SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/11

Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research

Key messages

- High scoring answers showed effective use of a wide range of sociological material.
- High scoring responses effectively used sociological material such as concepts, theories and research evidence to back the points that they made to reach the highest mark bands.
- In **Section A** many candidates would have benefitted from developing their sociological knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts for some questions, most notably **3(a)** and **3(b).**
- Candidates should be encouraged to read through the questions and highlight/ underline key words to ensure their responses are fully focused on the question.
- When teaching research methods, a focus on the accuracy of methodological concepts such as reliability and validity is encouraged.

General comments

Some very good responses were seen, but overall, there was a fairly low standard of responses, with many candidates appearing underprepared for the paper. A lack of basic sociological knowledge, such as on **Question 1** in terms of what qualitative means, and in **Question 2(b)**, what content analysis involves, undermined many candidates' answers, and many provided very 'common-sense' based responses.

There also appeared to be a lack of preparation relating to the demands of each question type, with too much detail being given on **Question 1**, evaluation being included in **Question 3(a)**, and several points being covered in **3(b)**, when only one argument is asked for. It is important that candidates are shown past papers and asked to focus on the marks available for each question and the appropriate question structure in order to maximise their performance.

For the questions focusing on methods of research (**Questions 1**, **2(a)**, **2(b)** and **5**) there was a tendency for candidates to mix up qualitative and quantitative and also validity and reliability. Key terms such as these should be taught carefully to ensure accuracy in this topic area.

In **Section B**, it was clear that **Question 4** was much preferred over **Question 5** (more than 80 per cent of candidates chose **Question 4**). However, many responses to **Question 4** were lacking in supporting sociological evidence and some were undermined by confusion. Some candidates who chose **Question 5** produced more sociologically focused and relevant answers, whereas many responses to **Question 4** bordered on common sense or were one-sided.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates were able to identify two types of qualitative interviews, with unstructured and semi-structured being the most common. The description did not need to be detailed, but to show some understanding of what the type of interview entailed. Many were able to do this. Some candidates used the same vague description for both unstructured and semi-structured, so it is important that candidates understand the difference between these two interview types. Group interviews/focus groups was also an acceptable answer, though this was not creditable as two different types of qualitative interview. Similarly, some candidates referred to 'open-ended' interviews, or 'in-depth interviews'. These were creditable but

seen as synonymous with each other and with unstructured interviews, so could only be credited as one type. Some candidates wrote a description of what qualitative interviews are in a very general way, rather than describing two types, thus could not gain credit – candidates must be advised to read the question carefully. A minority of candidates seemed confused or misunderstood the question, identifying structured interviews or questionnaires as a type of qualitative interview, which gained no credit. It is important that candidates understand which methods tend to generate qualitative data and which tend to generate quantitative data.

Question 2

(a)   Most candidates were able to gain marks on this question and appeared to understand what ethical factors are, though a few focused on practical issues such as cost or time instead, gaining no marks. The most commonly identified factors were informed consent and privacy, though others such as deception and the right to withdraw were also often seen. The factors identified needed to be explained, which most candidates though not all, were able to do, and then they needed to support their explanation with sociological material and show how this supported the point made. Commonly, complementary ethical issues were credited as supporting material, such as referring to confidentiality when explaining privacy, or referring to deception when explaining informed consent. Some candidates were able to use examples of observational studies to demonstrate the factors chosen, with Venkatesh and Partrick commonly seen. Many candidates' responses were limited to 4 marks, with two marks only awarded for each factor described, because they did not provide supporting material. Even the identification of covert or overt observation would have been creditable as material, but many did not include such specific methods or concepts.

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

(b)   This question proved challenging for many candidates with only a small minority understanding what content analysis is as a research method. Many appeared to think it just means analysing other research on information on the research topic, or thought it was a type of pilot study, and therefore their responses were very vague or inaccurate. Content analysis is a method of analysing qualitative secondary data, such as media texts, but usually involves categorising these in a quantitative format. Thus, many candidates who wrote about depth and detail as strengths were too vague in their points to be credited. Similarly, candidates who appeared to think content analysis could include the use of any secondary data, for example official statistics, were also not credited. Creditable points included a standardised way of categorising qualitative content, creating reliability – many candidates appeared to include this point on reliability almost by accident, but did gain credit for this. Similarly, focusing of the ability to identify patterns and trends from the content was commonly seen and creditable point. It is important that centres teach all research methods from the specification, rather than just focusing on interviews and observations, and ensure that candidates understand what each method involves, the type of data it generates and its potential strengths and limitations.

Note: centres should encourage candidates to adopt a clear and structured approach to answering **Question 2(b)**:

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

Question 3

(a)   This question allowed most candidates to gain some marks, since linking education to class identity seemed relatively straightforward. Good responses were supported with sociological material, often using a Marxist perspective and referring to concepts such as cultural and social capital, speech codes, the hidden curriculum and ideological control. Commonly seen sociologists included Bernstein, Bourdieu, Althusser and Willis. Many points were generalised, simply stating that by getting good educational qualifications an individual can improve their class position, which did not attract much credit. There were also many candidates who only raised one argument – it should be noted from previous years that two points are required for this 10–mark question.

(b)   Good responses explained why their chosen alternative agency (often the family) may be more influential on class identity than education is. There was a tendency for some candidates to merely describe an alternative agency which could influence class identity, rather than engaging with the

requirement to argue against the view presented in **Question 3(a)**. Those who used the family often referred to values such as immediate and deferred gratification or focused on ideas such as cultural and social capital in relation to the family. Some candidates argued that Capitalism is more influential than education, using a Marxist argument, and if done carefully, this could be fully credited, though clearly education is seen as part of the capitalist system by Marxists. Some tried to argue that other aspects of identity, such as gender or ethnicity, were the main influence on class identity, rather than another agency. This approach was potentially creditable, though often such responses lacked focus on class identity. Unless a response clearly linked back to challenge the influence of education, it could not access the top mark band, limiting many candidates' marks. This more evaluative approach should be practised by candidates preparing for future papers.

Section B

Question 4

This question was attempted by most candidates. Many were able to understand the idea of the nature/nurture debate, though some were confused, getting them the wrong way round, or assuming that nature referred to primary socialisation and nurture referred to secondary socialisation. Candidates need to create a debate in essay question, so those who focused solely on supporting the view of nurture in the question and not offering any challenge to this, lost out on marks for AO3. Common arguments presented to support the view included evidence of feral children, and of various agents of socialisation, often including gender socialisation in the family (referencing Oakley). Some of these points were not well linked to show how and why they supported the nurture argument. Those who did evaluate effectively presented evidence from sociobiologists, such as Wilson and Tiger and Fox and referred to Darwinism. Wrong's idea of the over-socialised concept of man was also often seen, as well as references to twin or triplet studies, and some also used functionalist ideas on gender roles being based on natural characteristics, referencing Parsons. Less creditable points included references to DNA and genetics, and mental illnesses, which did attract some marks but were often quite vague.

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

Though a less popular question, some candidates who attempted this were able to gain high marks. Good knowledge of positivism and the scientific approach were demonstrated by a few and most created a debate with interpretivist approaches, arguing why a scientific approach is not appropriate in studying society. However, weaker responses produced generic positivist versus interpretivist debates, losing the focus on the scientific approach, and instead referring to different methods. Commonly seen concepts included objectivity and reliability. Durkheim's suicide study was often referenced, but very few candidates referred to Popper's views on the scientific approach or the hypothetico-deductive approach.

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 9699/12

Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research

Key messages

- High scoring answers showed effective use of a wide range of sociological material.
- High scoring responses effectively used sociological material such as concepts, theories and research evidence to back the points that they made to reach the highest mark bands.
- Teachers should prepare candidates for the demands of **Questions 2b, 3b and Question 4/5.**
- Candidates should ensure essay responses **(Question 4/5)** engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material.
- **Question 3(b)** is a standalone question and should not be seen by candidates as a follow on from **Question 3(a).**

General comments

There was a range of candidate performance with some demonstrating a good comprehension of both the requirements of the questions, and the sociological knowledge and understanding to answer them effectively. There were, however, weaker candidates that relied on common sense/anecdotal evidence

Most candidates answered completed the questions within the allocated time but some candidates wasted valuable time on questions, for example *Section A*, **Question 1** which took away time that would have been better spent in the essay question in *Section B* of the paper.

