

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/11

Paper 11

## Key Messages

- **Sections A** and **B** are both worth 25 marks, candidates should be made aware of the need to allocate sufficient time for answering both sections of the paper.
- Candidates need to show that they have a clear understanding of sociological terms and concepts.
- Good essay answers include analysis and assessment of relevant sociological knowledge.
- Low-scoring answers often lack any sociological evidence.

## General Comments

This paper is a new paper introduced for the first time in the summer session this year. It covers a topic area previously part of Paper 3. It was pleasing to see that many candidates demonstrated a reasonable depth of sociological knowledge and understanding of the topic area and were able to respond effectively to the questions and offer an analysis of relevant issues in a coherent and logical manner. Less creditable were answers that addressed the broad subject of the question without responding directly to the analytical issues raised by the specific wording of the questions. Such answers tended to be rather descriptive and lacked a clear understanding of the subtleties of the questions set. Although marks were gained for this type of answer, there was often little to reward in terms of assessment and evaluation. Candidates in this category might benefit from more guidance and practice in composing tightly-structured, analytical responses to the questions that are set for this paper. Most candidates appeared to recognise the need to use appropriate textbook knowledge in responding to the questions. Answers that rely solely on general knowledge of the question topic and where there is no reference to relevant sociological studies, concepts, theories and data, invariably achieve very low marks. Centres are advised to ensure that candidates have access to the recommended Cambridge textbooks and to a selection of other relevant texts from the Cambridge recommended reading list for the subject.

As this is still a new paper, it is important that candidates are aware of the following in **Section A** of the paper: candidates should understand the need to spend an appropriate amount of time on each part of **Question 1** so that they achieve sufficient reward for each part they are answering. A number of candidates wrote very long answers for **1(b)** which may have limited the amount of time they were able to allocate to the essay-type responses required for answering **1(c)** and **1(d)**. Invariably this resulted in an overall low mark for the question. Similarly, a number of candidates spent a large proportion of their time in the examination writing very long answers to **1(c)** and **1(d)** which again affected the marks gained in their option question in **Section B**.

There were no rubric errors observed in **Section B** of the paper with candidates correctly selecting **one** out of the **two** option questions in this section of the paper. There were some very well-constructed and knowledgeable answers from candidates who had taken time to **plan** their response in advance. These candidates also made appropriate use of relevant sociological studies and concepts. A number of candidates did appear to offer a hurried or incomplete answer, occasionally in a listed format rather than an essay-type response. This perhaps indicated that they had not allocated an equal or sufficient amount of time for answering each section of the paper. Candidates in this category might benefit from additional guidance on how to use their time effectively in the examination (these comments also apply to answers to **1c** and **1d**).

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

The stimulus material accompanying this question provided clear, focused information that proved helpful in enabling the majority of candidates to direct their attention to what was being asked and to offer an appropriate, focused response to each part of the question. Where there was evidence of limited sociological knowledge and understanding, candidates were still able to use the stimulus phrases to offer some form of response and to gain some reward.

- (a) There were many clear and accurate explanations offered and candidates who were unsure invariably attempted an improvised definition which gained them some reward.
- (b) Responses to this question were very variable. Many candidates understood that lone-parent families might be seen as creating problems for society and were able to offer two examples of possible problems supported by relevant theory. Some candidates were able only to offer one example and there was also a number of candidates who while understanding what was being asked offered only assertive, conjectural responses which could only gain limited reward.
- (c) The best responses to this question were from candidates who remained focused on what was asked in the question and, more specifically, the command words '**how**' and '**may**' in the question. These responses covered a range of factors considered to be an influence on family forms such as migration patterns and new forms of multi-generational families and also the variety of family forms found in different ethnic groups and different societies. The use of relevant theory such as that of Ballard and Barrow and the variety of family forms found in Britain and other societies also appeared in a number of responses. However, the term **ethnicity** did appear to confuse many candidates and some incorrectly interpreted how this might influence **family form** by only discussing the concept of patriarchy and the way in which a family might function rather than focusing on, and describing, a variety of family forms linked to different ethnic groups.

A number of candidates did write very long answers to this part of **Question 1** which may have compromised their overall mark for **Question 1**. This, in turn, occasionally affected their response in their option question in the second part of the paper, clearly showing that they had not allocated sufficient time for an appropriate response for **Section B**.

- (d) Overall, the question provided a challenge, and there were some very varied responses. There were some excellent responses that were very full and analytical, demonstrating in-depth knowledge and understanding of issues affecting diversity in the family and family life in modern industrial societies. These candidates invariably referred to the work of the Rapoport, developing their responses to include an appropriate argument either endorsing, or occasionally refuting, any overall increase in diversity. Some responses provided only a thin, descriptive overview of different forms of family structures and struggled to offer any clear assessment of the nature and level of change, or to make any reference to modern industrial societies. A number of candidates made use of overly historical material, or offered stereotypical views about some family types. These responses showed only a limited amount of sociological understanding and a limited assessment of the proposal as set out in the question.

### **Section B**

Candidates were required to answer *either* **Question 2** or **Question 3** in this section of the paper. These essay-type questions were equally popular with candidates and appeared to provide a reasonable level of challenge. The questions were usually answered well by candidates who had allocated time to planning their response prior to answering the question. However, a number of candidates did appear to offer a rather hurried or list-like answer in this section of the paper. This, perhaps, indicated that they had not left sufficient time to respond effectively to what was being asked in their selected option question. Candidates should be made aware of the need to allocate an appropriate amount of time to answering their selected option question in **Section B**, noting that the question carries 50% of the total marks for this paper.

