SOCIOLOGY

Key messages

* High scoring answers were able to use a wide range of sociological material.
* There was sound knowledge of positivism and interpretivism shown in responses to methods questions.
* Many responses did not use sociological material (concepts/theories/research evidence) to support the points made.
* Greater observance of the new examination's rubric is needed in **Section A**. Candidates need to adhere more closely to the requirements of some questions, notably **2(a)**, **3(a)** and **3(b)**.
* In **Section B** essay responses could be improved with greater application of supporting material to support points.
* Essay evaluation was primarily delivered via juxtaposition.

General comments

The standard of responses overall was reasonably good with some candidates demonstrating strong knowledge and understanding of sociological issues. **Section A** **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)** required methodological knowledge. In both questions there was evidence of a sound knowledge base, although responses could be improved by closer adherence to the wording of each question. This was especially the case with **2(a)** which required identification of ways research may be affected by bias. Centres should note that the marks for these questions are accumulated on a points-based approach as demonstrated by the mark scheme.

In **Question 3,** many candidates had difficulties making a link between family and gender identity. Many were able to give relevant sociological material, but this was not always fully focused on the question. When considering the counter view in **3(b)** candidates gave alternative views but often without referring to the view in the question.

In **Section B** more candidates chose **Question 4** than **Question 5**. **Question 4** was slightly less well answered with a notable tendency for the arguments presented to be unbalanced. The use of key methodological concepts in **Question 5** could be improved on. In some cases, candidates confused experiments with research in general, and gave an account of a range of methods that were not well applied to the question. Validity, reliability and representativeness were often used interchangeably or incorrectly. This trend was also evident in **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)**. Centres are encouraged to concentrate on the differences between these concepts and to emphasise them as different aspects of research.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Describe two examples of social norms.

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. In most cases candidates correctly identified two social norms. Nearly all candidates registered at least one or two marks from this question with many scoring three or four. It would be beneficial for centres to emphasise to candidates that they need to identify and describe in their response to **Question 1**.

Question 2

(a) **Explain two ways sociological research may be affected by bias.**

Although many candidates were able to give good responses to this question, in some cases candidates had difficulties explaining ways research is affected by bias. Instead, some candidates focused on explaining bias and what it was rather than the impact on research. The best responses clearly identified a way, explained it, selected relevant sociological material, and then showed how the selected material supported the point. The ways most frequently identified were values of the sociologist and the effect of the researcher. Often sociological material was identified but not fully explained in relation to the point being made. In many responses candidates repeated their identified point when showing how their selected material supported the way, hence losing the last available mark.

(b) **Explain one strength and one limitation of unstructured interviews as a research method.**

This question was well answered by candidates. Most candidates were able to offer both a strength and a limitation of unstructured interviews. Strong responses considered validity as a strength and reliability as a weakness and linked these to interpretivist and positivist perspectives. Candidates that lost marks generally failed to develop their points to show why a point was a strength or limitation and so lost the final mark for each. Candidates might benefit from ensuring they complete their answer by stating that 'this is a limitation (or strength) because'.

Question 3

(a) **'The family is the main influence on gender identity.' Explain this view.**

Strong responses to this question were able to use Oakley or Parsons to show two clear points about the importance of the family in establishing gender identity. Many answers discussed clothing, toys and language. Others explained role models and linked to primary socialisation. Weaker answers showed knowledge of material but lacked the use of concepts or sociological evidence and so were focused on more common sense ideas. In places, candidates gave introductions that added little to the answer and were not necessary. In some cases, conclusions were also given which are not necessary. To achieve full marks, candidates need to provide two clear and developed points. If these points are made with good reference to concepts, theories and evidence that is directed towards the question a response can achieve 10 marks.

(b) **'The family is the main influence on gender identity.' Using sociological material, give one argument against this view.**

Candidates who were able to give a good response to question **3(a)** were often able to perform well on this part of the question. Strong answers looked at other agencies that provide sources of gender identity. Many candidates discussed either media or peer groups as alternative sources of gender identity. Many of the candidates gave good responses in relation to the alternative agency. What was often lacking in answers to take them to the top band was consideration of how this alternative source of identity might be more influential than the family. The strongest answers were able to state the power of the media or the close interactions with peers to give evidence of why this might be more influential than the family. Many responses gave more than one argument in their answer. In these cases, only one was rewarded.

Section B

Question 4

Evaluate the view that age is the main influence on a person's identity.

This was the more popular of the two essays, although responses tended to be weaker. Effective answers used a range of arguments to shape their essay. Focus was often on youth and old age and the characteristics of these. Many candidates also cited cross-cultural variations in age perceptions. Although points were made in relation to role expectation, generation gaps and life course, many of these were not supported by sociological evidence. Candidates often focused on a run-through of life course and the features of each stage without showing the relevance to identity. The use of concepts was limited and evaluation was not well developed.

Stronger responses were able to consider postmodern views of individualism or views linked to changes to childhood. Typically these arguments were delivered through juxtaposition, so centres may wish to work on the use of more focused evaluation.

Question 5

Evaluate the use of experiments in sociological research.

Fewer candidates attempted this question, responses were typically stronger than those given for **Question 4**. Strong responses were able to differentiate between laboratory and field experiments and give both strengths and limitations of each. Many candidates were able to look at practical, ethical, and theoretical factors. Strong answers were also able to illustrate points made with reference to relevant sociological material. Popular studies cited included Milgram, Zimbardo and Mayo. Many responses were able to effectively use methodological concepts such as reliability, validity and representativeness. Some confusion was shown in the use of field experiments. These were often confused with observations with many students incorrectly identifying Venkatesh's study as a field experiment.

Some candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about research in general rather than focusing on experiments, possibly taking experiments to mean research in general. These responses discussed a range of methods and in some instances included experiments for which credit was given.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12

Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research

Key messages

- Candidates showed greater knowledge and understanding of methods of research than socialisation and identity.
- Many responses did not use sociological material (concepts/theories/research evidence) to support the points made.
- There was a deficit in knowledge of the meaning of some key concepts (such as under-socialisation).
- Greater observance of the new examination's rubric is needed in **Section A**. Candidates need to adhere more closely to the requirements of some questions, notably **2(a)**, **3(a)** and **3(b)**.
- To achieve full marks in **Question 3(a),** candidates need to only provide two clear and developed points.
- There was evidence of time management issues on **Section B**.
- Essay evaluation was primarily delivered via juxtaposition.

General comments

The standard of responses overall was good. In **Section A** some candidates confused the concept of under-socialisation used in **Question 3**, explaining it as an absence of socialisation and referring to feral children in their answers. This did not get credited. Most candidates were able to give two social identities for **Question 1,** although some were not able to explain these for an additional mark. **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)** required methodological knowledge. In both questions there was evidence of a sound knowledge base. Centres should note that the marks for these questions are accumulated on a points-based approach as demonstrated by the mark scheme.

In **Section B** a greater proportion of candidates opted for **Question 4**. Candidates were able to show some knowledge and understanding of the role of the media in shaping gender identity. Evaluation in responses was typically juxtaposed. **Question 5** did prove challenging for some. Often responses did not demonstrate understanding of practical issues and instead gave more general accounts of a range of factors that might influence research. Some strong responses showed knowledge and understanding of the impact of practical factors. These were compared to theoretical and ethical factors, although often this was simply by juxtaposition.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Describe two examples of social identities.

Most candidates responded well to this question. Many were able to identify and describe two social identities. The most popular ones were gender and ethnicity, although religion also featured in many answers. Some candidates repeated the same identity by considering male and female, gaining only half the marks. Candidates should choose two different points that can be described in different ways.

In some cases, answers were lengthy, and this did not add to their marks. Candidates should be encouraged to use an appropriate amount of time for this question.

Question 2

(a)   Explain two features of the interpretivist approach to research.

Many candidates produced good answers to this question. The strongest responses clearly identified a feature, explained it, selected relevant sociological material, and then showed how the material supported the point. Popular features included using qualitative methods, looking at meanings and rejection of scientific method. Some less effective responses gave features of a positivist approach and explained in terms of how interpretivist differs. Some answers lacked relevant sociological material to support points made and this limited the marks. In some responses candidates simply repeated their identified point when showing how their selected material supported the reason, hence losing the last available mark.