Many 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 the question. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses (**Questions 4/5**) and **Question 3(a)**.

In **Question 3(a)**, candidates would benefit from practicing the inclusion of specific sociological evidence to support their points and ensuring that they fully link it to both aspects of the question, in this case peers, the agency of socialisation and the chosen identity, age.

In *Section B* more candidates attempted **Question 4** than **Question 5** but many candidates across both struggled to link their sociological evidence to the questions sufficiently and evaluation was the weakest skill.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The first question on laboratory experiments was accessible to most candidates. Common responses highlighted the controlled or artificial nature of the environment and the manipulation of variables by the researcher. Many candidates also linked their answers to positivism and reliability. A few, however, confused laboratory experiments with science experiments or fieldwork. Many responses were overly detailed.

Question 2

(a) A significant number of candidates struggled to fully address the sociological nature of this question. Instead of focusing on the challenges specific to *some social groups*, many gave

generalised responses on methodological difficulties like interviewer bias or the Hawthorne effect. Where candidates did engage with the question properly, they commonly cited deviant or hard-to-access groups, such as gangs, and referenced studies by Venkatesh, Patrick, or Goffman. Despite this, few candidates developed these points into fully explained answers with clear sociological reasoning, and many failed to provide supporting theoretical material which prevented them from gaining full marks.

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

(b) This was one of the better-answered questions across the paper. Most candidates were able to identify two appropriate strengths, particularly practical factors such as low cost and time efficiency. However, many responses simply restated the initial point and struggled to explain the significance of their stated strengths. Stronger answers made connections to methodological concepts like reliability, generalisability, or standardisation specifically in relation to online questionnaires, showing a more developed understanding and therefore enabling them to access the full range of marks available for this question.

Note: centres should encourage candidates to adopt a clear and structured approach to answering **Question 2(b)**:

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

Question 3

(a) This question proved the most difficult for candidates. Many responses discussed peer influence in general terms without addressing the specific concept of age identity. There was also a lack of sociological material and a limited range of points from many candidates which meant their points remained underdeveloped at best. Candidates who did engage with the topic tended to focus on adolescence, occasionally using studies like Willis, Archer, or Eisenstadt to support their points. Even so, the link to how peer interactions shape understandings and expressions of age was often underdeveloped or missing entirely.

Candidates are advised to focus on detailing two points in answering this question to maximize their use of time as well as giving them the best chance of accessing the highest levels of the mark scheme.

(b) While many candidates correctly identified alternative agencies of socialisation, most often the family or media, they frequently failed to establish why these alternatives might be more influential than peers. In many cases, the comparison with peer groups was either absent or only implied. Few responses included theoretical links or studies to substantiate the comparisons. Some answers also mistakenly treated this question as a continuation of **3(a)**, rather than a distinct question.

Section B

Question 4

This was the most popular essay question of the two options and generated some high-level responses. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of how female identity has evolved, discussing changes in education, family, employment, and legal rights. There was effective use of feminist perspectives in stronger responses, particularly drawing on theorists like Sue Sharpe. However, some candidates showed an over-reliance on Ann Oakley. A common issue was that some responses lost sight of the specific focus on identity, instead offering broader discussions of inequality or feminism. Additionally, some candidates wrote at length about historical contexts without connecting these directly to the question of change, or failed to critically evaluate their points, instead simply stating that not everything had changed.

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

Many candidates correctly described the features of structured interviews and discussed them in relation to positivist methodology, linking them to objectivity, reliability, and the ability to generalise. However, some candidates confused structured interviews with questionnaires or unstructured interviews, and many candidates failed to cite relevant studies. Evaluation often drifted into a general discussion of interviews or other research methods rather than focusing specifically on structured interviews, which limited the analytical depth of many answers. Conceptual confusion was also present in some responses, particularly around reliability and validity, or positivist and interpretivist approaches.

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

SOCIOLOGY

Key messages

- High scoring answers showed effective use of a wide range of sociological material.
- High scoring responses effectively used sociological material such as concepts, theories and research evidence to back the points that they made to reach the highest mark bands.
- Teachers should prepare candidates for the demands of **Questions 2(b), 3(b) and Question 4/5.**
- Candidates should ensure essay responses **(Question 4/5)** engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material.
- **Question 3(b)** is a standalone question and should not be seen by candidates as a follow on from **Question 3(a).**

General comments

There was a range of candidate performance with some demonstrating a good comprehension of both the requirements of the questions, and the sociological knowledge and understanding to answer them effectively. There were, however, weaker candidates that relied on common sense/anecdotal evidence

Most candidates answered completed the questions within the allocated time but some candidates wasted valuable time on questions, for example *Section A*, **Question 1** which took away time that would have been better spent in the essay question in *Section B* of the paper.

Many 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 the question. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses (**Questions 4/5**) and **Question 3(a)**.

In **Question 3(a)**, candidates would benefit from practicing the inclusion of specific sociological evidence to support their points and ensuring that they fully link it to both aspects of the question, in this case inadequate socialisation and the causes of deviant behaviour.

In *Section B* more candidates attempted **Question 4** than **Question 5** but many candidates across both struggled to link their sociological evidence to the questions sufficiently and evaluation was the weakest skill.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The first question on two ways children learn about gender identity was well done by most candidates, with many focusing on different agents, such as family and media as their two ways. Some did not gain the additional mark since the description was too vague and not linked clearly to gender – for example, saying that *children learn about gender identity from their family* but not giving any further description as to how this might happen.

Most candidates were able to provide further description, by focusing on toys, clothes, role models etc. However, some candidates went into unnecessary detail for a 4-mark question, describing Oakley's ideas at

great length, which was not required and impacted on the time left for questions later in the paper that require more time.

Question 2

(a) The question asked for two reasons why unstructured interviews are high in validity. This seemed to cause confusion for a minority of candidates, who were unclear of what unstructured interviews are, or what validity means.

Most were able to identify two clear reasons with common points relating to depth and detail, rapport/relationship with the interviewer and/or flexibility. Those who did identify relevant points sometimes failed to gain full marks because they did not support their points with sociological material, such as using a study, concept or theory. Relevant material which was successfully used included *unstructured interviews by Anne Oakley or Dobash and Dobash*, references to concepts such as *verstehen and rapport*, or links to *interpretivists or feminists'* use of unstructured interviews.

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

(b) Most candidates were able to identify two appropriate strengths of using laboratory experiments and explain why these were strengths. Common answers *included standardised procedures allowing for replication, controlled conditions, allowing for variables to be manipulated and extraneous variables to be controlled*. It was less common to see candidates developing these points to explain the impact of this on the research, e.g. showing why it is a strength.

Strong responses explained that the ability to replicate the experiment would lead to high reliability, or that the ability to control variables would allow cause and effect relationships to be established. This additional explanation was needed to achieve all available marks but was missing in many responses.

Note: centres should encourage candidates to adopt a clear and structured approach to answering **Question 2(b)**:

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

Question 3

(a) This question was interpreted in a very general way by some candidates, who focused on socialisation rather than inadequate socialisation as the main cause for deviant behaviour. For example, explaining how peers could socialise someone into deviance via peer pressure or subcultures. This approach was not creditable, since the focus needed to be on 'inadequate' socialisation, so unless the response showed how this peer socialisation may be inadequate, this was not addressing the demands of the question, and such material would more appropriately have been used in **Question 3(b)** to challenge the view. More successful approaches referred to inadequate socialisation in the family related to single parent families, using the New Right, and ideas from Murray about the underclass. Many also referred to feral children as examples of those who had received inadequate socialisation.

Candidates are advised to maximise their marks on this question by providing two detailed responses using sociological evidence to back up their points. Some candidates only provided one point and others provided more than two but, in less detail, than was required to develop them sufficiently.

(b) Most candidates were able to offer an alternative explanation for deviance to argue against the view in **3(a).** Marginalisation was commonly seen, as was subculture. Stronger responses were able to develop this to show why it may be more important than inadequate socialisation. There were also some references to white collar crime/crimes of the powerful, which worked well as a challenging argument.