## Question 2

This question was selected by many candidates and provided them with a reasonable level of challenge. The most successful candidates were able to process the demands of the question effectively, explaining aspects of family life and function that included an assessment of the role of the family in supporting the state. There were a number of very pleasing responses that offered some analysis of the ways in which the state may attempt to influence family life and some that included a postmodern perspective, arguing that the breaking down of traditional values in some societies means a changing relationship between families and the state. A number of candidates offered very full and analytical answers which showed an in-depth knowledge and understanding of related concepts and cross-cultural issues such as patriarchy, ideological conditioning, consensus, economic determinism and cultural defence and also included examples from different societies. Invariably, the assessment was well supported by relevant theory. Candidates with limited knowledge and understanding often offered only descriptive accounts of what the family did in 'society' as well as the functions of 'individual family members' without any clear reference to the 'state'. These candidates gained some reward and particularly where there was some use of relevant supporting theory. Candidates offering only descriptive accounts of different types of family, or an overly historical account of family life, gained only limited reward.

## Question 3

This question was also selected by many candidates and provided an opportunity for them to offer a balanced review of gender roles and changes within the family. The most successful candidates were able to interpret the question accurately and to provide a solid account of equality, inequality and changing status across different societies and to make cross-cultural comparisons using relevant theory and examples taken from their own and other societies. It was pleasing to see that many of these answers included a well-informed and sustained assessment of the ways in which gender equality/ inequality can be interpreted. Also pleasing was the fact that the majority of candidates made use of some relevant sociological theory, studies or concepts, in responding to the question. Candidates whose answers showed a limited understanding of what was asked in the question often provided assertive and unsupported responses, or a limited outline of what women's lives may have been like in the past compared with today. This affected the overall strength of any argument and limited any analysis or assessment of relevant issues relating to changes in gender inequality in the home.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/12

Paper 12

## Key Messages

**Sections A and B** are both worth 25 marks, candidates should be made aware of the need to allocate sufficient time for answering both sections of the paper.

Candidates need to show that they have a clear understanding of sociological terms and concepts.

Good essay answers include analysis and assessment of relevant sociological knowledge.

Low-scoring answers often lack any sociological evidence.

## General Comments

This paper is a new paper introduced for the first time in the summer session this year. It covers a topic area previously part of paper 9699/32. Many candidates demonstrated a reasonable depth of sociological knowledge and understanding of the topic area and were able to respond effectively to the questions and to offer an analysis of relevant issues in a coherent and logical manner. Less creditable were answers that addressed the broad subject of the question without responding directly to the analytical issues raised by the specific wording of the questions. Such answers tended to be rather descriptive and lacked a clear understanding of the subtleties of the question set. Marks are gained for this type of answer, but there is often little to reward in terms of assessment and evaluation. Candidates in this category might benefit from more guidance and practice in composing tightly-structured, analytical responses to the questions that are set for this paper. There were very few really poor answers and most candidates appeared to recognise the need to use appropriate textbook knowledge in responding to the questions. Answers that rely solely on general knowledge of the question topic, where there are no references to relevant sociological studies, concepts, theories and data, invariably achieve very low marks. Centres are advised to ensure that candidates have access to the recommended Cambridge textbooks and to a selection of other relevant texts from the Cambridge recommended reading list for the subject.

As this is still a new paper, it is important that candidates are aware of the following in **Section A** of the paper: candidates should understand the need to spend an appropriate amount of time on each part of **Question 1** so that they achieve sufficient reward for each part they are answering. A number of candidates wrote very long answers for **1(b)** which may have limited the amount of time they were able to allocate to the essay-type responses required for answering **1(c)** and **1(d)**. This invariably resulted in an overall low mark for the question. Similarly, a number of candidates spent a large proportion of their time in the examination writing very long answers to **1(c)** and **1(d)** which affected the marks gained in their option question in **Section B**.

There were no rubric errors observed in **Section B** of the paper with candidates correctly selecting **one** out of the **two** option questions in this section of the paper. There were some very well-constructed and knowledgeable answers from candidates who had taken time to **plan** their response in advance. These candidates also made appropriate use of relevant sociological studies and concepts. A number of candidates did appear to offer a hurried or incomplete answer, occasionally in a listed format rather than an essay-type response. This perhaps indicated that they had not allocated an equal or sufficient amount of time for answering each section of the paper. Candidates in this category might benefit from additional guidance on how to use their time effectively in the examination (these comments also apply to answers to **1(c)** and **1(d)**).

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Section A

#### Question 1

The stimulus material accompanying this question provided clear, focused information that proved helpful in enabling the majority of candidates to direct their attention to what was being asked and to offer an appropriate, focused response to each part of the question. Where there was evidence of limited sociological knowledge and understanding, candidates were still able to use the stimulus phrases to offer some form of response and to gain some reward.

