usage of time. The stem material is intended to prompt candidates in their answers to questions in **Section A**. However, number of candidates recycled material from the stem rather than using it as a starting point for an answer. This was particularly important in **Question 1(a)** as many responses repeated the key words in their answers. Whilst knowledge of sociological methods was generally sound, it was evident that many candidates had somewhat limited knowledge of laboratory experiments and in particular how they are related to the scientific approach.

In **Section B** there was a fairly even distribution of responses between **Questions 2** and **3**. There were some good answers to both questions displaying theoretical knowledge and understanding, much of which was analytical and evaluative. Other candidates discussed theoretical perspectives but without relating them directly to the question. In both questions there was a tendency for a number of responses to drift away from the core elements of the question or to write generalised accounts of theoretical positions. Only most successful responses were able to explicitly evaluate the views expressed in the questions. Many candidates simply juxtaposed different views/theories without explicitly using them to evaluate the view expressed.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this question accurately and were able to explain that *structured interviews* contain two distinct elements (pre-coded questions that are administered by an interviewer). Some were only able to identify one of the elements and many responses repeated key words from the stem in their answers.

- (b) Most candidates were either able to identify at least one feature and to develop it successfully, but fewer were able to repeat this with a second feature. Many responses stated two ways that were the same or very similar. Answers that gained all four marks clearly identified two distinct features with a clear link to the scientific nature of laboratory experiments. They used scientific concepts such as 'independent/dependent variables', 'control and manipulation', 'hypothesis', 'replication', etc.
- (c) The best answers identified a range of factors and gave detailed explanations of why they led to bias. Most responses focused on the impact of bias occurring during interaction with respondents, for example, explaining how a researcher's value or personal characteristics may cause bias. There were also many references to how the theoretical perspectives that sociologists adopt may reflect their values, but these did not always go on to explain how these may be linked to bias. Only the best responses were able to outline a range of difficulties. Many responses included evaluation points in their answer for which there are no marks available in this question.
- (d) Most candidates were able to identify two or three relevant points with some development. The best answers were able to engage with the wording of the question, i.e. they addressed the 'interpretivist' and 'lack validity' elements. Some very good answers considered 'validity' in terms of 'open' versus 'closed' questions or 'lack of demand characteristics when a researcher is not present' etc. Less successful responses tended to focus on the practical rather than theoretical/conceptual strengths. Some responses confused validity and reliability.

Section B

Question 2

Some very good responses were able to clearly engage with the sociological debate about social order. These candidates confidently used appropriate concepts and theories to support their arguments and they maintained an explicit focus on the 'who benefits' element of the question. A fairly common feature of less successful answers was a fairly limited knowledge base of the functionalist/consensus approach supporting the statement in the question, and a much greater command of the opposing – conflict – argument. In other words, there was a lack of balance in a number of responses to this question. Less successful answers contained lengthy theoretical descriptions that tended to drift away from the idea of social order. These responses often featured lists of feminist approaches with few if any links to 'social order'.

Question 3

A number of very good answers were able to use postmodern concepts such as 'pick and mix', 'fragmented identities', 'gender fluidity' and to link these to the process of globalisation and their implications on gender identity. The most effective responses were able to contrast this with evidence supporting the continued existence of traditional gender identities. Many candidates were able to argue both sides of the 'influence' debate although often they lacked sufficient conceptual/theoretical knowledge to develop their arguments. Some answers rightly introduced other social identities into their arguments (e.g. class, ethnicity, age and nationality) but they often did not explicitly link these to the question, i.e. there was only a limited consideration of gender. Weaker responses used a more common sense account of male/female roles with little or no engagement with 'social identity'.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/22 Paper 22

Key messages

- Good answers showed knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts, methods and theories. For example, official statistics appeared to be well understood.
- Most candidates allocated their time effectively to the questions.
- Some confusion over the meaning of validity and reliability, notably in **Question 1(c)**.
- There was a deficit in knowledge and understanding of secondary qualitative sources.
- Key concepts not always applied effectively to the question, notably in **Question 1(d)**.
- Some essay responses contained sound knowledge of theoretical perspectives but these were not always fully focused on the question.
- More careful reading of the essay questions may help improve responses.