(b)   Explain one strength and one limitation of questionnaires as a research method.

Most candidates were able to identify both a strength and a limitation. Common strengths identified included being easy to analyse, being high in reliability and having a large sample. Limitations often included a low response rate, lack of in-depth data and lack of flexibility. The first two marks were achieved by most candidates, many did not go on to explain why an identified point was a strength or limitation. Candidates might benefit from ensuring they complete their answer by stating that 'this is a strength/limitation because.' In some cases, there were long unnecessary descriptions of different types of questionnaire. These often did not link to the strengths and limitations and so did not gain any marks.

Question 3

(a)   'Under-socialisation is the main cause of deviance.' Explain this view.

To achieve full marks, candidates need to only provide two clear and developed points. If these points are made with good reference to concepts, theories and evidence and applied to the question, a response can achieve 10 marks. A significant number of candidates were not familiar with the concept of under-socialisation. Instead, many confused it with not having been socialised and so used the example of feral children. This was not rewarded. Stronger answers were able to explain the link to failures in primary socialisation and use material from Murray or Parsons to support these points. In some cases, material that would have been credited in **3(b)** was used in this answer, such as material deprivation or subcultures. Many only made one point in their response and very few candidates achieved the higher levels for their response. Some candidates wrote long introductions without making concrete points. It is worth reiterating that this question does not require an essay response and that to achieve full marks candidates need to only provide two clear and developed points.

(b)   'Under-socialisation is the main cause of deviance.' Using sociological material, give one argument against this view.

Overall, this question produced stronger responses than **3(a)**. Good answers included reference to material deprivation, status frustration, sub-culture, or marginalisation. Some responses gave good accounts of these factors and their impact on deviance but did not apply their argument to under-socialisation to get fully developed points. This meant many responses were unable to access the top mark band. Some candidates gave more than one argument in their response. In these cases, only one was rewarded.

Section B

Question 4

Evaluate the view that the media is the most important influence in shaping gender identity.

This question was the most popular of the essay questions. The quality of responses to this question was mixed with many candidates producing unbalanced accounts.

Weaker responses gave generalised and lengthy introductions which did little to advance the debate. Some candidates did not address the question asked, focusing instead on media effects in general rather than on

its link with gender identity. Other candidates misinterpreted sexual identities with gender identities with little evidence of a critical approach. Others produced lists of points that influence gender but did not comment on their influence on gender identities.

Most candidates seemed to deal with factors other than the media, that shaped identities. Some thought that the new media was an alternative source of influence from the media.

Many candidates used common sense knowledge to answer the question. The responses tended to be descriptive with limited application. Arguments against were rather descriptive and lacked sociological evidence or evaluation. A number of scripts offered few or no evaluation points.

There was some evidence that candidates were leaving insufficient time to focus on this question.

Question 5 Evaluate the view that practical factors are the main influence on a sociologist's choice of research method.

Overall, the standard of responses to this question were slightly stronger those for **Question 4**. Most candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge of practical factors and their impact on choice of research method. Those candidates who understood the difference between practical, ethical, and theoretical factors were able to use this knowledge to produce good accounts with some relevant examples given.

Some weaker responses were unclear about what constituted a practical factor, and the most common error was to say that ethical issues are practical factors. Some unfocused answers went into long descriptions of the suitability of different methods, rather than a comparison of practical factors to other influences. Most were able to list some different factors in juxtaposition, with developed evaluation absent in many cases.

There was some evidence that candidates were leaving insufficient time to focus on this question.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/13

Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research

Key messages

- High scoring answers were able to use a wide range of sociological material.
- Candidates showed limited knowledge and understanding of questions focusing on socialisation and identity.
- Some responses did not use sociological material (concepts/theories/research evidence) to support the points made.
- Greater observance of the new examination's rubric is needed in **Section A**. Candidates need to adhere more closely to the requirements of some questions, notably **2(a)**, **3(a)** and **3(b)**.
- In **Section B** essay responses could be improved with greater application of supporting material to support points.
- Some candidates left insufficient time to focus on **Section B.**
- Essay evaluation was primarily delivered via juxtaposition.

General comments

The standard of responses overall was good. In **Section A,** candidates had difficulties with **Questions 2(a)** and **3(a)**. For **Question 2(a),** candidates were often confused about gaining access to a study group, focussing instead on the impact of covert observation. Others discussed access in general for a range of methods, such as questionnaires, without applying this to the question, such as how to get questionnaires to participants. Centres should note that the marks for these questions are accumulated on a points-based approach as demonstrated by the mark scheme. For **Question 3(a),** many candidates discussed religion with limited application to ethnic identity. These answers tended to focus on religion without explaining the importance of religion for identity. **Question 2(b)** and **3(b)** tended to produce the strongest responses.

In **Section B** there was some evidence that candidates had not left enough time to complete the essays. **Question 4** was a little more popular. Many candidates were able to offer a range of evidence on both sides of the debate. Points against the view were often stronger showing good knowledge and understanding of sociological material on social class. The use of key methodological concepts in **Question 5** could be improved on. Validity, reliability and representativeness were often used interchangeably or incorrectly. This trend was also evident in **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)**. Centres are encouraged to concentrate on the differences between these concepts and to emphasise them as different aspects of research.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Describe two features of globalisation.

This question was answered well by the majority of candidates. In most cases, candidates correctly identified two features of globalisation, and could describe these effectively. Popular choices linked to culture and economic factors. Nearly all candidates registered at least one or two marks from this question with the majority scoring three or four.

Question 2

(a)   Explain two problems a researcher may face in gaining access to a study group.

Some candidates were able to give two clear points that were fully developed for this question. The strongest responses clearly identified a problem (making contact or blending into a group), explained it, selected relevant sociological material and then showed how the selected material supported the point. Weaker responses misunderstood what was meant by access and which method this should refer to. Some candidates gave simplistic or common sense answers without sociological evidence to support these points.

(b)   Explain two limitations of longitudinal studies.

This question was reasonably well answered by candidates. The most frequently identified limitations were sample attrition and money. The first two marks were achieved by most candidates, some did not go on to explain why an identified point was a limitation. Candidates might benefit from ensuring they complete their answer by stating that 'this is a limitation (or strength) because.'

Question 3

(a)   'Religion is the most important factor shaping ethnic identity.' Explain this view.

Most candidates could identify features of religion and discuss these in some detail. Weaker responses did not explain how their points linked to ethnic identity specifically. The strongest responses linked their understanding of the influence of religion to an individual's ethnic identity. Some made reference to religion being used to overcome oppression or religion begin used as a source of solidarity to maintain cultural identity. Many candidates wrote introductions without making concrete points. To achieve full marks, candidates need to only provide two clear and developed points. If these points are made with good reference to concepts, theories and evidence that are directed towards the question, a response can achieve 10 marks.

(b)   'Religion is the most important factor shaping ethnic identity.' Using sociological material, give one argument against this view.

Stronger responses made reference to factors such as not adhering to religion or following other agents of socialisation such as the media. Although there was knowledge of other points, this was not always fully developed. Many responses simply outlined the influence of an alternative agent and asserted its greater importance in shaping identity. This meant that many candidates were not able to reach the higher level. Some candidates gave more than one argument in their answer. In these cases, only one was rewarded.

Section B

Question 4

Evaluate the view that social class has little influence on identity today.

This question was the more popular of the two essays. Overall, the responses to this question were good. Effective answers used a range of arguments to shape their essay. These included reference to postmodern ideas of individualism and links between identity and consumption. Points against the view were often stronger than the points in support. Many candidates were able to examine Marxists views and link these to the continued existence of social class. Many responses began by discussing the importance of class and then covered points against this view. Whilst these answers showed relevant knowledge and understanding they were not always clearly applied to the question and evaluation was more by juxtaposition. Centres could focus on how to develop an argument from either side of the debate to help improve the structure and explicit evaluation in essays. There was some evidence that candidates were leaving insufficient time to focus on this question.

Question 5

Evaluate the view that qualitative interviews have little value in sociological research.