- (a) There were many clear and accurate definitions offered, but the term *dual burden* was not fully understood by a few candidates who, rather than offering an appropriate definition, described only one aspect of the dual burden or named two types of domestic task completed as a 'burden'. Occasionally a candidate would confuse the term with *triple shift* but the majority of candidates, if they were unsure, did attempt an improvised definition which gained them some reward.
- (b) Responses to this question were very variable. The best answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the term *new man* and gave two full and accurate descriptions of characteristics identified with those found in the *new man*. These responses were developed to explain how this affected aspects of family life and some also explored concepts and outcomes such as the feminisation of masculinity. A number of candidates showed that they did not have a firm grasp of the concept and offered inappropriate examples, such as women controlling the finances whilst the men looked after the children, or gave descriptions of single parent 'mother-headed' households or same-sex male households.
- (c) The best responses to this question were from candidates who remained focused on what was asked in the question and developed their response to cover the ways in which the family may be considered to be both a dangerous and a stressful place for some family members. These candidates were able to explore the 'might be' in the question effectively and make appropriate use of relevant supporting theory. It was very pleasing to see that a number of candidates, who appeared to have a really good understanding of the topic, included an analysis of cross-cultural issues and legal changes making comparisons as to who might be considered vulnerable in different families in different societies. Some candidates referred to the work of Leach, Laing and Cooper indicating how the family could become an inward-looking unit, causing stress, the 'dark side' of the family life. Others referred to a variety of feminist and/or Marxist sociologists explaining how the family could be dangerous or stressful. The work of Dobash and Dobash, Benston and Feeley were in evidence here. A few candidates also considered how family life could be harmful for the elderly as well as for children and wives. Only a few candidates offered very limited responses that invariably focused on violence against wives by 'brutal' husbands or included little relevant supporting theory. These candidates were however able to gain some reward for their efforts. A number of candidates did offer rather lengthy answers that showed their enthusiasm for the topic but affected the marks they could gain in **Section B** of the paper because of the time they had spent.
- (d) Overall, the question provided a challenge for many candidates and there were some very varied responses. The best responses were from candidates who offered very full and analytical answers and demonstrated an in-depth knowledge and understanding of cross-cultural issues, including in their answers examples of family life in and across different societies. These candidates also made use of relevant sociological concepts, theories and empirical studies and offered a balanced argument that explored the continuation of patriarchy and some evidence of change. Good use was made of a range of feminist and Marxist theory and studies with contrasting evidence from functionalist theory (Parsons and Young and Wilmott). More detailed responses considered issues such as power and decision-making and made reference to the work of Edgell, Pahl and Geshuny and contrasted this with the work of Somerville. Candidates who gained limited reward often provided answers that included only thin, descriptive overviews of equality in marriage or the family. Such answers frequently made use of overly historical material and offered stereotypical views about how men continue to be the leaders of families. Consequently these responses did not include any valid analysis or assessment of the proposal set out in the question. As previously in **1(c)**, many candidates did offer a very lengthy response to this part of **Question 1** which, in some instances, meant there was little time to offer a full response in **Section B** of the paper, but showed their enthusiasm for the topic.

## **Section B**

Candidates were required to answer *either* **Question 2** or **Question 3** in this section of the paper. These essay-type questions appeared to provide candidates with a reasonable level of challenge, although **Question 2** was selected more often than **Question 3**. The questions were usually answered well by candidates who had allocated some time to planning their response prior to answering the question. However, a number of candidates did appear to offer a rather hurried or list-like answer in this section of the paper. This, perhaps, indicated that they had not left sufficient time to respond effectively to what was being asked in their selected option question. Candidates should be made aware of the need to allocate an appropriate amount of time to answering their option question in Section B, noting that the option question carries 50% of the total marks for this paper.

### **Question 2**

This question was selected by many candidates and provided them with a reasonable level of challenge. There were some excellent responses from candidates who were able to process the demands of the question effectively and to link descriptions of family life and structure with the effects of industrialisation and identify examples of any changes that have taken place in modern industrial and other developing societies. The best answers gave clear descriptions of contrasting sociological theories and concepts and included an analysis of these competing perspectives with some reference to empirical data and research. A feature of these more developed responses was the use made of studies highlighting diversity of family structure in modern industrial societies.

There were a number of candidates who misinterpreted the question. These candidates invariably concentrated on discussing the impact that industrialisation may or may not have had upon the *functions* of the family. Occasionally these responses were linked to family structure, but this usually included only a move from extended to nuclear family structures. There were also a number of candidates who offered a one-sided view, covering evidence of changes in family structure with little reference to any increase in similarity, as asked in the question. Candidates who had taken the time to plan before commencing their response invariably offered focused and well-constructed answers that gained appropriate reward.

### **Question 3**

The question was less popular and although often attempted by weaker candidates there were a number of candidates who did appear to have relevant knowledge and understanding of this topic area. Those candidates who demonstrated some depth of understanding were able to make excellent use of relevant sociological theory, studies and concepts and made reference to the work of Pilcher, Vincent, Aries and Phillipson. Arguments included issues such as demographic change and increased life-expectancy and the emergence of a fitter and healthier population. Some considered the economic power of the retired and the benefits it might bring to the young. Creditable responses also explored cross-cultural variations and offered examples from different countries and/or societies. There was also some use made of factors such as time and place and historical influence. Less creditable were responses that were assertive and poorly supported by theory, offering only negative aspects of aging and/or aging populations and, therefore, a limited and often superficial response to the question asked. There were a few candidates who appeared to misinterpret the question and argue from a very superficial or personal perspective.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/13

Paper 13

## Key Messages

**Sections A** and **B** are both worth 25 marks, candidates should be made aware of the need to allocate sufficient time for answering both sections of the paper.

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Good essay answers include analysis and assessment of relevant sociological knowledge.

Low-scoring answers often lack any sociological evidence.