General comments

There were very few candidates that made rubric errors and most produced answers commensurate with the requirements of the questions – the exception to this was **Question 1(d)** in Section A and, to some extent, **Question 2** in Section B. Whilst there was generally sound knowledge of sociological methods (e.g. official statistics), this was not the case with secondary qualitative sources, which appeared to be much less well understood. Misunderstanding of key concepts undermined a number of responses. This was most notable in **Question 1(c)** on questionnaires where there was confusion between reliability and validity. There is a tendency for some candidates to tackle **1(d)** as if it were an essay question. Many candidates spent too much time evaluating in this question when only three marks are available for this skill.

In Section B there was a fairly even distribution of responses between **Question 2** and **3**. Many answers to both questions contained sound theoretical knowledge and there were some very good scripts that showed analytical and evaluative skills. Other candidates showed theoretical understanding but this was not closely applied to the question. In both, there was a tendency to drift away from the core elements of the question and to drift into marginal areas or to write generalised accounts of theoretical positions. A more careful reading of the question may have improved a number of scripts.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of primary data but only the most successful were able to write a definition that fully captured the meaning of the term. Many responses repeated the word 'data' in their answers.
- (b) Most candidates provided a sound account of two reasons why official statistics may lack validity, with many achieving full marks. Most gained at least 2 marks, usually referring to the 'dark figure of crime' and/or government manipulation of unemployment figures. Some failed to show development, especially in demonstrating the relevance of validity to 'outdatedness' or 'not being qualitative'.

- (c) Many responses to this question suggested that candidates had good knowledge of the use of official statistics. While some answers were limited to practical advantages, most were able to cite the concepts of reliability or generalisability and link these to the usefulness of official statistics. The highest scoring responses related these points well to the theoretical approach of positivism. There was a tendency for some candidates to include some critical points in their responses even though this question has no marks for evaluation.
- (d) A number of candidates focused their attention on discussing qualitative methodology and largely omitted mention of secondary sources. Those that took this approach were confined to the lower mark band. Most candidates could point out some practical advantages of existing written sources, with some exploring *verstehen* understanding and ethical issues. Stronger answers located their responses clearly in the context of theoretical debate and/or used specific studies to illustrate their points e.g. Thomas and Znaniecki. In this question there was a tendency to use reliability in a general sense rather than a sociological one. Overall, there appeared to be some deficit in developed understanding of this methodological approach

Section B

Question 2

The best answers engaged with theoretical debate on objectivity covering positivist and interpretivist approaches, the discussion of values from key thinkers such as Weber, Gouldner or Becker, and the influence of values in the specific approaches of Marxists, feminists and functionalists. However, many answers tended to drift away from the question and in particular lost focus on the 'choice of topic' aspect of the question. Many responses looked mainly at bias during the research process, while others discussed choice of research strategy with little reference to values. Each of these approaches received some credit but the lack of direct focus on the question meant that they could not be rewarded with the highest marks.

Question 3

The majority of responses discussed a number of the key ideas of the interactionist perspective. Many candidates outlined views associated with such theorists as Mead, Cooley, and Goffman, and sometimes making links to Weber or the post-modernists, and then evaluating in terms of structuralist theories. The best answers illustrated interactionist ideas by applying them to concepts like labelling via examples from areas like education or crime or the use of empirical studies. Structuration was sometimes used as a way of concluding. However, some changed the focus to a discussion of positivist v interpretivist methodology and others wrote a summary of all the perspectives they knew but often without a clear understanding of interactionism itself. There remains a tendency for some candidates to see interactionism as a perspective simply supporting the view that individuals are able to exercise freedom of choice in decision making. A small number of candidates confused interactionism with interpretivism.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/23 Paper 23

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- Some methods were less well understood than others; for example, laboratory experiments.
- There was some confusion over the meaning of validity and reliability, notably in **Question 1(d)**.
- Many essay responses in **Section B** contained sound knowledge of theoretical perspectives but these were not always applied well to the question.