Responses to Question **3(b)** were often stronger than those to **3(a).** Some candidates provided responses to **3(a)** that were more suited to **3(b)** and therefore failed to gain high marks in both questions.

Section B

Question 4

Most candidates found this question 'evaluate the view that the family is the most important agent of socialisation in shaping identity'**,** to be straightforward and there was little evidence of misunderstanding. Responses were differentiated by their range and depth of sociological material and their focus on the question – in particular the issue of identity.

The most successful responses focused on how the family is the most important agent in shaping class, ethnic, gender and age identity, separating these points and supporting them with evidence, allowing them to reach the highest levels, Successful evaluation showed detailed challenges to these points by using other agents of socialisation, such as education, media and peers, and showing how they may influence these aspects of identity more significantly.

Weaker responses wrote more generally about the family, primary socialisation and feral children, giving few examples and/or explicit links to identity. Parsons and Oakley were the most commonly seen sociologists to support the view.

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

Although this was the question chosen less often. many candidates who chose it often did well. Most understood the idea that sociological research can be value-free and were able to link their points to positivism and a scientific approach to sociological research. Concepts such as objectivity were well used, and there were often links to Durkheim's study on suicide.

Some candidates struggled to achieve a full range of points, and some responses were repetitive, or veered off into more general discussions of scientific or quantitative research, losing focus on value freedom. In evaluation, most candidates were able to write well in reference to interpretivism, with Gouldner and Weber used as relevant evidence in support.

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 9699/21**
> **The Family**

Key messages

- Teachers should support candidates in accessing past exam papers and mark schemes to make candidates aware of the different types of question that can be asked.
- Teachers should prepare candidates for the demands of **Questions 2b, 3b and Question 4/5.**
- Teachers should provide learners with activities encouraging point development and explicit evaluation.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses **(Question 4/5)** engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material.

General comments

Overall, most candidates achieved within the mid-range and lower mark range. Overall Candidates demonstrated limited sociological knowledge and understanding, as well as skills of interpretation, application and evaluation. A significant number of candidates relied on common sense/anecdotal evidence. Many candidates appeared unprepared for the demands of an A Level examination.

The more successful candidates produced responses that a/reflected the requirements of the question and b/applied relevant sociological material to support their responses. Candidate responses that achieved lower marks tended not to answer the question set, and/or tended to be descriptive, lacking an application of relevant sociological material in providing evidence of analysis and assessment. These often relied more on common sense/general knowledge. The extended writing questions were excellent discriminators for candidates to demonstrate their skills of knowledge and understanding (AO1), interpretation and application (AO2), and analysis and evaluation (AO3). Few candidates explicitly evaluated the question, relying on juxtaposition of opposing points.

Some 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 the question. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses (**Question 4/5**) and **3a/b**. Any rubric errors tended to occur within questions **Question 1**, **2a** and **3b**, whereby candidates provided more points than were required.

In general, candidates need to be better prepared for the requirements of the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates were able to describe at least one relevant way that increased life expectancy may impact upon the family. Most commonly given were: the *increase in sandwich generation…adults need to care for their elderly parents as well as their own young children*, *families are increasingly financially burdened…elderly parents who can not care for/support themselves need food and medical care*, the *creation of more extended families…grandparents can undertake free childcare,* as well as *grandparents can be more involved in childcare…allows both parents to be involved in paid employment.*

Weaker responses included those that identified the *increase in extended families/beanpole families* as a way however, then simply described the extended family rather than a description of the *impact*. Subsequently, these were not awarded the additional mark available for the description. There were also

examples of repetition such as, *help with childcare/grandparents can take care of grandchildren…the family becomes extended/the family contains grandparents*.

A small number of candidates discussed the impact of increased life expectancy on society not family, as well as those that confused increased life expectancy with infant mortality rate (IMR). Furthermore, there were some that stated an impact was to marry or have children later in life. *We have no idea how long we are going to live for, and therefore such statements are too presumptive to accept.* Candidates giving these responses were not credited with marks.

Note: *Candidates should be encouraged to structure their responses as two bullet points or numbered 1/2/. Avoid introductions/conclusions, unnecessarily lengthy answers and provide just the <u>two</u> responses as requested.*

Question 2

(a) Candidates should be encouraged to construct their responses in a clear and structured way:

– *Identified point.*
– *Point then explained.*
– *Relevant supporting sociological material (e.g. concept, study, social policy, theoretical approach).*
– *Application of this material to demonstrate the original point made.*

Most candidates were able to provide two reasons for greater gender equality in some families. Responses commonly given were: *more women are working…gives them greater power of decision making, the increase in new man…men now more involved housework/childcare*, and *the impact of policies such as the equal pay act…more women can be breadwinners.* The more successful responses supported reasons given with relevant sociological material and then applied this back to the reason/point given.

For example:

Identified reason: *Women have made progress in the workplace.*

Reason/point explained: *they have opportunities to be paid equally to their partners.*

Supporting sociological material: *Equal Pay act*

Application of this material to the original reason/point identified: *this has meant they have equal decision making in the family as they contribute financially.*

Weak responses were simplistic and lacked explanation. A common error was for candidates to provide illustrations/examples of gender equality in the family, rather than the *reasons for it*. For example, *there are symmetrical families and therefore equality*. The question required candidates to give reasons for *why this is why* are there symmetrical families? *Why* are there such families with equal division of conjugal roles?

(b) Candidates were asked to explain one strength and one limitation of liberal feminist views of the family.

Many candidates continue to be ill-prepared for the demands of this question. The most common errors continue to be, for candidates to discuss work or society in general rather than in the context of *the family*, and/or to describe the theoretical perspective rather than to view it evaluatively, identifying a relevant strength/limitation.

Few candidates achieved in the higher marks range as there was a tendency to identify a valid strength/limitation, but not to address the further elements of the question requirements: *what is it that leads liberal feminism to have this strength/limitation, and secondly, why it is a strength/limitation.*

Commonly valid responses were: a strength was that liberal feminists *have contributed to greater gender equality in the family,* whilst a limitation was that *they are ethnocentric/that they focus on white, western middle-class heterosexual women.*

Errors in knowledge and understanding of liberal feminism were evident with statements such as: *it fails to recognise the progress made for women in the family* (possibly indicating that candidates may be confusing with radical feminism), and *that they view women as superior to men*. What's more, there were those responses that discussed limitations of laws, rather than limitations of liberal feminism.

Note: *Candidates would 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.*

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

Question 3

(a) Candidates were asked to explain the view that social class is the most important factor affecting the experiences of children in the family.

Few responses were sociologically supported, relying on common-sense/general knowledge. Where sociological material was used, it was pre-dominantly *cultural* or *social capital*. Many candidates gave responses defining/describing such concepts rather than applying them to develop the response. Many candidates did not achieve in the higher band of marks available to them. The most common approach, was to discuss *the impact of finances, often in basic terms such as …upper class can afford to send children to better schools…working/lower class have fewer opportunities as they cannot afford to be sent to good schools…upper class know the right people to open doors for their children…*

Weak responses included those that only provided one point, and/or were simplistic and lacked development, such as: *working-class children grow up without much money…class decides where you live, and this affects the child's experiences…upper-class children are more likely to go to private school/college/university… upper class have the money to go to fancy restaurants, have nice clothes…*

Points made that were considered too vague included, working-class children lack socialisation/would not be socialised and have a bad environment, as well as those that discussed childhood experiences without the context of social class.

(b) Candidates were asked to give one argument against the view that social class is the most important factor affecting the experiences of children in the family. Use of sociological material is asked for in the question.

The most successful responses were those that proposed an alternative factor affecting the experiences of children in the family, most notably *gender*. Some provided an element of development, although not always sociologically supported. Where responses did apply sociological material, this tended to be *Oakley and gender socialisation* (referring to *canalisation and manipulation, verbal appellations*). Weaker responses included undeveloped points, and those that relied on benefit of doubt being given due to simple statements such as *culture is more important*.