## General Comments

This paper is a new paper introduced for the first time in the summer session this year. It covers a topic area previously part of paper 9699/33. It was pleasing to see that many candidates demonstrated a reasonable depth of sociological knowledge and understanding of the topic area and were able to respond effectively to the questions and offer an analysis of relevant issues in a coherent and logical manner. Less creditable were answers that addressed the broad subject of the question without responding directly to the analytical issues raised by the specific wording of the questions. Such answers tended to be rather descriptive and lacked a clear understanding of the subtleties of the questions set. Although marks were gained for this type of answer, there was often little to reward in terms of assessment and evaluation. Candidates in this category might benefit from more guidance and practice in composing tightly-structured, analytical responses to the questions that are set for this paper. Answers that rely solely on general knowledge of the question topic and where there is no reference to relevant sociological studies, concepts, theories and data, invariably achieve very low marks. Centres are advised to ensure that candidates have access to the recommended Cambridge textbooks and to a selection of other relevant texts from the Cambridge recommended reading list for the subject.

As this is still a new paper, it is important that candidates are aware of the following in **Section A** of the paper: candidates should understand the need to spend an appropriate amount of time on each part of **Question 1** so that they achieve sufficient reward for each part they are answering. A number of candidates wrote very long answers for **1(b)** which may have limited the amount of time they were able to allocate to the essay-type responses required for answering **1(c)** and **1(d)**. Invariably this resulted in an overall low mark for the question. Similarly, a number of candidates spent a large proportion of their time in the examination writing very long answers to **1(c)** and **1(d)** which again affected the marks gained in their option question in **Section B**.

There were no rubric errors observed in **Section B** of the paper with candidates correctly selecting **one** out of the **two** option questions in this section of the paper. There were some very well-constructed and knowledgeable answers from candidates who had taken time to **plan** their response in advance. These candidates also made appropriate use of relevant sociological studies and concepts. A number of candidates did appear to offer a hurried or incomplete answer, occasionally in a listed format rather than an essay-type response. This perhaps indicated that they had not allocated an equal or sufficient amount of time for answering each section of the paper. Candidates in this category might benefit from additional guidance on how to use their time effectively in the examination (these comments also apply to answers to **1c** and **1d**).

## **Comments on Specific Questions**

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

The stimulus material accompanying this question provided clear, focused information that proved helpful in enabling the majority of candidates to direct their attention to what was being asked and to offer an appropriate, focused response to each part of the question. Where there was evidence of limited sociological knowledge and understanding, candidates were still able to use the stimulus phrases to offer some form of response and to gain some reward.

- (a) There were many clear and accurate explanations offered and candidates who were unsure invariably attempted an improvised definition which gained them some reward.
- (b) Responses to this question were very variable. Many candidates understood that lone-parent families might be seen as creating problems for society and were able to offer two examples of possible problems supported by relevant theory. Some candidates were able only to offer one example and there was also a number of candidates who while understanding what was being asked offered only assertive, conjectural responses which could only gain limited reward.
- (c) The best responses to this question were from candidates who remained focused on what was asked in the question and, more specifically, the command words '**how**' and '**may**' in the question. These responses covered a range of factors considered to be an influence on family forms such as migration patterns and new forms of multi-generational families and also the variety of family forms found in different ethnic groups and different societies. The use of relevant theory such as that of Ballard and Barrow and the variety of family forms found in Britain and other societies also appeared in a number of responses. However, the term **ethnicity** did appear to confuse many candidates and some incorrectly interpreted how this might influence **family form** by only discussing the concept of patriarchy and the way in which a family might function rather than focusing on, and describing, a variety of family forms linked to different ethnic groups.

A number of candidates did write very long answers to this part of **Question 1** which may have compromised their overall mark for **Question 1**. This, in turn, occasionally affected their response in their option question in the second part of the paper, clearly showing that they had not allocated sufficient time for an appropriate response for **Section B**.

- (d) Overall, the question provided a challenge, and there were some very varied responses. There were some excellent responses that were very full and analytical, demonstrating in-depth knowledge and understanding of issues affecting diversity in the family and family life in modern industrial societies. These candidates invariably referred to the work of Rapoport and Rapoport, developing their responses to include an appropriate argument either endorsing, or occasionally refuting, any overall increase in diversity. Some responses provided only a thin, descriptive overview of different forms of family structures and struggled to offer any clear assessment of the nature and level of change, or to make any reference to modern industrial societies. A number of candidates made use of overly historical material, or offered stereotypical views about some family types. These responses showed only a limited amount of sociological understanding and a limited assessment of the proposal as set out in the question.

### **Section B**

Candidates were required to answer *either* **Question 2** or **Question 3** in this section of the paper. These essay-type questions were equally popular with candidates and appeared to provide a reasonable level of challenge. The questions were usually answered well by candidates who had allocated time to planning their response prior to answering the question. However, a number of candidates did appear to offer a rather hurried or list-like answer in this section of the paper. This, perhaps, indicated that they had not left sufficient time to respond effectively to what was being asked in their selected option question. Candidates should be made aware of the need to allocate an appropriate amount of time to answering their selected option question in **Section B**, noting that the question carries 50% of the total marks for this paper.



## Question 2

This question was selected by many candidates and provided them with a reasonable level of challenge. The most successful candidates were able to process the demands of the question effectively, explaining aspects of family life and function that included an assessment of the role of the family in supporting the state. There were a number of very pleasing responses that offered some analysis of the ways in which the state may attempt to influence family life and some that included a postmodern perspective, arguing that the breaking down of traditional values in some societies means a changing relationship between families and the state. A number of candidates offered very full and analytical answers which showed an in-depth knowledge and understanding of related concepts and cross-cultural issues such as patriarchy, ideological conditioning, consensus, economic determinism and cultural defence and also included examples from different societies. Invariably, the assessment was well supported by relevant theory. Candidates with limited knowledge and understanding often offered only descriptive accounts of what the family did in 'society' as well as the functions of 'individual family members' without any clear reference to the 'state'. These candidates gained some reward and particularly where there was some use of relevant supporting theory. Candidates offering only descriptive accounts of different types of family, or an overly historical account of family life, gained only limited reward.