General comments

Very few candidates made rubric errors and most candidates produced answers appropriate for the questions; i.e. demonstrating appropriate skills and usage of time. The stem material is intended to prompt candidates in their answers to questions in **Section A**. However, number of candidates recycled material from the stem rather than using it as a starting point for an answer. This was particularly important in **Question 1(a)** as many responses repeated the key words in their answers. Whilst knowledge of sociological methods was generally sound, it was evident that many candidates had somewhat limited knowledge of laboratory experiments and in particular how they are related to the scientific approach.

In **Section B** there was a fairly even distribution of responses between **Questions 2** and **3**. There were some good answers to both questions displaying theoretical knowledge and understanding, much of which was analytical and evaluative. Other candidates discussed theoretical perspectives but without relating them directly to the question. In both questions there was a tendency for a number of responses to drift away from the core elements of the question or to write generalised accounts of theoretical positions. Only most successful responses were able to explicitly evaluate the views expressed in the questions. Many candidates simply juxtaposed different views/theories without explicitly using them to evaluate the view expressed.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates answered this question accurately and were able to explain that *structured interviews* contain two distinct elements (pre-coded questions that are administered by an interviewer). Some were only able to identify one of the elements and many responses repeated key words from the stem in their answers.

- (b) Most candidates were either able to identify at least one feature and to develop it successfully, but fewer were able to repeat this with a second feature. Many responses stated two ways that were the same or very similar. Answers that gained all four marks clearly identified two distinct features with a clear link to the scientific nature of laboratory experiments. They used scientific concepts such as 'independent/dependent variables', 'control and manipulation', 'hypothesis', 'replication', etc.
- (c) The best answers identified a range of factors and gave detailed explanations of why they led to bias. Most responses focused on the impact of bias occurring during interaction with respondents, for example, explaining how a researcher's value or personal characteristics may cause bias. There were also many references to how the theoretical perspectives that sociologists adopt may reflect their values, but these did not always go on to explain how these may be linked to bias. Only the best responses were able to outline a range of difficulties. Many responses included evaluation points in their answer for which there are no marks available in this question.
- (d) Most candidates were able to identify two or three relevant points with some development. The best answers were able to engage with the wording of the question, i.e. they addressed the 'interpretivist' and 'lack validity' elements. Some very good answers considered 'validity' in terms of 'open' versus 'closed' questions or 'lack of demand characteristics when a researcher is not present' etc. Less successful responses tended to focus on the practical rather than theoretical/conceptual strengths. Some responses confused validity and reliability.

Section B

Question 2

Some very good responses were able to clearly engage with the sociological debate about social order. These candidates confidently used appropriate concepts and theories to support their arguments and they maintained an explicit focus on the 'who benefits' element of the question. A fairly common feature of less successful answers was a fairly limited knowledge base of the functionalist/consensus approach supporting the statement in the question, and a much greater command of the opposing – conflict – argument. In other words, there was a lack of balance in a number of responses to this question. Less successful answers contained lengthy theoretical descriptions that tended to drift away from the idea of social order. These responses often featured lists of feminist approaches with few if any links to 'social order'.

Question 3

A number of very good answers were able to use postmodern concepts such as 'pick and mix', 'fragmented identities', 'gender fluidity' and to link these to the process of globalisation and their implications on gender identity. The most effective responses were able to contrast this with evidence supporting the continued existence of traditional gender identities. Many candidates were able to argue both sides of the 'influence' debate although often they lacked sufficient conceptual/theoretical knowledge to develop their arguments. Some answers rightly introduced other social identities into their arguments (e.g. class, ethnicity, age and nationality) but they often did not explicitly link these to the question, i.e. there was only a limited consideration of gender. Weaker responses used a more common sense account of male/female roles with little or no engagement with 'social identity'.