Section B

Question 4

A minority of candidates opted to answer this question 'Evaluate the view that the main role of the family is to promote capitalist ideology.' In general responses were not particularly successful in supporting the view (AO1). This was often due to candidates not addressing the context of *capitalist ideology* and instead discussed how the family supported capitalism in more general terms. For example, women act as a reserve army of labour…through buying necessities…by producing the next generation of labour. As such, AO1 rewarding tended to be restricted to the lower levels. For example: the family promotes capitalism through consumerism because people need to buy food, shelter, clothes etc. things we need to survive, which creates profits…(therefore supporting capitalism in <u>general terms</u>). This is an example of conspicuous consumption *(the concept of false needs – people purchase items to bring them happiness, status etc, We do not need these things; we just want/desire them.)*

Where candidates did address supporting capitalist ideology appropriately, this was largely achieved through *Althusser and the family as an ideological state apparatus promoting obedience to authority*. There were a very small number who applied Marcuse (or confused with Zaretsky) and conspicuous consumption.

As such, many relied on AO3 marks (arguments made against the claim in the question), taking a pre-dominantly functionalist approach (promote social norms and values) or a generic feminist stance of promoting patriarchy. These were generally presented as alternative roles rather than addressing the element of 'main role'.

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

Most candidates opted to answer the question 'Evaluate the view that marriage has become less important in society.' In general responses were more successful in terms of presenting *relevant* sociological evidence in support of points made. Generally, candidates were able to demonstrate a reasonable knowledge and understanding in support of the view (AO1), commonly the *impact of feminism, polices and laws*, *secularisation in changing social attitudes*, and *the decline in stigma towards alternative relationships/families not marriage based*. More sophisticated approaches were able to apply for example, postmodernism and refer to concepts such as individualism.

Most candidates were able to offer arguments against the view, typically referring to the cultural/religious importance of marriage, or how cohabitation is a test or pre-cursor to marriage, and how most people still seek to get married/it is seen as the ideal. However, AO3 tended to rely on a juxtaposition of opposing points rather than explicit evaluation being made. Therefore, very few candidates were able to achieve the higher levels of marks available.

Weak responses were often simplistic statements such as, *people think it is just a piece of paper*, or *marriage is still important as people see it as a beautiful thing*.

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

SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/22
The Family

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Key messages

* Teachers should support candidates in accessing past exam papers and mark schemes to make candidates aware of the different types of question that can be asked.
* Teachers should prepare candidates for the demands of **Questions 2b, 3b and Question 4/5.**
* Teachers should provide learners with activities encouraging point development and explicit evaluation.
* Candidates should ensure essay responses **(Question 4/5)** engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material.

General comments

Overall, there was a range of candidate performance with some demonstrating a good comprehension of the requirements of the questions, and the sociological knowledge and understanding to support answers effectively. Weaker candidates relied on common sense/anecdotal evidence.

The more successful candidates produced responses that a/reflected the requirements of the question and b/applied relevant sociological material to support their responses. Candidate responses that achieved lower marks tended not to answer the question set, and/or tended to be descriptive, lacking an application of relevant sociological material in providing evidence of analysis and assessment. These often relied more on common sense/general knowledge. The extended writing questions were excellent discriminators for candidates to demonstrate their skills of knowledge and understanding (AO1), interpretation and application (AO2), and analysis and evaluation (AO3). Some candidates did not provide a response that addressed contrasting sides of the debate, providing one-sided responses thus limiting the marks that could be awarded.

Many 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 the question. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses **(Question 4/5)** and **3a/b**. Any rubric errors tended to occur within questions **Question 1**, **2a** and **3b**, whereby candidates provided more points than were required.

Some candidates need to use their time more effectively and in relation to the marks available for each question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Candidate performance varied across the range of marks available. The more successful candidates able to identify the relevant impact of social policies on the family. Common responses focused on family size e.g. *restricts the number of children…China's One Child policy limits families to having just the one child* (these would sometimes be expanded and add that this allows parents to focus more on that child/families have become more child-centred), and divorce policies e.g. *divorce made easier…has led to more nuclear families breaking up/led to more lone-parent families.* Candidates also focused on increased diversity e.g. *has led to more diverse family types…laws allowing same-sex couples to get married*. Occasionally, the impact of gender equality laws in creating equality of power or dual income families, and welfare support policies in creating an increase in lone-parent families, were used.

Less successful responses included those that only described one way or identified the two ways required but did not describe them. An error of some candidates was to state and outline a policy, rather than consider its impact. Stating a policy is not the same as identifying an impact of it.

Responses considered too vague to reward were, *policies that enforce norms and values,* and *governments helping families.*

Note: *Candidates should be encouraged to structure their responses as two bullet points or numbered 1/2/. Avoid introductions/conclusions, unnecessarily lengthy answers and provide just the* <u>two</u> *responses as requested.*

Question 2

(a) Candidates should be encouraged to construct their responses in a clear and structured way:

– *Identified point.*
– *Point then explained.*
– *Relevant supporting sociological material (e.g. concept, study, social policy, theoretical approach).*
– *Application of this material to demonstrate the original point made.*

Candidate performance was generally quite strong here, with most able to provide two reasons why fewer people are getting married. Common relevant responses were: *impact of secularisation, decline in stigma attached to alternatives to marriage, increased individualism,* and *the growth of women's independence/entering the workforce.*

For example:

Identified reason: *decline in the influence of religion*.

Reason/point explained: *as people have become less religious, there is no longer a moral compulsion to get married.*

Supporting sociological material: *secularisation.*

Application of this material to the original reason/point identified: *this has led to couples cohabiting rather than getting married, as it is no longer considered as living in sin to do so.*

A common error was for candidates to discuss delaying marriage, whilst other errors included discussing reasons for getting a divorce, thus not answering the question set.

There were some candidates that wasted valuable time providing lengthy introductions and/or conclusions – these are not required, and candidates should be encouraged to get straight into the response.

(b) Candidates were asked to explain one strength and one limitation of postmodernist views on family diversity.

Candidates were generally more successful at identifying limitations than strengths, most commonly that *they overestimate/exaggerate the extent of family diversity*. Few candidates achieved all the marks available to them, failing to address either what it is about the postmodernist approach that leads them to have the strength/limitation identified, or why it is a strength/limitation, or indeed both elements.

A common error made by candidates, was to discuss strengths/limitations of diverse family types. To illustrate an example:

Errors in knowledge and understanding of postmodernist sociology of the family, included statements as: *it only focuses on the nuclear family…it allows for a one size fits all approach…it sees the nuclear family as the ideal family type…it is not in favour of same-sex families…it ignores family diversity.*

Such errors would suggest these candidates lacked a comprehension of postmodernist thinking towards the family, confusing with functionalism and the New Right.

Note: *Candidates would 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.*

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

Question 3

(a) Candidates were asked to explain the view that the main role of the family is to benefit society.

Most candidates demonstrating a sociological awareness that ranged from a basic level through to a good comprehension. There were those however, whose responses relied on common-sense/general knowledge. Many candidates took a Marxist approach e.g. *benefitting capitalist society through ideological conditioning* or, *acting as a safety valve* rather than perhaps a more obvious functionalist approach, e.g. *ensuring social cohesion/social harmony/value consensus*. These Marxist discussions generally produced better quality responses in comparison to those that were functionalist based. Few candidates discussed the functionalist notion of the prevention of anomie, whilst some did attempt to discuss organic analogy, but not always successfully.

The more successful responses were well focused on how the role carried out benefits society and were well supported and developed with relevant sociological material. In comparison, weaker responses often lacked a clear focus on how society benefit.

(b) Candidates were asked to give one argument against the view that the main role of the family is to benefit society. Use of sociological material is asked for in the question.

Performance from candidates was generally good. The most common approach to answering this question, was to demonstrate *how it benefits capitalism/supports ruling class interests as opposed to society* in general. Overall, these responses were strong, with a good demonstration of knowledge and understanding of Marxism. Another common approach was to discuss how *the family serves individual needs* (either from a postmodernist or functionalist approach). Much fewer candidates discussed benefiting patriarchy, whilst interestingly a small number discussed how dysfunctional families are not beneficial for society (New Right and lone-parent mothers for example).

The more successful responses were clear, well focused, applied relevant sociological supporting material, with the point developed. Less successful responses tended to be limited in explanation, simplistic statements, and often relied on common-sense

Responses considered too vague or weak, included those that simply presented a function of the family without addressing either, who is benefitting if it is not society or, what its main role is.

Section B

All candidates provided a response to either **Question 4** or **5** in *Section B*.