## Question 3

This question was also selected by many candidates and provided an opportunity for them to offer a balanced review of gender roles and changes within the family. The most successful candidates were able to interpret the question accurately and to provide a solid account of equality, inequality and changing status across different societies and to make cross-cultural comparisons using relevant theory and examples taken from their own and other societies. It was pleasing to see that many of these answers included a well-informed and sustained assessment of the ways in which gender equality/ inequality can be interpreted. Also pleasing was the fact that the majority of candidates made use of some relevant sociological theory, studies or concepts, in responding to the question. Candidates whose answers showed a limited understanding of what was asked in the question often provided assertive and unsupported responses, or a limited outline of what women's lives may have been like in the past compared with today. This affected the overall strength of any argument and limited any analysis or assessment of relevant issues relating to changes in gender inequality in the home.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/21

Paper 21

## Key messages

- Good answers showed well-rounded knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological theories. Most candidates were able to apply these theories appropriately to the questions.
- Candidates performed better in the essay question compared to the data response one. This was partly a skills based issue.
- The skills required for success in some elements of **question 1** were lacking in a number of cases.
- There was a deficit in the knowledge base for some sociological methods.
- Erratic understanding of the meaning of some key concepts undermined some responses to methods questions

## General comments

The standard of responses was fairly similar to the previous session last year although the changes in the examination format meant they are not strictly comparable. Those candidates achieving the highest marks demonstrated all of the relevant skills. The data response element (Section A) was less well answered than the essay element (Section B). Candidates need to adopt a more strategic approach to each of the sub questions within **question 1** to maximise achievement. It is worth reiterating the point from last year's report that centres should focus on skills development in relation to the demands of these questions. Candidates should look to produce responses that contain concise, well distinguished points that are sociologically developed. Throughout **question 1** use of key methodological terms like validity and reliability lacked conceptual accuracy. The majority of candidates did not know what content analysis was **1(b)**. There was greater success achieved in question **1(d)**. Overall, responses to the essay questions produced some good answers with a number of candidates demonstrating sound essay construction skills that included analytical and theoretical understanding of different strands. However, candidates should try to make greater use of references to relevant studies when discussing theoretical and methodological issues. There were no rubric errors and mostly no time related issues although there were some overlong responses to **1(d)** given the marks available.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Many responses were able to accurately define reliability although a significant minority defined it as the ability to replicate a study without adding that it also entails coming up with the same or similar results. Some confused reliability with validity. Well answered responses outlined two discrete elements.
- (b) This was the least well answered question on the paper. Many candidates showed little or no knowledge of content analysis and they struggled accordingly. There were many common sense responses and others that only outlined one suitable topic.
- (c) Many responses were able to identify some reasons why a researcher might choose experiments as a research method. However, it was often the case that either insufficient points were explained and/or they lacked the development needed to reach the top level. Some candidates confused experiments with participant observation in their answers. Good answers to this question often considered both laboratory and field experiments. A number of responses made evaluation points, which was not necessary in this question.

- (d) This question was handled well overall, but in many cases further marks could have been gained by offering more original conclusions and/or including references to relevant studies. Less successful answers outlined a very general survey of mainly practical advantages of the use of quantitative data. As with other methodological questions, candidates often confused the concepts of reliability and validity and applied them to the question erratically. This trend was evident in (c) as well. However, there was evidence of sound knowledge in most answers with many able to make effective assessment.

### Question 2

Overall, candidates coped fairly well with this question. A range of explanations and perspectives were used to address the issues brought up by the question, and these were mainly well-focused. Successful responses managed to retain relevance throughout. However, quite a few answers discussed identity in terms of general knowledge rather than drawing on appropriate sociological concepts and evidence.

### Question 3

Some answers to **question 3** relied too much on references to particular research methods rather than considering broader theoretical and methodological issues. Few responses addressed the term 'accuracy' head on by showing an understanding of it in relation to the question. More successful accounts achieved this balance and rooted their response in the sociological perspective.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/22

Paper 22

## Key messages

- Good answers showed well rounded knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological theories, and most candidates were able to apply these appropriately to the questions.
- Many essay responses contained an evaluative tone and were able to analyse to good effect.
- Candidates fared demonstrably better in the essay question compared to the data response one. This was partly a skills based issue.
- The skills required for success in some elements of **question 1** were lacking in a number of cases.
- Some candidates showed a deficit in the knowledge base for some sociological methods.
- Variable understanding of the meaning of some key concepts undermined some responses.

## General comments

The standard of responses was fairly similar to the previous session last year although the changes in the examination format meant they are not strictly comparable. Those candidates achieving the highest marks demonstrated all of the relevant skills. The data response element (Section A) was less well answered than the essay element (Section B). Candidates need to adopt a more strategic approach to each of the sub questions within **question 1** to maximise achievement. Too often points identified for **1(b)** and **1(c)** were either undeveloped or overlapping. It is worth reiterating the point from last year's report that Centres should focus on skills development in relation to the demands of these questions. Candidates should look to produce responses that contain concise, well distinguished points that are sociologically developed. For example, in **1(a)** identify an element of the meaning of a term and then go on to briefly develop it. Likewise with **1(b)** make a clear point and then develop it sociologically. With **1(c)** ensure that a range of points are raised and discussed and maintain a focus on the question throughout. These strategies clearly adhered to are likely to result in candidates achieving higher marks in **question 1**. There was greater success achieved in question **1(d)**, which is pleasing given that this requires the application of higher order skills. Overall, responses to the essay questions produced good answers with candidates demonstrating sound essay construction skills with a number that were analytical and very well-versed in theoretical understanding. There were no rubric errors and mostly no time related issues although there were some overlong responses to **1(d)** given the marks available.