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Key messages

- There were some excellent answers, combining sound sociological understanding with sustained analysis and evaluation.
- A few answers lacked references to relevant sociological evidence.
- Further marks could be gained by using appropriate sociological concepts and theories to support key points.
- Some low scoring answers relied on assertion and general knowledge rather than relevant sociological material.
- Answers to the **(a)** questions would be enhanced by using examples to support key points.
- Some answers to the **(b)** questions were too descriptive.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts continues to improve and more candidates are demonstrating the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. The best answers were tightly constructed in a way that demonstrated clarity of thought and careful attention to the wording of the question. No marks are awarded for the use of evaluation in answering the **(a)** questions, yet some candidates misuse their time in the exam by writing evaluative answers to these questions. Some responses to the **(b)** questions were too descriptive, relying on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any related analysis and evaluation. More practice in formulating evaluative answers for the **(b)** questions would be helpful for these candidates. There continue to be a few candidates who rely on assertion and general knowledge to answer the questions. The marks awarded to answers that lack references to appropriate sociological material are inevitably at the lower end of the range. It is important therefore that candidates are encouraged to use references to sociological sources in their answers. Answers would also be enhanced by using appropriate examples to support key points.

Most candidates answered three questions in the time available. The questions on Education proved most popular, with those on Global Development less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a)** Good answers provided a detailed explanation of several ways in which home factors that may prevent working-class children achieving educational success. High quality responses included references to concepts such as material deprivation, cultural capital, social inequality, language codes, poverty, and habitus. There were some lower scoring answers that discussed influences on educational achievement without referring to home factors and the working class specifically.
- (b)** There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained assessment of the relationship between cultural capital and the educational underachievement of some minority ethnic groups. Good responses identified several ways in which lack of cultural capital may have an adverse impact on educational achievement. Evaluation was often provided through contrasting cultural and structural influences on educational achievement. Low scoring answers often lacked examples of what is meant by cultural capital and its influences on pupil performance.

Question 2

- (a) Good answers provided a clear account of several ways in which social class may influence pupil sub-cultures. High scoring responses often included references to relevant studies, such as those by Willis and by Fuller. Lower scoring answers were confined to discussing pupil sub-cultures in general, with no reference to social class influences specifically.
- (b) High scoring answers considered a range of evidence and arguments relating to the debate about whether the school curriculum reflects the interests of the rich and powerful. Good responses also made use of relevant concepts such as the social construction of knowledge, cultural bias, the ethnocentric curriculum, the gendered curriculum, language codes, and cultural capital. Lower scoring answers demonstrated little understanding of the debate about class influences on the school curriculum and lacked reference to appropriate sociological material.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) Answers that merited high marks offered a well-developed account of several different types of development aid. Types of development aid discussed included bilateral, multilateral, non-repayable grants, repayable loans, and non-monetary assistance. There were some low scoring answers that discussed development aid in general without distinguishing between different types of aid.
- (b) High scoring answers used relevant examples and sociological arguments to assess the view that cultural theories of poverty underestimate how difficult it is for the poor to escape poverty. Good responses often discussed Lewis' culture of poverty thesis and also referred to New Right theories of poverty. Some high-quality answers made appropriate use of the distinction between cultural and structural theories of poverty. Lower scoring answers often relied on a simple line of argument rather than considering different perspectives and angles on the question.

Question 4

- (a) There were a few good answers that identified all of the main features of the world systems theory of development. The ideas of Wallerstein were often cited in high scoring responses. Some answers lower in the mark range lacked detail and were confined to making just one or two relevant points. There were a few responses that demonstrated no understanding of the world systems theory as such, but offered a few general observations about the nature of development.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated awareness that the question invited a discussion of evolutionary theories of development, such as modernisation theory and Marx's historical materialism. High scoring responses often included a clear assessment of Rostow's five stage model of development. Some good responses used examples of particular societies to support or challenge evolutionary accounts of development. Answers that gained marks in the middle of the range often relied on a simple juxtaposition of modernisation theory and dependency theory. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the role of evolutionary theory in accounts of development.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the role of the media in creating moral panics. Concepts that were used in high quality answers included sensationalism, deviancy amplification, folk devils, hegemony, and gate-keeping. Some responses showed only a limited or inaccurate understanding of the relationship between moral panics and the media.
- (b) High scoring answers provided a sustained analysis of the claim that the new media has weakened the power of the traditional media. Marxist and pluralist theories of the media were often used to provide a framework for addressing the issues raised by the question. Different types of new media were considered in some high scoring answers. Links between the new media and the traditional media were also explored in good responses. Lower in the mark range, less use was made of

relevant concepts and theories. Some answers gave rather too much attention to discussing the impact of the new media, without making the links to the question clear.