The most successful responses focused on the positivist approach and its scientific rationale. These candidates focused their attention directly on the positivist perspective and the key concepts associated with it, using these to explore what counts as valid and reliable sociological knowledge. Points such as the problems of reliability or the lack of representativeness were developed in support of the view. The strongest answers used research studies to good effect. In challenging the view, good responses mostly outlined the interpretivist approach. Some candidates gave an account of the strengths and limitations of qualitative interviews without fully applying these to the view in the question. These types of answers showed points that were either underdeveloped or lacking breadth. There was some evidence that candidates were leaving insufficient time to focus on this question.

SOCIOLOGY

| Paper 9699/21 |
| The Family |

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they understand the requirements of the questions prior to the examination – familiarisation through use of past exam papers/marks schemes would benefit them.
- Candidates need to focus their responses on the family rather than wider society.
- More successful responses applied relevant sociological theories, concepts and research to demonstrate sociological knowledge and understanding of the family.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material.
- Teachers/candidates should use the mark schemes as teaching and learning tools, particularly for 2b.

General comments

In general, few candidates achieved the higher marks. Both sociological knowledge and understanding, and skills of application and analysis were limited. Many candidates appeared unprepared for the demands of particular questions.

The **more successful** candidates produced responses that reflected the requirements of the question and applied relevant sociological material to support their responses. Candidate responses that achieved lower marks did not answer the question set. Some were descriptive and lacked application of sociological material and did not provide evidence of analysis and assessment, often relying more on common sense/general knowledge. The extended writing questions were excellent discriminators for candidates to demonstrate their skills of knowledge and understanding, interpretation and application, and analysis and evaluation.

Most candidates were able to name relevant sociological concepts; less successful candidates did not *apply* these to develop their response, often relying on simply stating them or defining/describing them rather than applying them in a way that engaged with the question. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses. Any rubric errors tended to occur within **Questions 2a** and **3b**, in which candidates provided more points than were required.

In general, candidates need to be more aware of their use of time. For example, in **all *Section A* questions** a lengthy introduction and conclusion are not necessary. Using up valuable time that could be utilised on other more challenging questions e.g. essay responses is not advisable. The majority of candidates answered the questions in order; some perhaps could have benefitted from answering the essay first.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Describe two ways motherhood has changed.

The majority of candidates were able to identify two ways motherhood had changed, with common answers being *increasingly in the workplace/motherhood occurring later in life*, and *increasingly mothers choosing to raise children alone/do not need to rely on men as now financially independent*.

Less successful responses either demonstrated repetition and therefore at most achieved half the marks available, or were too vague in their explanations. Other less successful responses were those that failed to focus on the context of motherhood, instead discussed changing lives of women in general, or why motherhood had changed rather than how.

Occasionally, candidates provided more than the two responses required. Unfortunately, there were a few examples of candidates writing far too much, with responses including introductions and conclusions, which is not required. Furthermore, some candidates gave definitions of motherhood, again this was not required.

Note: *Candidates should be encouraged to structure their **Question 1** responses as two bullet points, avoiding introductions and unnecessarily lengthy answers. Also provide just the two responses required.*

Question 2

(a)   **Explain two ways the role of women in the family supports capitalism.**

Most if not all candidates were able to provide at least one appropriate point and relevant explanation with the majority of those able to provide two. Candidates should be encouraged to structure their responses in a clear and structured way:

–   *Identified point*
–   *Point explained*
–   *Relevant supporting sociological material*
–   *Application of this material to demonstrate the original point.*

It would be beneficial for candidates to adopt this approach as it would help them focus their response. Common responses focused on *reproduction/raising future workers* and *providing emotional/physical care for the husband/he can continue to go to work*. Where sociological material was used in support, this tended to rely on *Marxism and functionalism.*

The more successful responses clearly demonstrated two ways the role of women in the family supports capitalism and supported their point by applying appropriate sociological material. However, these were unfortunately scarce. The majority of candidates whilst able to provide two relevant ways, did not apply sociological material, therefore at most were awarded half the marks available to them.

To improve, candidates need to provide appropriate sociological material e.g. concepts, studies, relevant policies etc. and apply these in supporting the original point made. Too often, candidates wasted valuable time providing lengthy introductions and conclusions – these are not required.

Note: Candidates should be encouraged to structure responses as two separate paragraphs identified as
'The first…. The second….' for clarity and <u>only provide</u> the two points required.

(b)   **Explain two limitations of Marxist feminist views of the family.**

The best responses identified some form of limitation e.g. *that the family was outdated*, or that it *failed to show the progresses women have made*. Most responses tended to simply describe/state a viewpoint of the theoretical stance, in this case Marxist feminism. This is not the same as identifying its strengths or its limitations. Those responses that did gain a mark for identifying a relevant limitation, often did not gain marks for explaining *why* Marxist feminism have the limitation identified. Weaker responses tended to discuss in the context of the workplace rather than the family as required. A clear and structured approach to answering **2b**:

A strength/limitation is…./X have this as a strength/limitation because they…/This is a strength/limitation because…

Note: *Candidates may benefit from using the mark schemes to create a table of strengths and limitations of the key theoretical stances in relation to the family during their studies, to aid their learning and revision.*

Question 3

(a) **'Changes in social policy are the main reason for an increase in divorce.' Explain this view.**

Where this question was answered correctly, candidates were quite simplistic in their responses, tending to state how policies had made divorce cheaper and easier (*some candidates did reference the 1969 Divorce Reform Act)*; few discussed the significance of equality legislation and welfare provision. Such responses tended to rely on common-sense with little to no supporting evidence e.g. naming of policies, reference to sociologists etc. Generally, this question was poorly answered with candidates demonstrating confusion and a lack of understanding of what is meant by social policy. For example, candidates discussed social life, social norms, social stigma, socialisation, social change. Thus, not answering the question.

Other incorrect responses were a result of candidates discussing how divorce rates have not increased, how people are cohabiting instead of getting married, and other reasons for divorce.

To improve, candidates need to ensure they focus their responses in addressing the specifics of the question, as well as apply relevant sociological evidence in support to develop at least points.

Note: *a small number of candidates wasted time by providing an unnecessary evaluation of the claim; this is <u>not a requirement of the question</u> (they have the opportunity to do this in 3b). Lengthy introductions and conclusions are unnecessary and candidates should be discouraged from doing this on this question.*

(b) '**Changes in social policy are the main reason for an increase in divorce.' Using sociological material, give <u>one</u> argument against this view.**

Successful responses tended to state that *women were now able to work so did not need to rely on a man, so could leave abusive relationships*, or occasionally *secularisation/loss of religious influence meant people would no longer be considered sinful for divorcing.* Less successful responses included candidates <u>giving reasons</u> for divorce rather than discussing reasons for an <u>increase</u> in divorce e.g. *no longer love each other*, discussing alternatives to marriage or why there is a decline in marriage.

Note: *a small number of candidates wasted time by providing more than one argument against the claim, using up time that could be useful elsewhere.*

Section B

Question 4

Evaluate the view that roles in the family are no longer fixed.

This was the more popular choice and the more successfully answered. Most candidates that answered this were able to demonstrate at least a basic knowledge and understanding of the debate, although arguments in support of the claim in the question tended to outweigh arguments against. Across the responses both roles *within* the family e.g. domestic/paid labour, and roles *of* the family e.g. provide socialisation were discussed; occasionally candidates expanded to include discussions of children and grandparents. However, few candidates were able to back these points up with appropriate research evidence, relying on common-sense/anecdotal evidence.

Few candidates made specific evaluation points against the view of the question and so were not able to access the higher marks for analysis and evaluation. Evaluation was largely by juxtaposition although most candidates were able to identify the other side of the debate.

Less successful responses focused on a historical discussion, often citing how things used to be with little to no examination of the present. Numerous candidates discussed why roles should be fixed and the consequences of not having fixed roles, which is not what the question required from candidates.

Note: *candidates need to be more aware of the importance of assessment/evaluation within essays, given its weighting in the mark scheme.*

Question 5

Evaluate the view that the family benefits all its members equally.

The least opted for question. Few candidates focused their responses on the issue of the family benefitting its members _equally_. Those that did so, and used supporting sociological material, tended to cite _functionalism and the economic function and/or the emotional support function_. Counter arguments tended to focus on _feminist_ arguments of how _women are exploited and burdened_ or experience _domestic violence_. The occasional response discussed _children and grandparents_ benefitting, as well as a _Marxist_ stance for the counter argument, discussing _how everyone in the family is exploited by capitalism_.