Question 4

In general, responses to the question 'Evaluate the view that roles in the family are still based on traditional gender identities', were well applied. The more successful responses had a clear focus on the question, applying sociological evidence to provide both arguments for the continued presence of a *gendered division of labour, expectancies of motherhood/fatherhood* etc., versus the existence of change e.g. *the blurring of gendered expectations in roles* (women breadwinners, new man, super dad etc.). Some candidates explored the processes involved in creating the continuity through gendered socialisation (canalisation etc.) and biological determinism for example, as well as how and why gender identities are changing (new femininities and masculinities, impact of policies/laws etc.).

Weaker responses were simplistic and often quite repetitive, outlining how women can now go to work and men are taking on more child caring, often illustrated through such statements as '*women can now work so men stay at home…they now change diapers…they are now more involved in the socialisation of children*', without sociological evidence to support. Some candidates discussed power dynamics e.g. domestic violence; few however successfully made the connection to the context of roles in the family.

Other weak responses focused on gender identity without the context of roles in the family, as well as discussing how women are burdened or exploited, for example by undertaking a triple shift, however, did not show the significance of this to the context of the actual question set.

It was encouraging to see some candidates engaging explicitly in an evaluative analysis of the question. However, for the vast majority, AO3 relied on a juxtaposition of counter points.

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

Candidates answering, 'Evaluate the view that the nuclear family is the dominant family type', typically gave weaker responses than those seen for Question 4. Candidates demonstrated a mixed comprehension of question requirements; generally counter arguments (AO3) showed that candidates had understood the question, examining how the nuclear family is not dominant as there are diverse family types.

The more successful candidates understood that this was a family diversity question. The wording *dominant family type* has been used in numerous past exam papers, centres and candidates should be familiar with such a question. It is *not* about the role of the family from differing perspectives, or whether the nuclear family is the most functional. Being considered the most functional by functionalists/New Right does not mean it is the most dominant/most common.

Those who did provide relevant supporting material for the claim (AO1), cited Murdock and the universality of the nuclear family, how it forms the basis of other family types, and occasionally how government policies support the formation of the nuclear family. Media dominance was also cited. Arguments against on a simpler level, cited the increase in different family types, whilst more sophisticated responses examined reasons for the increase e.g. the impact of polices, secularisation, growth in the economic independency of women etc.

AO3 was largely demonstrated through a juxtaposition of points rather than the provision of explicit evaluation.

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

- Teachers should support candidates in accessing past exam papers and mark schemes to make candidates aware of the different types of question that can be asked.
- Teachers should prepare candidates for the demands of **Questions 2b, 3b and Question 4/5.**
- Teachers should provide learners with activities encouraging point development and explicit evaluation.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses **(Question 4/5)** engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material.

General comments

Overall, there was a range of candidate performance with some demonstrating a good comprehension of the requirements of the questions, and the sociological knowledge and understanding to support answers effectively. Weaker candidates relied on common sense/anecdotal evidence.

The more successful candidates produced responses that a/reflected the requirements of the question and b/applied relevant sociological material to support their responses. Candidate responses that achieved lower marks tended not to answer the question set, and/or tended to be descriptive, lacking an application of relevant sociological material in providing evidence of analysis and assessment. These often relied more on common sense/general knowledge. The extended writing questions were excellent discriminators for candidates to demonstrate their skills of knowledge and understanding (AO1), interpretation and application (AO2), and analysis and evaluation (AO3). Some candidates did not provide a response that addressed contrasting sides of the debate, providing one-sided responses thus limiting the marks that could be awarded.

Many 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 the question. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses **(Question 4/5)** and **3a/b**. Any rubric errors tended to occur within questions **Question 1**, **2a** and **3b**, whereby candidates provided more points than were required.

Some candidates need to use their time more effectively and in relation to the marks available for each question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Describe two ways childhood is a distinct period from adulthood.

Most candidates were able to identify two ways childhood is a distinct period from adulthood. Common responses included: the distinction that *children are expected to attend compulsory education whilst adults are expected to be in employment.* Other common rewardable responses tended to focus on age related laws/protection policies e.g. how *the innocence of children is protected via age restrictions on adult themed media content or engaging in adult activities e.g. consuming alcohol* etc. Additionally, how *children are seen as vulnerable and in need of protection/are dependent on adults, compared to adults who are seen as able to care for themselves/are independent*. Less common responses included lack of freedoms e.g. *children are*

seen as needing protection/parents exert control over their time, space and bodies to preserve their childhood/innocence.

Responses considered too vague to reward included for example, *children are treated differently*, without any elaboration or illustration to demonstrate a distinction between childhood and adulthood.

Note: *Candidates should be encouraged to structure their responses as two bullet points or numbered 1/2/. Avoid introductions/conclusions, unnecessarily lengthy answers and provide just the <u>two</u> responses as requested.*

Question 2

(a) Candidates should be encouraged to construct their responses in a clear and structured way:

– *Identified point.*
– *Point then explained.*
– *Relevant supporting sociological material (e.g. concept, study, social policy, theoretical approach).*
– *Application of this material to demonstrate the original point made.*

Most common successful responses explaining two functions the family performs to benefit its members included discussions of Parsons' *stabilisation of adult personalities* (applying the concepts of *warm bath theory* of a functionalist approach, or *safety valve*, a Marxist feminist concept which was fine as could be made relevant), and *primary socialisation of children*.

For example:

Identified function: *stabilisation of adult personality*.

Point explained: *family provides comfort and emotional support to the breadwinner.*

Supporting sociological material: *warm bath theory.*

Application of this material to the original function/point identified: *the family acts like a soothing warm bath that helps to destress the breadwinner when they come home from work, ensuring they are physically and psychologically fit and healthy.*

There were examples of candidates only providing one function however, and therefore at best rewarded half the marks available to them. There were also candidates who did not apply sociological material in support, so could only be rewarded half marks at best, whilst weak/simple responses were common-sensical and included for example, *provide emotional support/financial support/provide food/provide education.*

(b) Candidates were asked to explain two strengths of functionalist views of the family.

Many candidates were able to identify two relevant strengths, most commonly a *recognition of the positive role the nuclear family plays for its members,* and *an acknowledgment of the relationship the family has to wider social cohesion/harmony.*

The most common error was for candidates to discuss strengths of, or some function/role performed by the *nuclear family*, e.g. *it socialises children into norms and values…it ensures that children grow up to be useful to society*…rather than a strength of the theoretical approach of functionalism and it views on the family, and therefore, not rewarded as this is not fulfilling the question set.
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Note: *Candidates would 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.*

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

Question 3

(a) Candidates were asked to explain the view that there is no longer any social pressure on people to get married.

Relevant responses commonly discussed the *impact of secularisation in changing social norms and values, leading to less religious expectation and therefore less social pressure to get married*. Occasionally, no social pressure due to the *decline in influence of the extended family* was also discussed. Increased individualism was also discussed by some, however few candidates applied this to the context of there no longer being social pressure, instead simply citing it as a reason why people do not get married from an individual level. This was too vague to reward with a mark.

(b) Candidates were asked to give one argument against the view that there is no longer any social pressure on people to get married. Use of sociological material is asked for in the question.

The most common approach to answering this, was for candidates to discuss how *strongly religious/conservative countries continue to apply social pressures through norms and values, laws, and how there are stigmas attached to those that do not marry, particularly women*. Occasionally, the example of China's 'left behind women' was cited. Little sociological supporting material was used.

Section B

Question 4

Fewer candidates opted for the question 'Evaluate the view that cultural differences are the main cause of family diversity.' Candidates tended to provide stronger arguments against the view (AO3) rather than in support of it (AO1). They were more successful in providing points proposing alternative influences were a cause, rather than cultural. Notably, very few if any candidates focused on the element of *main cause*.

Supporting points/views tended to present how different ethnic groups/cultures are largely found with particular family types, e.g. *through religious pressures or cultural norms*, with examples to illustrate. Occasionally, the *impact of migration/globalisation* was discussed, that is, the impact of different cultural groups introducing their preferred family form into the society they migrate to, creating diversity. Also, conjugal role diversity was discussed, as was social class diversity (as an example of culture – this could also be used/was used, as an AO3 approach).