## Comments on specific questions

### Question 1

- (a) A number of answers outlined a partial definition of *interpretivism* but many developed these fully enough to gain full marks. Well answered responses outlined two elements, for example, by referring to the notion that interpretivism is a sociological perspective that focuses on how individuals interact and give meaning to their actions. Less successful responses tended to outline methods associated with interpretivism or define it in opposition i.e. what it is not.
- (b) This was the least well answered question on the paper. Many candidates did not understand what a focus group is and they struggled accordingly. Moreover, candidates tended to describe a focus group rather than identify advantages. This may have been the result of a deficit in knowledge. There was a notable tendency for answers to contain overlapping advantages.
- (c) There were many good answers and most responses to this question were at least satisfactory. However, as with (b) some candidates were not completely sure about what a semi-structured interview is. Only a few correctly identified it as primarily a qualitative method, with most drawing on their knowledge of structured and unstructured interviews and then classifying it as in between the

two when this is not strictly the case. Many responses were not that good at linking their answers to interpretivism and positivism. Some candidates were able to explain the advantages of semi-structured interviews and apply them to research studies, which was pleasing. There was some unnecessary evaluation in a number of responses to this question.

- (d) Good answers clearly focused their attention on the interpretivist arguments against the use of questionnaires and directly addressed the theoretical dimension explicit in the question. Less successful answers outlined a very general survey of mainly practical criticisms of the use of questionnaires i.e. objections that interpretivists may not make. A number of responses regarded questionnaires and structured interviews as one and the same thing. A common problem was that candidates often confused the concepts of reliability and validity and applied them to the question without confidence. This trend was evident in (c) as well. However, there was evidence of sound knowledge in most answers with many able to make effective assessment as well.

### Question 2

This question was generally well-answered. Good responses showed sound knowledge of functionalism and Marxism, although outlines of the latter were sometimes rather simplistic with few references to neo-Marxist accounts. When these were included they tended to be effective additions to an essay, for example, a number of candidates used Willis to discuss the issue of determinism as a way of assessing the Marxist position. Less satisfactory responses provided descriptions of many other sociological perspectives but without using this knowledge to assess Marxism or functionalism. Although the similarities between the two theories were more difficult for some candidates, the majority attempted to demonstrate these, often effectively. The most successful responses were often those that interleaved the arguments as their essays progressed, permitting themselves the opportunity to assess the position of each theory as they went along. This avoided the juxtaposition of those that simply outlined each position separately.

### Question 3

Most candidates who tackled this question did so effectively. The focus of the overwhelming majority of responses was on socialisation with functionalism, interactionism, Marxism and feminism featuring in most responses. Less successful answers just described the process of socialisation but did not link their ideas to theory. The most common approach was to simply juxtapose these theoretical positions rather than subject them to thoroughgoing analysis. A number of candidates spent too long describing the experience of feral children instead of focusing on sociological explanations and research studies. As with **question 2** the most successful were those that generated points of argument between the theoretical positions and there were some strong attempts to critique the traditional perspectives on socialisation and identity from the standpoint of postmodernism.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/23

Paper 23

## Key messages

- Good answers showed well-rounded knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological theories. Most candidates were able to apply these theories appropriately to the questions.
- Candidates performed better in the essay question compared to the data response one. This was partly a skills based issue.
- The skills required for success in some elements of **question 1** were lacking in a number of cases.
- There was a deficit in the knowledge base for some sociological methods.
- Erratic understanding of the meaning of some key concepts undermined some responses to methods questions

## General comments

The standard of responses was fairly similar to the previous session last year although the changes in the examination format meant they are not strictly comparable. Those candidates achieving the highest marks demonstrated all of the relevant skills. The data response element (Section A) was less well answered than the essay element (Section B). Candidates need to adopt a more strategic approach to each of the sub questions within **question 1** to maximise achievement. It is worth reiterating the point from last year's report that centres should focus on skills development in relation to the demands of these questions. Candidates should look to produce responses that contain concise, well distinguished points that are sociologically developed. Throughout **question 1** use of key methodological terms like validity and reliability lacked conceptual accuracy. The majority of candidates did not know what content analysis was **1(b)**. There was greater success achieved in question **1(d)**. Overall, responses to the essay questions produced some good answers with a number of candidates demonstrating sound essay construction skills that included analytical and theoretical understanding of different strands. However, candidates should try to make greater use of references to relevant studies when discussing theoretical and methodological issues. There were no rubric errors and mostly no time related issues although there were some overlong responses to **1(d)** given the marks available.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) Many responses were able to accurately define reliability although a significant minority defined it as the ability to replicate a study without adding that it also entails coming up with the same or similar results. Some confused reliability with validity. Well answered responses outlined two discrete elements.
- (b) This was the least well answered question on the paper. Many candidates showed little or no knowledge of content analysis and they struggled accordingly. There were many common sense responses and others that only outlined one suitable topic.
- (c) Many responses were able to identify some reasons why a researcher might choose experiments as a research method. However, it was often the case that either insufficient points were explained and/or they lacked the development needed to reach the top level. Some candidates confused experiments with participant observation in their answers. Good answers to this question often considered both laboratory and field experiments. A number of responses made evaluation points, which was not necessary in this question.