Less successful responses for example, simply presented roles performed in the family e.g. the wife cooks/cleans and the husband goes to work, without demonstrating how all members benefit equally from this. Some responses were one sided, tending to only discuss how family members do not benefit equally, and in addition there were those responses that lacked sociological support, relying on common sense/anecdotal evidence.

Note: _candidates need to be more aware of the importance of assessment/evaluation (AO3) within essays, given its weighting in the mark scheme._

SOCIOLOGY

**Paper 9699/22
The Family**

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they understand the requirements of the questions prior to the examination – familiarisation through use of past exam papers/marks schemes would benefit them.
- Candidates need to focus responses on the family rather than wider society.
- More successful responses applied relevant sociological theories, concepts and research to demonstrate sociological knowledge and understanding of the family.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material.
- Teachers/candidates should use the mark schemes as teaching and learning tools, particularly for 2b.

General comments

Overall candidates performance has improved. In particular, there was a marked improvement in how some candidates approached **2a**, although candidates still demonstrate a lack of understanding of how to respond to **2b.**

Candidates in general appeared to demonstrate a reasonable sociological knowledge and understanding of the strands of feminism and Marxism, although were less knowledgeable about social policies. The **more successful** candidates produced responses that reflected the requirements of the question and applied relevant sociological material to support their responses. Candidate responses that achieved lower marks did not answer the question set. Some were descriptive and lacked application of sociological material in providing evidence of analysis and assessment, often relying more on common sense/general knowledge. The extended writing questions were excellent discriminators for candidates to demonstrate their skills of knowledge and understanding, interpretation and application, and analysis and evaluation.

Most candidates were able to name relevant sociological concepts/studies; less successful candidates did not *apply* these to develop their response, often relying on simply stating them or defining/describing them rather than applying them in a way that engages with the question. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses. Any rubric errors tended to occur within **Questions 2a** and **3b**, whereby candidates provided more points than were required.

In general, candidates need to be more aware of their use of time. For example, in **Question 1** lengthy introductions and conclusions are not necessary; this uses up valuable time that could be utilised on other more challenging questions. Some candidates appeared to run out of time in their essay response and cut the response prematurely short. Most candidates answered the questions in order; some perhaps could have benefitted from answering the essay first.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Describe two ways the increase of women in paid employment has affected the family.

The majority of candidates were able to identify two ways the increase of women in paid employment has affected the family, commonly *women have greater economic power/now have decision making power*, *less time to take care of the household/growth of new man whereby men are now taking on more equal share of*

domestic chores, and *women increasingly dual/triple burdened/still expected to fulfil their traditional expressive role.*

Less successful candidates either demonstrated repetition and therefore at most achieved half the marks available, or were too vague in their explanations. Occasionally candidates provided more than the two responses required. A few candidates wrote far too much, with responses including introductions and conclusions, which clearly is not required.

Note: *Candidates should be encouraged to structure their **Question 1** responses as two bullet points or numbered 1/2, avoiding introductions and unnecessarily lengthy answers. Also provide just the two responses required.*

Question 2

(a) **Explain two ways the family supports the economy.**

Most if not all candidates were able to provide at least one appropriate points and relevant explanation, with the majority of those able to provide two. There were some very good answers that achieved full marks, with some candidates seemingly following a logical and well thought structure of:

–   *Identified reason/point*
–   *Reason explained*
–   *Relevant supporting sociological material*
–   *Application of this material to demonstrate the original point.*

This is very encouraging to see and it is beneficial for candidates to adopt this approach as it helps them to focus their response. Responses used both *Marxism and functionalism*, with common responses focused on *consumption, the woman's role in physically and emotionally supporting the man so he can work,* and in *reproduction/producing future workers.* Sociological material in support tended to be *Althusser, Zaretsky, Benston, Parsons, warm bath, primary socialisation.*

The more successful responses clearly demonstrated two ways, supported with the application of appropriate sociological material. Less successful candidates whilst able to provide two relevant reasons, did not support with sociological material, therefore at most were awarded half the marks available to them. Other weaker responses were simplistic in stating paying taxes or set up a business.

To improve, candidates need to support points using appropriate sociological material e.g. concepts, studies, relevant policies etc. and apply these in demonstrating the original point made. Too often, candidates wasted valuable time providing lengthy introductions and conclusions – these are not required.

Note: *Candidates should be encouraged to structure responses as two separate paragraphs identified as 'The first…. The second….' for clarity and only provide the two points required.*

(b) **Explain two strengths of Marxist views of the family.**

Candidates generally still appear unprepared for the demands of this question, with only a minority clearly identifying at least one strength of Marxism (some candidates discussed Marxist feminism which was valid), such as *recognises the relationship the family has with capitalism* and, *acknowledges the exploitation that women face in the family due to capitalism.* Many candidates failed to achieve any marks because they simply described two views of Marxism. *A viewpoint of Marxism is not the same as recognising a strength of it.* Quite often the strength was left implicit and not clearly identifiable within a general discussion of Marxism. A clear and structured approach to answering **2b**:

A strength/limitation is…./X have this as a strength/limitation because they…/This is a strength/limitation because…

Note: *Candidates may benefit from using the mark schemes to create a table of strengths and limitations of the key theoretical stances in relation to the family during their studies, to aid their learning and revision.*

Question 3

(a) **'The experience of childhood is different today than in the past.' Explain this view.**

Candidates provided responses to this question, with varying degrees of success. Higher marks were achieved by candidates who were able to develop at least two points, using relevant sociological evidence to expand the point and engage with it. Common responses included *how children today are viewed more preciously and in need of protection, with various laws to assure their health and wellbeing,* as well as how more recently *the distinction between childhood and adulthood is becoming increasingly blurred through the use of technology*. Sociological evidence included *Postman, Palmer, Robertson, child labour laws.*

Weaker responses were those that relied on basic description and common sense and lacked sociological supporting evidence. Also, a number of candidates focused too much on the past, presenting a historical account of childhood with little or no consideration of the present and how it had changed.

To improve, candidates needed to ensure that they focused their responses in addressing the specifics of the question, as well as apply relevant sociological evidence in support.

Note: a small number of candidates wasted time by providing an unnecessary evaluation of the claim; *this is not a requirement of the question (they have the opportunity to do this in 3b). Lengthy introductions and conclusions are unnecessary and candidates should be discouraged from doing this on this question.*

(b) **'The experience of childhood is different today than in the past.' Using sociological material, give <u>one</u> argument against this view.**

Successful responses tended to make cross-cultural comparisons - how *childhood is in some parts of the world still involves labouring to support the family (e.g. Brazil),* or how it *still involves gender socialisation into social stereotypes*. Others used the idea of toxic childhood to show how it had not changed as *childhood is seemingly returning to share similarities with adulthood.*

Weaker responses included those that provided common sense/general knowledge responses such as, parents have always had to take care of children, or have always disciplined children, whilst incorrect answers included how childhood should or should not be, and those that discussed differences between social classes, providing no discussion of how childhood had not changed.

Note: a small number of candidates wasted time by providing more than one argument against the claim, *using up time that could be useful elsewhere.*

Section B

Question 4

Evaluate the view that social policies are the main reason for increased family diversity.

This was the least opted for question of the two, but in general those that did attempt it managed to demonstrate some comprehension of the debate over whether social policies were the main reason for increased family diversity. Whilst not all responses were able to identify specific policies, they were able to demonstrate their impact. Arguments against the claim commonly included *changes in the lives of women*, *impact of secularisation* and *postmodernist arguments of increased choice*.

Few candidates made specific evaluation points against the view in the question, relying on juxtaposition and so were not able to access the upper mark bands of AO3.

Weaker responses showed confusion, taking social policies to mean social norms or social attitudes, did not address *'increased'* and simply discussed why diversity exists e.g. social class and ethnicity, provided a one-sided argument or simply described different family types without addressing the issue of social policies.

Note: *candidates need to be more aware of the importance of assessment/evaluation (AO3) within essays, given its weighting in the mark scheme.*

Question 5

Evaluate the view that the family is a patriarchal institution.