Arguments against the view, commonly focused on the increased *economic independence of women* as well as the *impact of laws in creating family diversity*. However, this AO3 was largely demonstrated through a juxtaposition of points rather than the provision of explicit evaluation.

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

More candidates the question 'Evaluate the view that parenthood today is different from the past.' The more successful candidates applied relevant sociological material, in particular sociologists such as Arfini, Grey, and concepts such as *super dad/new dad, hegemonic masculinity, patriarchy and biological determinism*, as well as addressed the context of parenthood.

There was a tendency amongst some candidates, to simply discuss how gender roles are different/not different, often adding 'and this shows how parenthood is different/not different', or discussing the changing lives of women, without relating this to parenthood resulting in weaker responses. For example, men do more housework now, so this shows how parenthood is different/according to Oakley, women continue to perform most of the housework, therefore showing how parenthood is not different today.

Some examples of candidates discussing the influence of grandparents increasingly taking on the parenting role (of their grandchildren), as well as the impact of institutions taking over the caring and socialisation role of parents. Many of these responses were well applied to the question asked.

Responses considered too vague/irrelevant to reward, included stating functionalists believe women should play the expressive role of childcare. This is not the same as arguing that women continue to dominate the role of childcare and therefore, parenthood today is not different from the past. That is, just because functionalists believe it is ideal or proper for the woman to undertake the role of child caring, it does not mean it is taking place. It is a theoretical viewpoint of how things should be according to them, rather than how things *are*.

AO3 was largely demonstrated through a juxtaposition of points rather than the provision of explicit evaluation.

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

SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/31
Education
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Key messages

- Most candidates were able to answer all questions.
- Some candidates gave lengthy responses to lower mark questions. Candidates should note the marks available for each question and use their time accordingly.
- Candidates should use sociological material that is relevant to the question. In **Question 2** this should be used to support the points made. In essays material should be explained to show how it supports the view in the question or the argument against the view.
- Essay evaluation was often juxtaposed rather than explicit. Counter arguments should be made relevant to the question to show why they argue against the view in the question rather than just stating an alternative view.
- Candidates should practice questions using past papers to be able to understand the requirements for each type of question.

General comments

Candidates were able to answer all the questions. The best responses used relevant sociological material to support the points made including studies, concepts and theories.

Some candidates did not seem to understand the requirements of each question, and this limited their marks.

Question 1 should contain two clear points with some description of how this point relates to the question.

Question 2 requires the candidate to give two points. For each point there should be an explanation of the point, some sociological material to support the point (study/concept/empirical evidence) and an explanation of how this material supports the point.

Question 3 requires an argument against the given statement. There is no requirement to give points that support the statement. This question does not require an introduction.

Question 4 should be a balanced essay. There should be equal consideration given to points that support the statement and those against the statement. The answer should show the debate between views on the statement in the question and how these may be similar of different.

Centres should use past question papers and mark schemes to help prepare candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Good answers were able to identify two ways streaming negatively affects educational attainment. Most popular answers used labelling or teacher expectations. Some answers used anti-school subcultures. Answers generally were longer than they needed to be.

Some candidates were confused by the question and gave answers relating to streaming of media content rather than streaming in education.

Question 2

Good answers focused on the impact of social factors on IQ. These answers used material such as cultural bias in IQ tests or different perceptions of testing. The impact of poverty and health on performance was used in several answers and points were made in relation to preparation for tests. Most candidates were able to identify cultural or socio-economic reasons for performance on IQ tests and linked these to social class and ethnic differences in performance. There were some responses that referenced Kaplan and Gardner.

Most candidates were able to give two relevant points, but many did not have sociological material to support their answer. This limits their mark to 4. Several responses were too vague and tried to use general environmental factors like heat and time of day to support their answer.

Question 3

Good answers were able to give two developed points against education benefitting the individual. The most common way candidates addressed this question was through using functionalism to argue that education supports social solidarity or role allocation, or Marxist views to support education reproducing a society based on capitalist interests. Durkheim, Parsons, Althusser and Bowles and Gintis were popular sociological material points. Some candidates gave more limited points that were not developed in relation to the question. For example, points were made about functionalist views of education, such as role allocation, in general without developing these to explain this benefits society rather than the individual.

Some candidates gave an introduction or outline of the view in the question before their points against the view. This is not necessary in this question and does not gain any additional marks.

Question 4

Generally, most candidates were able to show understanding of the view in the question. Good answers used a range of material to show how social class impacts educational attainment. A common approach was to use Marxist and Neo-Marxist views of education in support e.g. Ideological state apparatus, cultural reproduction, material deprivation and the hidden curriculum/correspondence principle. Good evaluation used functionalist views of education being meritocratic and that working class children could achieve with hard work. Many candidates showed evaluation by juxtaposing the impact of gender and ethnicity on attainment. In some cases, this was more explicit by comparing the effects of different social factors and their relative impacts. Other candidates were able to evaluate effectively using social mobility and comprehensive schools/compensatory education as counter arguments to the impact of social class.

Although most candidates were able to show some knowledge of theoretical perspectives in this debate, weaker candidates gave limited depth or range. A notable number of candidates did not fully develop their points and there was a clear lack of range on both sides of the debate. Some candidates only including 1 or 2 points on either side. Some answers showed a range of brief points about Marxist and functionalist views without specific application to difference in attainment, giving a rather general account.

Centres should encourage candidates to explain how points against a view are different to the view stated in the question.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/32
Education

Key messages

- Most candidates were able to answer all questions.
- Some candidates gave lengthy responses to lower mark questions. Candidates should note the marks available for each question and use their time accordingly.
- Candidates should use sociological material that is relevant to the question. In **Question 2** this should be used to support the points made. In essays material should be explained to show how it supports the view in the question or the argument against the view.
- Essay evaluation was often juxtaposed rather than explicit. Counter arguments should be made relevant to the question to show why they argue against the view in the question rather than just stating an alternative view.
- Candidates should practice questions using past papers to be able to understand the requirements for each type of question.

General comments

The standard of responses overall was good. Most candidates were able to answer all the questions. The best responses used relevant sociological material to support the points made including studies, concepts and theories.

Some candidates did not seem to understand the requirements of each question, and this limited their marks.

Question 1 should contain two clear points with some description of how this point relates to the question.

Question 2 requires the candidate to give two points. For each point there should be an explanation of the point, some sociological material to support the point (study/concept/empirical evidence) and an explanation of how this material supports the point.

Question 3 requires an argument against the given statement. There is no requirement to give points that support the statement. This question does not require an introduction.

Question 4 should be a balanced essay. There should be equal consideration given to points that support the statement and those against the statement. The answer should show the debate between views supporting the statement in the question and views against the statement. This debate should focus on the issue in the question rather than giving a general debate between perspectives.

Centres should use past question papers and mark schemes to help prepare candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was generally well-answered. Many candidates were able to identify two clear ways in which schools are feminised, with frequent references to the presence of more female teachers who act as role models, positive teacher expectations and labelling of girls, and, in some cases, the role of coursework as suiting girls.

Some candidates misunderstood what feminisation means and instead focused on how females have achieved more equality in the education system. Other candidates drifted towards writing in general terms about increased equality within the curriculum or equal opportunities to choose subjects. Such responses, while relevant to gender equality more broadly, did not fully address the specific focus on feminisation of schooling. Candidates should be reminded to read questions carefully and use the precise wording of the question in their response.

Question 2

Good answers used teacher labelling and the ethnocentric curriculum as ways racism can affect attainment. Other answers used anti-school subcultures created as a reaction to racism and institutional racism in the form of setting and streaming that disadvantages ethnic minority pupils. In terms of material, the most common references made by students were to Sewell, Gillborn and Youdell, Wright, and a lesser extent, Mirza, and Mac and Ghaill.

Some students were unable to develop their answers sufficiently to gain maximum marks due to not applying self-fulfilling prophecy to ethnicity and achievement. Similarly, this question proved to be challenging for many students as they referred to labelling and other material in relation to class rather than specifically referring to ethnicity and racism. A common issue was treating teacher expectations and labelling as separate points, even though these are conceptually the same and therefore only counted once.