Question 6

- (a) Higher in the mark range answers provided several well-developed points about how content analysis is used in the study of the media. Examples from relevant studies were often used to support key points. Good answers also often distinguished between content analysis and semiology as different approaches to the study of the media. Low scoring answers lacked a clear understanding of how content analysis differs from other research methods.
- (b) High quality answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the hegemonic model of media influence and how it differs from the mass manipulation model. Good responses also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. Theories of the media (Marxist, pluralist, postmodernist) were often used to develop the assessment and some answers included useful references to relevant sociological studies of the hegemonic model, such as those by the Glasgow Media Group. A few candidates made intelligent use of the distinction between the traditional media and the new media in advancing the discussion. There were some low scoring answers that demonstrated little understanding of the hegemonic and mass manipulation models of media influence.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) Good answers offered several well-developed points about how new age movements differ from other religious groups. Concepts such as spiritual shopping, religious revival, commodification of religion, sects, cults, and marginalisation often featured in high scoring responses. There were a few low scoring answers that lacked understanding of what is meant by new age movements.
- (b) Answers that reached the top of the mark range offered a detailed assessment of the arguments for and against the view expressed in the question. Evidence from studies was often used to gauge whether the growth of fundamentalist religions is a response to the uncertainty of postmodern society. Some high-quality answers distinguished between different examples of fundamentalist religions, noting that reasons for the growth in these movements may differ between different examples. Answers that merited the middle of the mark range often relied on a largely uncritical and generalised account of the links between the uncertainty of postmodern society and the growth of fundamentalist religions. There were a few low scoring answers that made assertions about the nature of fundamentalist religions, without developing relevant links to the question.

Question 8

- (a) High scoring answers provided several well-developed points about how religion contributes to social change. Good responses often made use of case studies to demonstrate different ways in which religious influence may lead to social change. Lower scoring responses often identified one or two links between religion and social change, but lacked relevant examples and references to concepts and theories.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the secularisation thesis. High scoring responses also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. The assessment often took the form of a juxtaposition of different arguments for and against the secularisation thesis. The best answers often distinguished between different religions, arguing that the extent of secularisation differs between different religions and societies. Some candidates made good use of postmodernist accounts of the role of religion today. Answers in the middle of the mark range tended to agree with the view expressed in the question, with little critical analysis or reflection on other possible perspectives on the secularisation debate. There were a few low scoring answers that described what secularisation means without any discussion of the arguments for and against the secularisation thesis.

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Key messages

- There were some outstanding answers, full of sociological insight and sound reasoning.
- Good answers combined detailed sociological understanding with effective analysis and evaluation.
- A few answers lacked references to relevant sociological concepts and theories.
- Further marks could be gained by using evidence from sociological studies to support key arguments.
- Some answers to the **(a)** questions included evaluation that was not required.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts was high, with many candidates demonstrating good understanding of the relevant sociological issues combined with skilful delivery of the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Many candidates also made good use of references to relevant sociological studies in developing their answers. Good answers to the **(b)** questions combined detailed sociological understanding with sustained assessment of the issues raised by the question. Lower scoring answers by contrast relied on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any related analysis and evaluation. Some answers to the **(a)** questions included evaluation alongside explanation. **Evaluation is not required for (a) questions.** Responses achieving the highest marks made good use of sociological concepts and theories. Some candidates also made effective use of case studies and examples from particular societies to support key arguments and this is to be encouraged as a way of satisfying the relevant assessment objectives.

Most candidates answered three questions in the time available though some candidates answered more than three questions. The questions on Education proved most popular, with those on Global Development less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a)** Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of how schools contribute to social order. High-scoring answers included references to relevant concepts and theories, with explanations often constructed in the context of functionalist and Marxist perspectives. There were some low scoring answers where the explanations offered were brief and covered only a narrow range of relevant points.
- (b)** There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained assessment of the view that gender is the main influence on educational achievement today. Good responses included evidence about how factors linked to gender may impact on educational performance. High quality responses also considered other factors, such as class and ethnicity, that might influence educational achievement. There were some low scoring answers that discussed educational achievement in a general way, without reference to relevant sociological concepts and theories.