The more popular option of the two. The strongest responses were able to demonstrate how the family was a patriarchal institution, largely through a *radical, liberal and Marxist feminist* discussion; *domestic violence through biologically being stronger in a bid to impose authority, men having greater decision-making power due to them being the breadwinner, women socialised into the gendered role of serving the man.*

Weaker responses did not explicitly address the issue of whether or not the family is patriarchal, often demonstrating an assumption that unequal distribution of housework/childcare constitutes patriarchy. Some candidates incorrectly suggested that functionalism argues the nuclear family is be patriarchal.

Common arguments to counter the claim, included *women are now contributing more financially/are breadwinners, and this has led to more equal decision-making power,* or *how the growth in family diversity means there are fewer nuclear families and so less patriarchy.* A few candidates used Marxism appropriately to counter the claim, stating the family *was not patriarchal/serving men, rather it served capitalism.* Others used functionalism to demonstrate how whilst roles are different, they are considered equally as important and do not involve male dominance over women, therefore the family is not patriarchal.

Note: *candidates need to be more aware of the importance of assessment/evaluation (AO3) within essays, given its weighting in the mark scheme.*

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/23
The Family

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they understand the requirements of the questions prior to the examination.
- Candidates should ensure they focus responses on the family rather than wider society.
- Good responses applied relevant sociological theories, concepts and research to demonstrate sociological knowledge and understanding.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material.
- Teachers/candidates should use the mark schemes as teaching and learning tools, particularly for 2b.

General comments

Overall, there was a wide range of performance from candidates. There was a marked improvement in how some candidates approached **Questions 2a** and **2b**, responses were given in a logical and clear way. The language that some used in responses for **2b** is encouraging and provides clarity for candidates in constructing their answers.

Candidates in general demonstrated a reasonable understanding of the strands of feminism, although postmodernism less so. The **more successful** candidates produced responses that reflected the requirements of the question and applied relevant sociological material to support their responses. Candidate responses that achieved lower marks tended to not answer the question set, and/or tended to be descriptive and lacked application of sociological material in providing evidence of analysis and assessment, often relying more on common sense/general knowledge. The extended writing questions were excellent discriminators for candidates to demonstrate their skills of knowledge and understanding, interpretation and application, and analysis and evaluation.

Most candidates were able to name relevant sociological concepts; less successful candidates did not *apply* these to develop their response, often relying on simply stating them or defining/describing them rather than applying them in a way that engages with the question. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses. Any rubric errors tended to occur within **Questions 2a** and **3b**, whereby candidates provided more points than were required.

In general, candidates need to be more aware of their use of time. For example, in **all *Section A* questions** a lengthy introduction and conclusion are not necessary. Using up valuable time that could be utilised on other more challenging questions e.g. essay responses is not advisable. The majority of candidates answered the questions in order; some perhaps could have benefitted from answering the essay first.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Describe two functions performed by the family.

The majority of candidates were able to identify two functions performed by the family. The most common responses took the functionalist approach of *primary socialisation* and *stabilisation of adult personalities*. Other occasional responses included *reproduction* and *satisfaction of sex drive*. Very few candidates took a Marxist approach for example, *acts as an ideological state apparatus*.

Less successful candidates either demonstrated repetition and therefore at most achieved half the marks available, or were too vague in their explanations.

Occasionally candidates provided more than the two responses required. Unfortunately, there were a few examples of candidates writing far too much, with responses including introductions and conclusions, which was not required.

Note: *Candidates should be encouraged to structure their **Question 1** responses as two bullet points, avoiding introductions and unnecessarily lengthy answers. Also provide just the two responses required.*

Question 2

(a) **Explain two reasons for an increase in the age of first marriage.**

Most candidates were able to provide at least one appropriate point and relevant explanation, with the majority of those able to provide two. There were some very good answers that achieved full marks, with some candidates seemingly following a logical and well thought structure of:

– *Identified reason/point*
– *Reason explained*
– *Relevant supporting sociological material*
– *Application of this material to demonstrate the original point.*

It would be beneficial for candidates to adopt this approach as it helps them to focus their response. The majority of responses focused on the *improvement in women's financial situation/prioritising career*, with other popular responses being *the increase in cohabitation as a test to see if 'the one'/marriage is taken more seriously.* Sociological material in support tended to rely on *Sharpe, Giddens, Individualism*, *Equal Pay Act*.

The more successful responses clearly demonstrated two reasons for an increase in the age of first marriage, supported with the application of appropriate sociological material. Less successful candidates whilst able to provide two relevant reasons, did not apply sociological material, therefore at most were awarded half the marks available to them.

To improve, candidates need to apply appropriate sociological material e.g. concepts, studies, relevant policies etc. and apply these in supporting the original point made. Incorrect responses focused on: why people are not getting married, why people get married at a young age, why people divorce, all of which were not demands of the question.

Note: Candidates should be encouraged to structure responses as two separate paragraphs identified as
'The first…. The second….' for clarity and <u>only provide</u> the two points required.

(b) **Explain one strength and one limitation of postmodernist views on family diversity.**

Generally speaking, candidates appeared to have a better understanding of the limitations of postmodernism, than its strengths. The more successful candidates provided an identifiable strength/limitation and why it is a strength/limitation. Responses went on to demonstrate *why* postmodernism has this as a strength/limitation.

Weaker responses tended to discuss strengths/limitations of diversity, or be critical of lone parent or same sex families.

Note: *Candidates may benefit from using the mark schemes to create a table of strengths and limitations of the key theoretical stances in relation to the family during their studies, to aid their learning and revision.*

Question 3

(a) **'Men have more power than women in the family.' Explain this view.**

The more successful responses <u>clearly focused</u> on demonstrating that men have more power than women in the family. These tended to discuss how the man gains *power from his role as breadwinner*, demonstrated through *decision making*, or how they exercise *physical power through domestic violence to exert their dominance*. Higher marks were achieved by those candidates that were able to develop at least two points, using relevant sociological evidence to expand the point and engage with it. Less successful responses tended to be those that relied on basic description without sociological support, or that did not explicitly address men having more power than women in the family. Such responses tended to discuss difference in gender roles (*without making any connection to power inequalities – this is simply a difference in roles which can be considered equally as important/equal status without power differences – functionalism*), discussed women having greater burden – *again this in itself does not demonstrate men's power*, whilst some discussed society rather than in the context of the family.

To improve, candidates needed to ensure that they focus their responses in addressing the specifics of the question, as well as apply relevant sociological evidence in support.

Note: *a small number of candidates wasted time by providing an unnecessary evaluation of the claim; this is <u>not a requirement of the question</u> (they have the opportunity to do this in 3b). Lengthy introductions and conclusions are unnecessary and candidates should be discouraged from doing this on this question.*

(b) **'Men have more power than women in the family.' Using sociological material, give <u>one</u> argument against this view.**

The most successful responses tended to argue that *changes in women's financial status/increased presence in employment, has led to greater financial contribution in the family and therefore greater decision-making power.*

Unfortunately, a common error that candidates demonstrated was again, not explicitly addressing the issue of men's power, for example rise in 'new man'/men taking on more of the domestic labour. *This in itself does not demonstrate that men do not have more power than women in the family – men can still have more power than women whilst increasing their involvement in housework.* Some candidates incorrectly discussed the workplace rather than the family.

Note: *a small number of candidates wasted time by providing more than one argument against the claim, using up time that could be useful elsewhere.*

Section B

Question 4

Evaluate the view that increased life expectancy has had a positive impact on family members.

This was the least opted for question and typically less well answered than Question 5. Most candidates were able to demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of the debate. More sophisticated responses used comparative analysis of the positive and negative impacts of increased life expectancy, e.g. the *greater involvement of grandparents* versus the *greater burden and financial strain on families in taking care of the elderly relatives/grandparents.* A few candidates were able to back these points up with appropriate research evidence. In terms of analysis and evaluation, very few candidates made specific evaluation points against the view of the question and so were not able to access the top mark bands of AO3. Evaluation was largely by juxtaposition although most candidates were able to identify the other side of the debate at least.

Note: *candidates need to be more aware of the importance of assessment/evaluation (AO3) within essays, given its weighting in the mark scheme.*

Question 5

Evaluate the view that the nuclear family is no longer the dominant family form.