Question 3

Most students were able to identify two arguments against the view the IQ tests are a fair measure of educational ability. The most common responses referred to cultural bias, conditions affecting performance in IQ tests and problems in defining/testing intelligence or the existence of multiple intelligences. These answers supported the points made with relevant sociological material including Kleinberg, Gardner and Bourdieu.

Many candidates were able to identify an argument and able to provide enough evidence to at least get into Level 2. However, many could not get into Level 3 as responses were not clearly applied to IQ tests not being a fair measure of educational ability.

A small number of candidates failed to address the question and gave accounts of the 11 plus exam or focused on underachievement. A small minority of candidates wasted time by writing an 'introduction,' typically defining and outlining the strengths of IQ tests. Similarly, a considerable number of students wasted time by giving more than two arguments.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to demonstrate some knowledge and understanding (AO1) of the view that education contributes to value consensus. Most candidates were able to outline the functionalist views of Durkheim, Parsons and to a lesser extent, Davis and Moore. Some candidates were able to do this with some sophistication using concepts such as social cohesion, collective conscience, and universalistic standards. Many were also able to apply examples of schools contributing to value consensus in schools such as the teaching of history, school assemblies and shared experiences in education. Candidates were less successful in terms of correctly outlining the social democratic perspective.

In terms of interpretation and application (AO2), a common issue was that students gave a general description of the functionalist view on education, without applying it two how it contributed to value consensus. This was particularly in relation to role allocation (Davis and Moore) and to a lesser extent on meritocracy. Similarly, many candidates who presented the arguments of the New Right and the Social Democratic perspective, often failed to apply these clearly to how they related to value consensus. Some candidates successfully applied Marxist views to support the view, especially with the hidden curriculum an ideological state apparatus. However, some candidates did not do this successfully as they did not clearly state how Marxist arguments (such as ideological state apparatus) could lead to value consensus.

For analysis and evaluation (AO3), there were some good evaluations, often referring to the existence of subcultures, ethnocentric curriculum and the divisions created between the working and middle classes that leads to conflict. Most candidates were able to provide some arguments against this view, (namely by reference to Marxist and to a lesser extent feminist views). Most students were able to refer accurately to Marxist arguments of Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, Willis, and Bourdieu. Many were able to do this with

some sophistication and were able to apply a wide range of concepts such as ideological state apparatus, cultural reproduction, the hidden curriculum, and the correspondence principle. However, a substantial number of students presented these by juxtaposition and did not clearly apply these views to how education contributes to value consensus. As a result, they could not access Level 4 and 5 of the mark scheme. For a considerable number of candidates, material on Marxist views were often merely presented as an alternative view and was not used evaluatively. This also applied to a lesser extent to those students who presented material on feminist and postmodernist perspectives.

A few candidates did not seem to understand what value consensus means.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/33
Education

Key messages

- Most candidates were able to answer all questions.
- Candidates need to focus on the question, especially in longer answers, rather than writing more general answers.
- Candidates should use sociological material that is relevant to the question. In **Question 2** this should be used to support the points made. In essays material should be explained to show how it supports the view in the question or the argument against the view.
- Some candidates gave lengthy responses to lower mark questions. Candidates should note the marks available for each question and use their time accordingly.
- Essay evaluation was often juxtaposed rather than explicit. Counter arguments should be made relevant to the question to show why they argue against the view in the question rather than just stating an alternative view.
- Candidates should practice questions using past papers to be able to understand the requirements for each type of question.

General comments

Some candidates were very well prepared and gave some good responses to the questions. The best responses used relevant sociological material to support the points made including studies, concepts and theories.

Some candidates did not seem to understand the requirements of each question, and this limited their marks.

Question 1 should contain two clear points with some description of how this point relates to the question.

Question 2 requires the candidate to give two points. For each point there should be an explanation of the point, some sociological material to support the point (study/concept/empirical evidence) and an explanation of how this material supports the point.

Question 3 requires an argument against the given statement. There is no requirement to give points that support the statement. This question does not require an introduction. Candidates should give two clear paragraphs each with an

Question 4 should be a balanced essay. There should be equal consideration given to points that support the statement and those against the statement. The answer should show the debate between views on the statement in the question and how these may be similar of different.

Centres should use past question papers and mark schemes to help prepare candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Good answers were able to identify two limitations of IQ tests. Most common answers linked to cultural bias and multiple intelligences. Some answers used differences in preparation and some used the impact of

material factors on the test such as poverty. A minority of candidates wrote vague responses such as lacking in accuracy or unfair, which gained no credit.

May candidates gave too much detail in their response. Centres should note that the length of answers should be appropriate to the mark tariff.

Question 2

Good answers were able select two relevant points about how subcultures influence attainment. Many candidates chose to focus on anti-school subcultures for their first way and pro-school subcultures for their second way, which was a successful approach. Other good answers gave one point on the impact of the subculture such as peer pressure and one point on the impact of teacher labelling of the subculture. To gain full marks, responses needed to include supporting sociological evidence for each point. Willis was frequently used for anti-school subcultures. Some focused on gender or ethnicity in subcultures, often using Mac an Ghaill, Sewell and Shain in support.

Most candidates were able to give two relevant points, but some candidates did not engage with the 'candidate subcultures' aspect of the question and wrote more general accounts of school attainment, such as material deprivation. Unless there was a clear link to subculture, this could not be credited, so candidates must be reminded to read the question carefully and link points back clearly. Some candidates did not have sociological material to support their answer. This limits their mark to 4.

Question 3

Good answers were able to effectively explain how marketisation does not increase equality of opportunity. Points relating to schools' selection of candidates and how this would disadvantage some groups were effective. Other good answers discussed material capital and the impact on schooling such as private education or being able to live in areas with the best schools linking this to the concept of parentocracy.

Some candidates struggled to focus on marketisation. These answers tended to give points on the lack of equality of opportunity without making a link to marketisation, such as general discussions of material deprivation. Many focused on the cost of private schools, not fully engaging with the notion of *competition between schools* and *parental choice* which marketisation implies.

Some responses included lengthy introductions, explaining what marketisation is, and/ or lengthy conclusions repeating points already made. This is not necessary in this question and does not gain any additional marks.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to show some understanding of the question. Good answers gave a range of points to illustrate how the curriculum benefits the privileged in society. Althusser and Bowles and Gintis were wider referenced to show how the curriculum supports ruling class ideology and prepares working-class candidates for work in a capitalist society. Other good answers discussed the existence of the ethnocentric or gendered nature of the curriculum and how it supports patriarchy. Other answers used difficulties in accessing the curriculum based on cultural capital, using Bourdieu. Good evaluation used functionalist views on the curriculum promoting value consensus and social solidarity. The concept of meritocracy was widely used in good evaluative points.

Although most candidates were able to show knowledge of how education benefits the privileged in society, candidates often seemed to read this as a question on the role of education rather than the curriculum. This meant generic responses with a Marxist view on education benefitting the privileged contrasted with a functionalist view that education benefits the whole society.

Some candidates appeared confused by the word 'privileged', apparently assuming this meant everyone, and thus viewed debate the opposite way around. Some candidates only included 1 – 2 points on either side.

Centres should encourage candidates to explain how points against a view are different to the view stated in the question.

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Paper 9699/41
Globalisation, Media, Religion

Key messages

- Most responses demonstrated good knowledge of the issues raised by the questions.
- High scoring answers included an explicit and sustained evaluation.
- References to relevant sociological studies was absent in some responses.
- Further marks could be gained by providing more detailed explanations of key points.
- More use could be made of sociological concepts to support key points.
- Low scoring answers often relied on assertion and general knowledge rather than relevant sociological material.

General comments

The standard of the scripts overall was high. Good answers used a range of arguments and evidence to evaluate the strengths and limitations of the view in the question. Other responses covered less evaluative material and were more descriptive. Not focusing on the key terms in the question was a problem with many of the less analytical answers. Encouraging candidates to make focuss on the key terms in the question is to be recommended. Referring back to the key terms at regular intervals in the answer is also advisable. There continue to be a few candidates who rely on assertion and general knowledge as a basis for their answers. The marks awarded for responses that lack references to appropriate sociological material are inevitably low. It is important therefore that candidates are encouraged to use references to sociological sources in their answers.