- (d) This question was handled well overall, but in many cases further marks could have been gained by offering more original conclusions and/or including references to relevant studies. Less successful answers outlined a very general survey of mainly practical advantages of the use of quantitative data. As with other methodological questions, candidates often confused the concepts of reliability and validity and applied them to the question erratically. This trend was evident in (c) as well. However, there was evidence of sound knowledge in most answers with many able to make effective assessment.

### Question 2

Overall, candidates coped fairly well with this question. A range of explanations and perspectives were used to address the issues brought up by the question, and these were mainly well-focused. Successful responses managed to retain relevance throughout. However, quite a few answers discussed identity in terms of general knowledge rather than drawing on appropriate sociological concepts and evidence.

### Question 3

Some answers to **question 3** relied too much on references to particular research methods rather than considering broader theoretical and methodological issues. Few responses addressed the term 'accuracy' head on by showing an understanding of it in relation to the question. More successful accounts achieved this balance and rooted their response in the sociological perspective.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/31

Paper 31

## Key Messages

- Good answers included references to relevant concepts and theories
- Low scoring answers often lacked links to appropriate sociological material
- Evidence from research studies was used well in high scoring answers
- Knowledge of post-modernist theories is still weak among some candidates
- Answers to the (b) questions often lacked evidence of assessment

## General Comments

There were some high quality answers that made good use of concepts and theories to deliver clear and well-reasoned explanations and assessment. While some candidates also made good use of relevant evidence from research studies, this was a notable omission in the work of many other candidates. There continue to be a lot of low scoring answers where candidates rely on assertion and general knowledge rather than using appropriate sociological material. Knowledge of the main sociological theories was evident in the work of many of the candidates, though higher marks could be gained through a better understanding of different strands of thought within each theory. There were no significant rubric errors and most candidates were able to answer three questions fully in the time available.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a) There were some low scoring answers that discussed gender inequality in education without relating the material to the question. Better answers offered a range of explanations for why the educational performance of girls has improved relative to boys in recent years.
- (b) Good answers to this question used a range of theories and studies to discuss the idea that schools reproduce social inequality. Marxist views were often contrasted with functionalist ideas, though some candidates also made good use of references to feminist theory and to post-modernist arguments. Lower scoring answers often lacked references to theory and made little use of relevant concepts.

### Question 2

- (a) Lower scoring answers were often limited to a few assertions about the factors that influence educational success, with no direct links to the question. Better answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the concept of cultural capital and applied the material well to answering the question.
- (b) There were some low scoring answers that offered a few basic points about how schools may prepare young people for work. Higher scoring answers examined the arguments for and against the idea that the main role of schools is to prepare young people for work. Good use of references to theories and studies, such as the work of Bowles and Gintis and Althusser, was a distinguishing feature of the better answers.



### Question 3

- (a) Some answers wrongly discussed the causes of global poverty. Better answers focused on explaining the difficulties in measuring global inequality. High scoring answers examined several relevant difficulties in detail.
- (b) There were some low scoring answers that demonstrated little understanding of what is meant by global inequality. Better answers focused on recent trends in global inequality, often making relevant distinctions between the situation in different countries and regions. High quality answers included references to relevant evidence and research studies.

### Question 4

- (a) There were some low scoring answers that offered only one or two simple observations about why the population in low-income countries is increasing at a faster rate than the population in high-income countries. Better answers discussed a range of appropriate reasons in reasonable detail.
- (b) Low scoring answers were often confined to a few general points about the nature of poverty. Better answers demonstrated an understanding of cultural theories of poverty, with many candidates discussing Lewis' culture of poverty thesis. High quality responses contrasted cultural theories with structural explanations of poverty.

### Question 5

- (a) Lower scoring answers were often limited to a few observations about the impact of the media on human behaviour. Good answers explained a range of factors (such as social class, age and gender) that influence how people use and respond to the media.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of how media stereotypes of minority ethnic groups are constructed and applied. The best responses included references to appropriate concepts, studies and theories. There were some low scoring answers that discussed media stereotypes without reference to minority ethnic groups specifically.

### Question 6

- (a) Some candidates showed little understanding of the term 'new media'. Good answers described both the traditional media and the new media, drawing appropriate contrasts between the two.
- (b) There were a few low scoring answers that discussed the impact of the media in general. Better answers considered how the new media specifically is impacting upon society. Good responses often distinguished between different forms of the new media and considered specific examples, such as social media and citizen journalism.

### Question 7

- (a) Some candidates were able to define the term 'sect', but were unable to identify relevant contrasts with the term 'church'. Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of both concepts.
- (b) Lower scoring answers offered a few assertions about the role of women in religious organisations. Better answers used appropriate theories and research evidence to discuss how far women are discriminated against in religious organisations. High quality responses distinguished between different groups of women and different types of religious organisation.