This was by far the more popular option. Common points made by candidates in support of the debate included the *increase in diversity of family structures, impact of secularisation, impact of more negotiated gender roles, independence of women and state policies.* Research evidence used often referred to feminist and postmodern views as well as the work of Rapoport and Rapoport. Common points against focused on the continued *significance and popularity of the nuclear family in society* (e.g. Chester) as well as how *it continues to form the basis of other family types (functionalism).*

Unfortunately, some candidates that did not understand the question, or misinterpreted the significance of 'dominant family form' and gave responses which did not answer the question. Some candidates discussed how functionalists believe the nuclear family performs important functions, comparing to Marxist and feminist views of the role of family, or how it is the best type of family – neither of which address how the nuclear family is the most common/dominant.

Other weak responses gave one side of the discussion, tending to support the view that the nuclear family is no longer the dominant family form and did not provide the counter argument.

Note: *candidates need to be more aware of the importance of assessment/evaluation (AO3) within essays, given its weighting in the mark scheme.*

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/31
Education

Key messages

- High scoring answers made good use of relevant sociological material and demonstrated their knowledge of sociological concepts and studies.
- Good answers considered arguments for and against a view and developed evaluation and analysis.
- Use of assertion rather than sociological arguments was a feature of many low scoring answers.

General comments

Many candidates showed knowledge of a good range of theoretical ideas, concepts and research studies and were able to apply these to the questions asked. However, in some cases questions were either misread or candidates didn't pay careful enough attention to their wording. Candidates occasionally appeared to be answering a question that was not asked. Candidates need to be well prepared across the full range of the syllabus. They should also be encouraged to carefully read the instructions in questions and apply knowledge in answering them. 'Describe how...', 'Explain two reasons why...' 'Give two arguments against...' 'Evaluate the view…' mean that marks are given for responding to those command words and not something else. Candidates should especially note that 'evaluation' does not just mean outlining alternative views, but can also involve weighing up a view in terms of its logic, the research it is based on, the times and places or groups to which it might or might not be applicable and the assumptions made.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Describe two ways education can contribute to a country's economy.

Most candidates could identify at least one example of how education can contribute to a country's economy. The most common responses were references to knowledge and skills, role allocation or aspects of the hidden curriculum. A significant number of candidates did not score full marks as they did not adequately describe how the example contributed to the country's economy.

Question 2

Explain two ways that ethnicity may influence a pupil's experience of school.

The stronger answers made very good use of appropriate concepts and research, including Gillborn and Youdell, Sewell, Connolly and Shane. However, a number of responses were not able to select relevant sociological material and therefore only scored 2 marks per point. Some candidates utilised appropriate concepts such as language codes, material deprivation, anti-school subcultures and cultural capital but did not make explicit links to ethnicity. The weakest responses opted for bullying or 'being treated differently' without development.

Question 3

'IQ tests are a good indicator of educational ability.' Using sociological material, give two arguments against this view.

The stronger candidates made good use of key concepts and studies, using, for example Gardner's issues with defining intelligence and Kleinberg questioning the validity of tests because of the impact of cultural

differences. Others limited their answers to points, such as the impact of health during a test, which though relevant, was not conducive to using much sociological material. Candidates who simply presented studies of social factors that affected general educational attainment could only gain Level 1.

Question 4

Evaluate the functionalist view that schools help to maintain the social system.

Many candidates were able to demonstrate a reasonable knowledge and understanding of the functionalist view that schools help to maintain the social system. A significant number of responses referred to the work of Durkheim, Parsons and Davis and Moore and referred to concepts such as social solidarity, meritocracy and value consensus. In terms of analysis and evaluation, very few candidates made specific evaluation of the points used to support the view of the question and so were not able to access the top mark band. Evaluation was largely limited to juxtaposition of Marxist views, often using Althusser and Bowles and Gintis, and to a lesser extent Bourdieu and Willis. The use of more recent perspectives, such as Giroux or Usher and Edwards was rare.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/32
Education

Key messages

- High scoring answers made good use of relevant sociological material and demonstrated their knowledge of sociological concepts and studies.
- Good answers considered arguments for and against a view and developed evaluation and analysis.
- Use of assertion rather than sociological arguments was a feature of many low scoring answers.

General comments

Many candidates showed knowledge of a good range of theoretical ideas, concepts and research studies, and could apply these to the questions asked. In some cases questions were either misread or candidates didn't pay careful enough attention to their wording. Candidates occasionally appeared to be answering a question that was not asked. Candidates need to be well prepared across the full range of the syllabus. They should also be encouraged to carefully read the instructions in questions and apply knowledge in answering them. 'Describe how...', 'Explain two reasons why...' 'Give two arguments against...' 'Evaluate the view…' mean that marks are given for responding to those command words and not something else. Candidates should especially note that 'evaluation' does not just mean outlining alternative views, but can also involve weighing up a view in terms of its logic, the research it is based on, the times and places or groups to which it might or might not be applicable and the assumptions made.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Describe two examples of how the hidden curriculum can reinforce gender stereotypes.

Most candidates could identify at least one example of how the hidden curriculum can reinforce gender stereotypes. The most common responses were references to subject choice, pupil-teacher interaction, and textbooks. If candidates only gave examples of the hidden curriculum in general, rather than being applied to gender stereotypes, they did not gain marks. A significant number of candidates did not score full marks as they did not adequately describe how the example reinforced gender stereotypes. For example, many candidates merely stated that the example given reinforced gender stereotypes, without development.

Question 2

Explain two ways education systems can serve the interests of the rich and powerful.

Most candidates were able to identify two ways in which education systems can serve the interests of the rich and powerful. The most common points were in relation to providing a passive workforce, socialising into capitalist values and encouraging the working class to see failure as their own fault. Most candidates used the work of Althusser (ISA) and Bowles and Gintis (correspondence principle). Many also referred to the work of Bourdieu (cultural reproduction and cultural capital), but this was less successfully done. However, a significant number of responses were not able to select the relevant sociological material required to move up the mark band and therefore only scored 2 marks per point. A small number of candidates wrote accounts of the deficiencies of the working class rather than answering the question set.

Question 3

'The education system maintains the existing social order.' Using sociological material, give two arguments against this view.

More successful answers explored how increased social mobility or policies promoting more gender, ethnic or class equality challenged the existing social order. Other responses showed how it was challenged by the existence of pupil subcultures (e.g., Willis) or other expressions of deviance, resistance, or agency. Weaker responses gave a long account of how the education system does maintain the existing social order and so did not focus on the question. Some gave a general functionalist view of the role of education or accounts of inequality, often from a Marxist or feminist perspective, without applying these to how it did not maintain the existing social order. Often the term social order was just included by candidates in the final sentence of their answer and so responses did not get out of Level 1. A number of candidates misinterpreted the meaning of 'social order' as referring to a 'fair system' or similar and therefore, whilst they attempted to engage with the question, they could not gain more than 2 marks per argument.

Question 4

Evaluate the view that ethnicity is the most important influence on educational attainment.

Most candidates were able to demonstrate a reasonable knowledge and understanding of the view that ethnicity is the most important influence on educational attainment. A significant number of responses referred to the work of Mirza, Coard, Sewell, Archer and Francis and Basit and referred to concepts such as the ethnocentric curriculum, institutional racism and subcultures. A common error was that candidates failed to differentiate between different ethnic minority groups. For example, they wrongly asserted that ethnic minorities all suffer from material deprivation. In terms of interpretation and application, a common issue was that candidates gave descriptive accounts of studies without applying these to how they influenced educational achievement.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, few candidates made specific evaluation points on the evidence used to support the view of the question and so were not able to access the top mark band. Evaluation was largely limited to juxtaposition of studies of class and gender influencing attainment. The most common specific evaluation point was on how students from an ethnic minority background could reject teacher labels, often using the work of Fuller. Very few candidates were able to identify links between internal and external factors. Often candidates failed to recognise that factors used in the 'against' argument, such as language codes (Bernstein) or cultural and material deprivation, could be applied to why certain ethnic minority groups underachieved. More sophisticated responses highlighted the interplay between ethnicity, class and gender and referred to intersectionality, particularly in their conclusion.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/33
Education

Key messages

- High scoring answers made good use of relevant sociological material and demonstrated their knowledge of sociological concepts and studies.
- Good answers considered arguments for and against a view and developed evaluation and analysis.
- Use of assertion rather than sociological arguments was a feature of many low scoring answers.