Question 2

- (a) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the concept of pupil sub-cultures. High-scoring answers provided several examples to show how pupil sub-cultures may influence educational achievement. There were some low scoring answers that discussed social class influences on educational achievement rather than focusing on pupil sub-cultures specifically.
- (b) High scoring answers considered a range of evidence and arguments about whether the main role of education is to promote social equality. Answers that reached the top mark band made effective use of concepts such as cultural and material deprivation, meritocracy, social mobility, cultural capital, hidden curriculum, labelling, and habitus. Lower scoring answers lacked references to relevant concepts and theories and relied on assertion and generalisation rather than appropriate links to sociological arguments and evidence.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) Answers that merited high marks offered a well-developed discussion of several difficulties in measuring development. The problem of defining what is meant by development and the difficulties in agreeing appropriate economic indicators of development were noted in many of the answers. There were some low scoring responses that covered only one or two underdeveloped points about the difficulties in measuring development.
- (b) Good answers identified a range of points for and against the view that international labour migration benefits developed countries more than developing countries. High scoring responses included relevant references to different perspectives on development, including world systems theory and modernisation theory. Lower scoring answers often relied on a simple line of argument rather than considering contrasting explanations and theories.

Question 4

- (a) There were a few good answers that made several well-developed points about how cultural theories of poverty differ from structural theories. The 'culture of poverty' thesis advanced by Lewis featured in many of the high scoring answers. Some responses lower in the mark range lacked detail and made just one or two relevant points. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little or no understanding of the role of culture in explanations of poverty.
- (b) Good answers offered a sustained assessment of whether all forms of aid are unhelpful for development. High scoring responses often distinguished between different types of aid, examining whether some types are more helpful than others in promoting development. Some candidates also made good use of case studies to reflect on the impact of aid programmes. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the sociological debates about the role of aid in promoting development.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) Good answers identified several factors that influence the presentation of news. High scoring responses often included references to relevant studies and identified groups who may play a key role in news presentation, including editors, journalists and media owners. Some responses showed only a limited or inaccurate understanding of the social processes behind the presentation of news.
- (b) High scoring answers provided a sustained analysis of the view that the media are instruments of ideological control. Good responses discussed the Marxist contribution to the debate about the relationship between the media and the forces of ideological control. Some candidates made good use of the distinction between the traditional media and the new media in developing their analysis. Lower in the mark range, little use was made of relevant concepts and theories. Some answers discussed models of media effects (the hypodermic-syringe model, for example) without clarifying the relevance of this material in answering the question.

Question 6

- (a) Higher in the mark range, answers identified several relevant features of the pluralist theory of the media. Some well-formed answers focused on the role of different interest groups in influencing the content of the media, as noted in the pluralist theory. Low scoring answers lacked detail and some demonstrated only the most limited understanding of the pluralist perspective.
- (b) High quality answers demonstrated a good understanding of the theories and arguments supporting the view that the media directly influence the way people behave. Responses at this level also provided a sustained assessment of that view. Theories of the media (Marxist, pluralist, postmodernist) were often used to develop the assessment and some answers included useful references to relevant sociological studies of media influence, such as Bandura and Gerbner. Some candidates made effective use of different models of media influence, such as the hypodermic-syringe and uses and gratifications models. There were some low scoring answers that discussed issues of media influence without reference to appropriate sociological concepts and theories.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) Good answers offered several well-developed points about how religion contributes to social solidarity. Concepts such as collective conscience, rituals, social order, ideological control, and value consensus were widely used in high scoring responses. There were some low scoring answers that offered a few points about the role of religion without making strong links to the concept of social solidarity.
- (b) Answers that reached the top of the mark range offered a detailed assessment of the claim that women have greater power within religious organisations today. Evidence from studies was often used to consider where power lies in religious organisations. Some high-quality answers distinguished between the situation in specific religions, noting that women today have more power in some religions than in others. Answers that merited the middle of the mark range often relied on a largely uncritical summary of feminist theories of religion. There were a few low scoring answers that made assertions about who exercises power in religious organisations but offered little supporting evidence from the relevant sociological literature.