### Question 8

- (a) A few candidates appeared not to understand the term 'New Age'. Good answers explained what is meant by New Age ideas and offered a range of reasons why these ideas have become popular in modern industrial societies.
- (b) Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to assess the secularisation thesis. Good answers discussed the evidence about trends in religiosity in modern industrial societies and reached reasoned conclusions about the extent to which religious belief is declining. High quality responses often included references to relevant theories and studies.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/32

Paper 32

## Key Messages

- Good answers included references to relevant sociological studies
- Some candidates lacked knowledge of recent sociological theories, such as the post-modernist contribution
- Low scoring answers lacked references to appropriate concepts and theories
- Some answers to the **(b)** questions lacked assessment

## General Comments

Most of the candidates were able to demonstrate some understanding of the relevant sociological material. High quality responses included references to relevant concepts, theories and research evidence. Some answers lacked the necessary evaluative content to gain high marks for the **(b)** questions. Candidates could gain higher marks by avoiding digression and maintaining a tight focus in their answers on the specific requirements of the questions. Good answers should also include references to recent sociological theories and studies; some candidates are still relying on sociological sources from the twentieth century that are now quite dated.

## Comments on Specific Questions

### Question 1

- (a)** There were some high scoring answers that offered several reasons why sociologists question the importance of intelligence in explaining educational achievement. Some answers drifted away from the focus of the question by discussing influences on educational achievement, with little or no reference to the importance of intelligence.
- (b)** There were some low scoring answers that offered a few assertions about the role of education with little or no linkage to social order. Better answers often used different theories of education to illustrate the links with social order. There were some very good answers that contrasted consensus and conflict theories of the role of education in maintaining social order.

### Question 2

- (a)** Good answers to this question identified several ways in which the educational opportunities that a child has may be influenced by parental income. High scoring responses often included references to relevant studies of education. There were some low scoring answers that offered a few assertions about educational achievement, but with little reference to parental income.
- (b)** Good answers provided a detailed account of how peer groups may influence educational achievement. Some candidates made good use of references to the work of Hargreaves and Woods. There were some less creditable answers that offered only a cursory account of peer group influence, followed by a discussion of other factors affecting educational achievement. Low scoring answers lacked references to relevant studies and concepts and identified only a narrow range of factors affecting educational achievement.

### Question 3

- (a) Some low scoring answers offered only a few vague assertions about why high levels of debt may be a problem for low-income countries. Better answers provided a reasoned account of the links between government debt and development, covering a range of problems that might arise as a consequence of indebtedness.
- (b) There were some answers that discussed a range of factors affecting economic growth, but without linking the material well to the role of government policies. Better answers often discussed particular government policies and/or referred to relevant case studies of how development has been brought about. There were a few high scoring answers that linked the discussion of government policies to different theories of development.

### Question 4

- (a) Low scoring answers were often restricted to a few assertions about the effectiveness of aid with little focus on the issue of distribution. Better answers identified some of the difficulties in distributing aid in low-income countries and used examples to illustrate key points.
- (b) Some answers demonstrated little understanding of the nature of transnational corporations. Better answers discussed the role transnational corporations in low-income countries. There were some high scoring responses that used case studies to show how transnational corporations may help or hinder the development process in low-income countries.

### Question 5

- (a) Lower scoring answers were often confined to describing just one or two basic examples of how youth sub-cultures are represented by the media. Better answers considered a wider range of examples and often used references to relevant studies and/or concepts to support key points.
- (b) Some candidates wrongly interpreted this question as an invitation to discuss the ways in which the media influence audiences. Better answers focused rightly on discussing the extent to which audiences are able to influence the content of the media. Good answers often contrasted the pluralist and Marxist views of the media and considered a range of groups who might influence the content of the media.

### Question 6

- (a) There were some low scoring answers that offered only a few vague assertions about the influence of the media on social identity. Better answers often made good use of appropriate concepts, such as deviancy amplification, stereotypes and media representations, to build a well-informed response to the question.
- (b) There were some short answers to this question that demonstrated little understanding of the role of the media in the political domain. Answers in the middle of the mark range were often limited to discussing a few links between the media and the democratic political process. Better answers covered a wider range of relevant points and used appropriate concepts and theories to develop the response. High scoring answers included a sustained assessment of the extent to which the media promote the democratic political process.

### Question 7

- (a) There were some low scoring answers that demonstrated little or no understanding of the concept of sects. Good answers described several factors that may be linked to the growth of sects, such as relative deprivation, marginalisation and secularisation.
- (b) Low scoring answers offered a few observations about religion in general, with no direct links to the influence of science and rationalisation. Better answers situated the question in the context of the secularisation debate. There were some good accounts of Weber's ideas about the influence of science and rationalisation on religious observance and thinking. High scoring answers often included references to different theories of religion and/or studies of the extent of secularisation.

**Question 8**

- (a) There were some low scoring answers that offered only a few general comments about gender inequality in general. Better answers were focussed on the position of women within religious organisations. High quality answers referred to relevant studies, such as those by El Saadawi, Wilson and Badawi.
- (b) Some answers demonstrated little or no understanding of the post-modernist contribution to understanding the role of religion. There were some answers in the middle of the mark range that offered only a limited account of post-modernist views. Higher scoring answers discussed the views of different post-modernist writers and compared those theories with other sociological accounts of the role of religion.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/33

Paper 33

## Key Messages

- Good answers included references to relevant concepts and theories
- Low scoring answers often lacked links to appropriate sociological material
- Evidence from research studies was used well in high scoring answers
- Knowledge of post-modernist theories is still weak among some candidates
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There were some high quality answers that made good use of concepts and theories to deliver clear and well-reasoned explanations and assessment. While some candidates also made good use of relevant evidence from research studies, this was a notable omission in the work of many other candidates. There continue to be a lot of low scoring answers where candidates rely on assertion and general knowledge rather than using appropriate sociological material. Knowledge of the main sociological theories was evident in the work of many of the candidates, though higher marks could be gained through a better understanding of different strands of thought within each theory. There were no significant rubric errors and most candidates were able to answer three questions fully in the time available.

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