General comments

Many candidates showed knowledge of a good range of theoretical ideas, concepts and research studies and were able to apply these to the questions asked. However, in some cases questions were either misread or candidates didn't pay careful enough attention to their wording. Candidates occasionally appeared to be answering a question that was not asked. Candidates need to be well prepared across the full range of the syllabus. They should also be encouraged to carefully read the instructions in questions and apply knowledge in answering them. 'Describe how...', 'Explain two reasons why...' 'Give two arguments against...' 'Evaluate the view…' mean that marks are given for responding to those command words and not something else. Candidates should especially note that 'evaluation' does not just mean outlining alternative views but can also involve weighing up a view in terms of its logic, the research it is based on, the times and places or groups to which it might or might not be applicable and the assumptions made.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Describe two examples of how cultural capital can influence educational attainment.

Most candidates could identify one or two clear points, with middle class habitus, the elaborated code and examples of cultural experiences being amongst the most common. Some candidates did not fully understand the concept of cultural capital, referring either to economic capital, such as fees for private schools, or changed the question to discuss material or cultural deprivation or parental attitude. Others missed the second mark because they did not adequately explain how the cultural capital identified influenced educational attainment.

Question 2

Explain two reasons why intelligence tests may not accurately measure educational ability.

There were many strong responses which made use of appropriate concepts and research on intelligence testing, especially showing awareness of class or ethnic bias in the construction of tests or of the problems in matching definitions of intelligence to the range of educational ability. Some candidates missed the focus of the question by explaining how social factors influence educational attainment in general. Others only gained up to 2 marks for each point because a relevant explanation was not backed up by any sociological material.

Question 3

'Choice and competition between schools leads to greater equality in educational attainment.' Using sociological material, give two arguments against this view.

Many demonstrated good knowledge of issues surrounding the ERA and marketisation of education. The ways in which material or cultural differences can affect the whether pupils can take advantage of choices were often well explained. There were also some excellent answers analysing the implications of schools'

selection and streaming procedures in response to the pressures of league tables. Some illustrated their answers with examples drawn from their own culture or other cultures, for example USA, China and Cuba. Some weaker responses found it difficult to come up with two arguments against the view set out in the question and the candidates often reverted to prepared responses on other aspects of inequality of opportunity.

Question 4

Evaluate the view that schools successfully impose ideological control on pupils.

There were some very strong answers showing a clear understanding of the Marxist perspective, building on concepts from Althusser, Bowles and Gintis and Bourdieu. The strongest responses introduced feminist analysis of patriarchal control and a few made the link to ethnocentricity in the curriculum. The most sophisticated responses were explicitly evaluative, demonstrating resistance in schools and policy changes as well as exploring how far values imposed could also be based either on consensus or critical alternatives. Weaker responses relied on a simple juxtaposition of Marxist and functionalist approaches and did not show strong analytical or evaluative skills. Many candidates have some familiarity with classic studies from the 1970's but are less aware of more up to date research.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/41
Globalisation, Media, Religion

Key messages

- Good answers combined detailed sociological knowledge with sustained analysis and evaluation.
- More candidates are making effective use of references to concepts and theories.
- Higher marks could be gained by making more use of references to relevant sociological studies.
- Some candidates attempted to answer the questions without use of sociological material.
- Some answers lacked focus on the wording of the question.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts was good, with many candidates making effective use of relevant sociological material to provide well-informed and suitably analytical responses. There were some high-quality answers that combined detailed knowledge and understanding with sustained evaluation of the issues raised by the question. References to relevant concepts and research studies featured heavily in higher scoring responses. Some answers demonstrated reasonable subject knowledge, but lacked analysis and evaluation. Lower scoring responses lacked references to appropriate sociological material, relying instead on assertion and general knowledge. Some answers were too short to provide sufficient demonstration of the skills required to trigger the higher mark bands. More use of sociological concepts and theories to support key arguments would be one way in which candidates could gain higher marks.

Most candidates answered two questions in the time available and there were no rubric errors. A few candidates answered more than two questions, though they appeared to derive no benefit from this strategy in terms of marks achieved. The questions from the sections on Religion and Media proved most popular, with those on Globalisation less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

'Globalisation has a positive impact on developing societies.' Evaluate this view.

High quality responses to this question demonstrated a good understanding of what is meant by globalisation and its impact on developing societies. Good answers often considered different aspects of globalisation – cultural, social, economic, environmental – as the basis for developing a sustained evaluation of the view expressed in the question. Some candidates also distinguished between developing societies that have benefitted from globalisation and those that have not benefitted. Lower scoring answers were often characterised by a few simple points about the economic benefits of globalisation.

Question 2

'Governments are unable to prevent the growth of global crime.' Evaluate this view.

There were a few high scoring responses to this question that combined references to relevant concepts and theories with well-informed insights into the difficulty of policing global crime. Good answers offered an accurate account of how global crime differs from local or national crime, linking this to an explanation of why governments may struggle to respond effectively to criminal activity that reaches across national borders. Some candidates made effective use of different examples of global crime to support their analysis.

Evidence about where national governments have been successful in combatting global crime was also cited in some of the best answers. Lower scoring responses were often confined to observations about the nature of global crime, with few links to the issue of whether governments have the means to combat this form of criminality effectively.

Section B

Question 3

'Media owners control the content of the media.' Evaluate this view.

Good answers to this question demonstrated a clear understanding of arguments supporting the view that media owners control the content of the media. High quality responses also considered the possible limitations in these arguments and examined the scope for other agents and agencies to influence media content. Some candidates linked their analysis to the Marxist and pluralist theories of the media. Likewise, a distinction was often drawn between the new media, which is seen to be less susceptible to control by media owners, and the traditional media. There were a few low-scoring responses that lacked references to sociological material and offered only personal opinion about who controls media content.

Question 4

'The growth of the new media has weakened the power of governments.' Evaluate this view.

High scoring responses to this question demonstrated a good understanding of how the growth of the new media may have weakened the power of governments. Many candidates used examples from different countries to illustrate how new media can be used to confront and subvert existing power structures. Good responses also examined how far the new media has weakened the power of governments. The distinction between digital optimists and digital pessimists provided an appropriate theoretical background in many answers and similar links were also made to the Marxist versus pluralist debates about media control, lower scoring responses lacked references to relevant concepts and theory, and often accepted uncritically the view that the new media has weakened the power of governments.

Section C

Question 5

'Religion is a force for social change.' Evaluate this view.

Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to contrast theories which view religion as a force for social change with those that see religion as a conservative influence in society. Good answers often illustrated the idea that religion is a force for social change by drawing on examples of religion being used to challenge the status quo and oppose the dominant value system in society. Likewise, theoretical support for the idea that religion is a force for social change was often taken from the work of Weber. Functionalist, Marxist, and feminist theories of religion were used in critically assessing the view that religion is a force for social change. There were some lower scoring answers that outlined different theories of religion without linking the material well to the debate about religion and social change.

Question 6

'People are less religious today than in the past.' Evaluate this view.

This question provided an opportunity for candidates to discuss the secularisation thesis. High quality responses demonstrated a detailed understanding of the view that people are less religious today than in the past. This was supported by reference to relevant concepts, theories, and study evidence. Good answers often also considered the difficulties in defining and measuring religiosity in order to draw comparisons between today and the past. Some candidates made good use of distinctions between different religions and/or cultures to warn against over-generalising about trends in religiosity. Lower scoring answers were often confined to a narrow range of points about religious belief today, with only limited reference to recognisable sociological content.

SOCIOLOGY

Key messages

- Good answers used a range of relevant sociological material to examine the case for and against the view expressed in the question.
- While some candidates demonstrated good evaluation skills, others provided little coverage of this assessment objective.
- Higher marks could be gained by making more use of references to relevant sociological concepts and theories.
- More use could be made of research evidence to support key points.
- Some answers were too short and demonstrated little sociological knowledge.

General comments

There were some high-quality answers that combined detailed knowledge and understanding with insightful analysis and evaluation. Use of sociological concepts and theories to support the evaluation was a feature of responses that achieved high marks. Some answers demonstrated reasonable subject knowledge, but offered only limited evaluation. Lower scoring responses lacked references to appropriate sociological material, relying instead on assertion and general knowledge. Some answers addressed the general topic of the question, but neglected the issues rather by the specific wording. More use of evidence, from sociological studies and other appropriate sources, would be one way in which candidates could gain higher marks.