Question 8

- (a) High scoring answers provided a well-developed account of several factors behind the growth in privatised forms of religion. Concepts that were used in good responses included privatised worship, spiritual shopping, religious diversity, new religious movements, civil religion, re-moralisation of self, televangelism, and religious re-engagement. Lower scoring answers were often confined to making just one or two undeveloped points.
- (b) Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to examine themes from the secularisation thesis. Good answers identified a range of social functions attributed to religion and considered how far these functions are being performed by religious organisations today. The assessment often took the form of a comparison of different responses to the secularisation thesis. The best answers usually distinguished between specific religions and recognised that the extent to which religious influence has declined varies from country to country and between religions. Postmodernist reflections on the position of religion in contemporary society were often discussed in high scoring responses. Answers in the middle of the mark range tended to support the view expressed in the question, with little critical analysis or reflection on other possible perspectives. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little knowledge of the debates surrounding the secularisation thesis.

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Key messages

- There were some excellent answers, combining sound sociological understanding with sustained analysis and evaluation.
- A few answers lacked references to relevant sociological evidence.
- Further marks could be gained by using appropriate sociological concepts and theories to support key points.
- Some low scoring answers relied on assertion and general knowledge rather than relevant sociological material.
- Answers to the **(a)** questions would be enhanced by using examples to support key points.
- Some answers to the **(b)** questions were too descriptive.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts continues to improve and more candidates are demonstrating the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. The best answers were tightly constructed in a way that demonstrated clarity of thought and careful attention to the wording of the question. No marks are awarded for the use of evaluation in answering the **(a)** questions, yet some candidates misuse their time in the exam by writing evaluative answers to these questions. Some responses to the **(b)** questions were too descriptive, relying on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any related analysis and evaluation. More practice in formulating evaluative answers for the **(b)** questions would be helpful for these candidates. There continue to be a few candidates who rely on assertion and general knowledge to answer the questions. The marks awarded to answers that lack references to appropriate sociological material are inevitably at the lower end of the range. It is important therefore that candidates are encouraged to use references to sociological sources in their answers. Answers would also be enhanced by using appropriate examples to support key points.

Most candidates answered three questions in the time available. The questions on Education proved most popular, with those on Global Development less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a)** Good answers provided a detailed explanation of several ways in which home factors that may prevent working-class children achieving educational success. High quality responses included references to concepts such as material deprivation, cultural capital, social inequality, language codes, poverty, and habitus. There were some lower scoring answers that discussed influences on educational achievement without referring to home factors and the working class specifically.
- (b)** There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained assessment of the relationship between cultural capital and the educational underachievement of some minority ethnic groups. Good responses identified several ways in which lack of cultural capital may have an adverse impact on educational achievement. Evaluation was often provided through contrasting cultural and structural influences on educational achievement. Low scoring answers often lacked examples of what is meant by cultural capital and its influences on pupil performance.

Question 2

- (a) Good answers provided a clear account of several ways in which social class may influence pupil sub-cultures. High scoring responses often included references to relevant studies, such as those by Willis and by Fuller. Lower scoring answers were confined to discussing pupil sub-cultures in general, with no reference to social class influences specifically.
- (b) High scoring answers considered a range of evidence and arguments relating to the debate about whether the school curriculum reflects the interests of the rich and powerful. Good responses also made use of relevant concepts such as the social construction of knowledge, cultural bias, the ethnocentric curriculum, the gendered curriculum, language codes, and cultural capital. Lower scoring answers demonstrated little understanding of the debate about class influences on the school curriculum and lacked reference to appropriate sociological material.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) Answers that merited high marks offered a well-developed account of several different types of development aid. Types of development aid discussed included bilateral, multilateral, non-repayable grants, repayable loans, and non-monetary assistance. There were some low scoring answers that discussed development aid in general without distinguishing between different types of aid.
- (b) High scoring answers used relevant examples and sociological arguments to assess the view that cultural theories of poverty underestimate how difficult it is for the poor to escape poverty. Good responses often discussed Lewis' culture of poverty thesis and also referred to New Right theories of poverty. Some high-quality answers made appropriate use of the distinction between cultural and structural theories of poverty. Lower scoring answers often relied on a simple line of argument rather than considering different perspectives and angles on the question.