Most candidates answered two questions in the time available and there were no rubric errors. A few candidates answered more than two questions, though they appeared to derive no benefit from this strategy in terms of marks achieved. The questions from the sections on Religion and Media proved most popular, with those on Globalisation less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

'Global inequality is caused by capitalist exploitation of developing countries.' Evaluate this view

High quality responses to this question demonstrated a good understanding of the possible causes of global inequality. Links between capitalist exploitation and global inequality were often explored through references to dependency theory and/or the world systems perspective. Good answers also provided a sustained evaluation of the idea that global inequality is the result of capitalist exploitation of developing countries. In many cases, the evaluation drew on insights from modernisation theory. There were some weaker responses that discussed global inequality in general terms, without reference to Marxists ideas about the capitalist exploitation of developing countries.

Question 2

'Global migration has more positive than negative consequences for both migrants and host countries.' Evaluate this view.

There were some strong responses to this question that combined references to relevant concepts and theories with well sourced evidence about the consequences of global migration. Good answers were

balanced in considering consequences for both migrants and host countries. Many of the best answers considered consequences across a range of relevant variables, including economic, social, cultural, and environmental. Some answers outlined consequences in a list-like way, with no links to concepts, theories, and research findings. Weaker responses offered only a few simple points about how those who migrate benefit from global migration.

Section B

Question 3

'The media has a significant influence on how people behave.' Evaluate this view.

Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to discuss contrasting models of media effects. The hypodermic-syringe model, in particular, was used in explaining the view expressed in the question. Some candidates also made good use of research evidence about the influence of the media on particular forms of behaviour, such as violence and moral panics. Good responses included a sustained evaluation of the view that the media has a significant influence on behaviour. The pluralist perspective was often cited in opposing the view expressed in the question, and this was often supported with links to the uses and gratification model. Weaker responses that lacked references to sociological material and offered only personal opinion about the influence of the media instead.

Question 4

'The media still portrays women in traditional gender roles.' Evaluate this view.

Strong responses to this question demonstrated a good understanding of sociological accounts of how women are presented in the media. This was complemented by a detailed assessment of whether the media still portrays women in traditional gender roles. Good answers often considered whether portrayals of women may vary between different types of media. The distinction between the traditional and the new media often featured in that regard. Weaker responses lacked references to study evidence and accepted uncritically that the media still portrays women in traditional gender roles.

Section C

Question 5

'Religion encourages people to accept oppression.' Evaluate this view.

Many candidates used references to Marxist and feminist theories to illustrate possible links between religion and oppression. Strong responses also included a critical assessment of the idea that religion encourages people to accept oppression. Examples of where religion has acted as a liberating force were cited in some answers. Useful distinctions were also made between religions that support the status quo and those that challenge the existing social order and seek change. There were some weaker responses that outlined different theories of religion without linking the material well to the debate about whether religion encourages people to accept oppression.

Question 6

'Religious fundamentalism is best explained as a response to secularisation.' Evaluate this view.

Strong responses to this question demonstrated a detailed understanding of the possible links between secularisation and the existence of religious fundamentalism. Good answers also considered the limitations in explaining fundamentalism in this way and offered a sustained evaluation of the view expressed in the question. Examples of fundamentalist religious groups often featured in well informed responses and, in some cases, this was supported by references to relevant sociological studies. There were a lot of responses that discussed the secularisation thesis in general rather than examining links with the existence of religious fundamentalism specifically. These answers were rather too tangential to gain high marks.

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Globalisation, Media, Religion

Key messages

- Good answers combined detailed sociological knowledge with sustained analysis and evaluation.
- More candidates are making effective use of references to relevant research studies.
- Higher marks could be gained by making more use of concepts and theories to support key points.
- A few answers lacked references to relevant sociological material.
- Some candidates discussed the general topic underpinning the question rather than focusing on the specific wording.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts remains high and many candidates succeeded in demonstrating the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Some responses are still too descriptive and rely on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any related evaluation. High scoring answers often included detailed references to relevant concepts and theories. Some candidates also made good use of evidence from research studies to support key arguments and analysis. Lower scoring responses lacked references to appropriate sociological material, relying instead on assertion and general knowledge. Some answers were too short to provide sufficient demonstration of the skills required to trigger the higher mark bands. Most candidates answered two questions in the time available and there were no rubric errors. A few candidates answered more than two questions, though they appeared to derive no benefit from this strategy in terms of marks achieved. The questions from the sections on Religion and Media proved most popular, with those on Globalisation less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

'Only rich people benefit from global migration.' Evaluate this view.

Strong responses to this question demonstrated a good understanding of the arguments supporting the view that only the rich benefit from global migration. Marxist theory often featured in this part of the answer. Good responses also considered other groups who might benefit from global migration, such as migrants and their families, the host community, and governments. Some candidates made good use of modernisation theory to challenge the idea that only the rich benefit from migration. There were some weaker answers that discussed the experiences of migrants without considering whether or not it is only the rich who benefit from global migration.

Question 2

'Transnational organisations have been successful in improving life chances in developing countries.' Evaluate this view.

Good answers to this question recognised that transnational organisations are agencies that work with less economically developed countries to achieve humanitarian aims such as the alleviation of poverty and improvement of educational and health facilities. Examples of transnational organisations that were discussed by candidates included: alliances of nation-states such as the United Nations, the EU, and the G7; transnational trade organisations such as the WTO, the World Bank, and the IMF; and charities such as

Oxfam, Save the Children, and World Vision. High quality responses identified several respects in which it can be argued that transnational organisations have helped to improve life chances in developing countries. These arguments were then evaluated through considering alternative perspectives, such as the Marxist view that transnational organisations are detrimental to development and help to maintain capitalist exploitation of the less economically developed countries. Low scoring answers were often confined to a description of the types of aid provided by transnational organisations, with little or no analysis of the effectiveness of that aid.

Section B

Question 3

'Postmodernists are right that social reality today is shaped by the media.' Evaluate this view.

Good responses to this question demonstrated a detailed understanding of the postmodernist view that we are currently living in a world where engagement with the media increasingly shapes our lifestyle choices and sense of reality. Concepts that featured in well-informed answers included hyperreality, social construction, media representations, hyper-connectivity, simulations, simulacra, and media consumption. Some candidates chose to support their accounts of the postmodernist view with links to other theories and/or models of media effects. Other answers made greater use of research evidence to evaluate the view that social reality is shaped by the media today. There were some weaker responses that showed little awareness of the postmodernist perspective and instead discussed the influence of the media in general terms.

Question 4

'Governments control the media.' Evaluate this view.

Strong responses to this question demonstrated a good understanding of the means through which governments may be able to control the media. Some candidates made a helpful distinction between authoritarian and democratic political regimes, often arguing that while authoritarian regimes exercise significant control over the media this is not the case with democratic regimes. Evaluation was provided by considering contrasting theories of who controls the media, with good use made of Marxist and pluralist theories in particular. Weaker responses lacked references to relevant concepts and theory, and often accepted uncritically the view that governments control the media.

Section C

Question 5

'Religion functions to bind people together in society.' Evaluate this view.

Most candidates recognised that this question provided an opportunity to consider the functionalist theory of religion and Emile Durkheim's work in particular. Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the arguments supporting the view that religion acts to bind people together in society. This was complemented by an evaluation of the functionalist theory that was often delivered by examining the contrasting view that religion may be a source of conflict in society. Marxist and feminist theory often featured in the evaluation. There were a few weaker responses that discussed the role of religion in general terms, with little or no reference to relevant sociological theory and concepts.

Question 6

'There is clear evidence that religion has lost its social significance.' Evaluate this view.

This question provided an opportunity for candidates to discuss the secularisation thesis. Strong responses demonstrated a detailed understanding of the view that religion has lost its social significance. This was supported by reference to relevant concepts, theories, and study evidence. Good answers often also considered the difficulties in defining and measuring religious belief and practice in order to determine whether religion has lost its social significance. Some candidates made good use of distinctions between different religions and/or cultures to argue that religion may have retained its social significance in some societies, but not in others. Weaker responses were often confined to a narrow range of points about religious belief today, with only limited reference to recognisable sociological content.