Question 4

- (a) There were a few good answers that identified all of the main features of the world systems theory of development. The ideas of Wallerstein were often cited in high scoring responses. Some answers lower in the mark range lacked detail and were confined to making just one or two relevant points. There were a few responses that demonstrated no understanding of the world systems theory as such, but offered a few general observations about the nature of development.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated awareness that the question invited a discussion of evolutionary theories of development, such as modernisation theory and Marx's historical materialism. High scoring responses often included a clear assessment of Rostow's five stage model of development. Some good responses used examples of particular societies to support or challenge evolutionary accounts of development. Answers that gained marks in the middle of the range often relied on a simple juxtaposition of modernisation theory and dependency theory. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the role of evolutionary theory in accounts of development.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the role of the media in creating moral panics. Concepts that were used in high quality answers included sensationalism, deviancy amplification, folk devils, hegemony, and gate-keeping. Some responses showed only a limited or inaccurate understanding of the relationship between moral panics and the media.
- (b) High scoring answers provided a sustained analysis of the claim that the new media has weakened the power of the traditional media. Marxist and pluralist theories of the media were often used to provide a framework for addressing the issues raised by the question. Different types of new media were considered in some high scoring answers. Links between the new media and the traditional media were also explored in good responses. Lower in the mark range, less use was made of

relevant concepts and theories. Some answers gave rather too much attention to discussing the impact of the new media, without making the links to the question clear.

Question 6

- (a) Higher in the mark range answers provided several well-developed points about how content analysis is used in the study of the media. Examples from relevant studies were often used to support key points. Good answers also often distinguished between content analysis and semiology as different approaches to the study of the media. Low scoring answers lacked a clear understanding of how content analysis differs from other research methods.
- (b) High quality answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the hegemonic model of media influence and how it differs from the mass manipulation model. Good responses also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. Theories of the media (Marxist, pluralist, postmodernist) were often used to develop the assessment and some answers included useful references to relevant sociological studies of the hegemonic model, such as those by the Glasgow Media Group. A few candidates made intelligent use of the distinction between the traditional media and the new media in advancing the discussion. There were some low scoring answers that demonstrated little understanding of the hegemonic and mass manipulation models of media influence.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) Good answers offered several well-developed points about how new age movements differ from other religious groups. Concepts such as spiritual shopping, religious revival, commodification of religion, sects, cults, and marginalisation often featured in high scoring responses. There were a few low scoring answers that lacked understanding of what is meant by new age movements.
- (b) Answers that reached the top of the mark range offered a detailed assessment of the arguments for and against the view expressed in the question. Evidence from studies was often used to gauge whether the growth of fundamentalist religions is a response to the uncertainty of postmodern society. Some high-quality answers distinguished between different examples of fundamentalist religions, noting that reasons for the growth in these movements may differ between different examples. Answers that merited the middle of the mark range often relied on a largely uncritical and generalised account of the links between the uncertainty of postmodern society and the growth of fundamentalist religions. There were a few low scoring answers that made assertions about the nature of fundamentalist religions, without developing relevant links to the question.

Question 8

- (a) High scoring answers provided several well-developed points about how religion contributes to social change. Good responses often made use of case studies to demonstrate different ways in which religious influence may lead to social change. Lower scoring responses often identified one or two links between religion and social change, but lacked relevant examples and references to concepts and theories.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the secularisation thesis. High scoring responses also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. The assessment often took the form of a juxtaposition of different arguments for and against the secularisation thesis. The best answers often distinguished between different religions, arguing that the extent of secularisation differs between different religions and societies. Some candidates made good use of postmodernist accounts of the role of religion today. Answers in the middle of the mark range tended to agree with the view expressed in the question, with little critical analysis or reflection on other possible perspectives on the secularisation debate. There were a few low scoring answers that described what secularisation means without any discussion of the arguments for and against the secularisation thesis.