Most candidates answered two questions in the time available. Some candidates answered more than two questions, though they appeared to derive no advantage from this strategy in terms of marks achieved. The questions on Religion proved most popular, with those on Globalisation less frequently attempted. There were a few scripts where the candidate omitted to reference answers with the appropriate question number. Candidates may disadvantage themselves by omitting the question number or writing the number illegibly, as it makes it difficult for the Examiner to be certain which question is being attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

High scoring responses to this question demonstrated a good understanding of the processes of globalisation and their impact on cultural differences between countries. Theories about cultural convergence were used to support the view expressed in the question and some candidates made good use of examples to illustrate how cultural differences may be disappearing today. Good answers also provided a sustained evaluation of the view expressed in the question. Debate about whether globalisation has led to greater cultural diversity as opposed to cultural convergence often featured as part of the evaluation. Some candidates drew useful distinctions between different countries, arguing that some have been more prone to cultural convergence than others. High scoring responses often drew contrasts between the cultural convergence viewpoint and the tranformationalist and postmodernist theories of globalisation. Low scoring answers were limited to a few points about globalisation with little or no reference to cultural effects.

Question 2

Good responses to this question demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of different explanations of poverty in developing countries and possible links to global capitalism. Marxist theories of development, particularly dependency theory, featured in support of the view in the question and some candidates made good use of examples of poverty in particular countries to illustrate key points. Evaluation was provided by considering alternative explanations of poverty, particularly the arguments associated with modernisation theory. Some candidates also questioned the reductionism and over-generalisation in the view that poverty in developing countries can best be explained in terms of dependency on rich capitalist countries. Lower scoring answers were often characterised by a few simple points about the nature of poverty, with no clear reference to dependency or other concepts that have been used to explain disparities in income and wealth between countries.

Section B

Question 3

High scoring answers to this question demonstrated a good understanding of the mechanisms through which owners of the media may be able to control media content. The mechanisms cited included the power to hire and fire media employees, agenda setting and gatekeeping, the global scale of media assets today, shared interests and values with editors and journalists, and the power of owners to make policy decisions and set broad editorial guidelines. Marxist theory often featured in the points made in support of the view expressed in the question, but some candidates also made useful references to research studies highlighting the power dynamics within the media that may result in owners exercising considerable control over content. Evaluation often took the form of identifying sources of media influence other than media owners, such as editors and journalists, government agencies, media pressure groups, and audiences. Some candidates made useful contrasts between the traditional media and the new media in terms of who exercises control. There were some lower scoring answers that accepted uncritically that owners control the media.

Question 4

Good answers to this question demonstrated a clear understanding of how media representations of women may have changed over time. High scoring responses covered a range of points questioning the extent to which media representations of women still reflect gender stereotypes. Examples of females stereotypes in the media were used to good effect in developing the analysis. Challenges to these stereotypes in current media content was also described, with the impact of the new media being emphasised. Good evaluative responses identified different ways in which gender stereotypes disadvantaging women may still feature in media content today. Recent feminist analysis particularly was used to good effect. Some candidates also noted the resurgence of aggressive sexism in some areas of the digital media. At the lower end of the mark range, there were a few answers that lacked references to sociological material and offered only opinion about the way women are represented in the media.

Section C

Question 5

This question provided an opportunity to consider the role of religion with reference to preventing conflict in society. Good responses distinguished between theories that emphasise the integrating role of religion in society and those that use a conflict perspective to identify negative impacts of religion. Functionalist views were often used to support the view expressed in the question. Marxist and feminist perspectives were then deployed to challenge the functionalist theory of religion. Some candidates also referred to examples of conflicts where religion has been heavily involved as a way of extending their analysis. There were some lower scoring answers that outlined different theories of religion without linking the material well to debates about how far religion helps to prevent conflict in society.

Question 6

This was a popular question that was answered well by many of the candidates. Good responses discussed a range of arguments and evidence supporting the view that all societies have experienced a decline in religiosity. Links to the secularisation thesis were made in many of the higher scoring answers and findings from appropriate research studies was used to support the analysis. Strong evaluative responses considered a range of theories and evidence challenging the claim that all societies have experienced a decline in religiosity. Some candidates questioned the extent to which secularisation has occurred in all societies and

affects all religions. Developments such as the growth of new religious movements and the idea of 'believing without belonging' were also referenced in providing a rejoinder to the view in the question. Difficulties of defining and measuring the extent of religious belief and practice was a further line of analysis seen in good evaluative responses. Lower scoring answers lacked references to relevant sociological material and relied mainly on opinion and assertion.

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Key messages

- Most candidates showed reasonable awareness of the issues raised by the questions.
- High quality responses included explicit and sustained evaluation.
- Good responses also made use of relevant sociological concepts and theories.
- Higher marks could be achieved by including more references to sociological evidence.
- Low-scoring responses mostly lacked references to sociological materials and relied on opinion and general knowledge instead.

General comments

The standard of the scripts overall was good. High-scoring responses included detailed references to relevant sociological theories and studies. Some candidates also made effective use of relevant examples to support their answers. Responses in the middle of the mark range often selected relevant material to support the view in the question, but struggled to deliver a convincing evaluation. To gain high marks for evaluation (AO3), it is important to challenge and test the view in the question, preferably by making explicit evaluative points. There were some lower-scoring answers that included a lot of material that was tangential to the question. Some answers addressed the general topic of the question, but neglected the issues raised by the specific wording.

There also continue to be some candidates who rely on opinion and general knowledge as a basis for their answers. The marks awarded for responses that lack references to appropriate sociological materials are inevitably low. It is important therefore that candidates are encouraged to use references to sociological concepts, theories and evidence in their answers.

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

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

High scoring responses to this question demonstrated a good understanding of how the processes of globalisation may have led to greater cultural diversity. Theories about cultural divergence were used to support the view expressed in the question and some candidates made good use of examples to illustrate how cultural differences may be increasing today. Good answers also provided a sustained evaluation of the view in the question. Discussion of whether globalisation has led to greater cultural convergence as opposed to cultural diversity often featured as part of the evaluation. The concepts of Westernisation and cultural imperialism helped support arguments about cultural convergence. Some candidates drew useful distinctions between different countries, arguing that some have experienced an increase in cultural diversity more than others. Low scoring answers were limited to a few points about globalisation with little or no reference to cultural effects.

Question 2

There were relatively few answers to this question. Good responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the part that capitalist exploitation of developing societies may have played in the spread of global crime. Support for the view expressed in the question was often provided through discussing examples of global crime that has clear links to the economic exploitation of individuals and communities. Examples cited included the illicit drugs trade, people trafficking, sex tourism, and international financial fraud. Some candidates also made good use of examples of environmental crimes and corporate crimes in developing societies to support their analysis. High scoring answers included an evaluation that challenged the view expressed in the question by considering other possible reasons, apart from capitalist exploitation, for the rise of global crime. These reasons included the impact of wars and regional conflicts, weakness and corruption in some governments, improvements in global communications and transport networks, and the impact of increasing levels of international migration. Lower scoring answers described some examples of global crime but provided little or no analysis of causal factors.

Section B

Question 3

Good answers to this question demonstrated a clear understanding of a range of arguments and evidence supporting the view in the question. High scoring responses often challenged the methodology and/or findings of studies that claim to identify a strong link between media influence and changes in human social behaviour. Media models that question the idea of audiences being passive recipients of media messages also featured in many of the responses. Evaluation was provided in most cases by describing theories and evidence used to support the idea that the media have a powerful influence on the way people think and behave. This included references to the hypodermic-syringe model and the Marxist mass manipulation theory, together with studies such as those undertaken by Bandura, Hovland, Lang and Lang, Noelle-Neumann, Cohen, and Gerbner. Topics covered in these studies included the impact of watching violent scenes in films and the role of the media in creating moral panics. Examples from social media were also used to illustrate the influence of celebrities and opinion formers on social ideas and behaviour. Use of the media for propaganda purposes was considered in many of the answers too. Some answers lacked focus on the reference to evidence in the question.

Question 4

High scoring answers to this question demonstrated a good understanding of the mechanisms through which Large media corporations may be able to control the new media. The mechanisms cited included the power to hire and fire media employees, agenda setting and gatekeeping, the global scale of cross-media ownership today, and the power of media owners to make policy decisions and set broad editorial guidelines. Marxist theory often featured in the points made in support of the view in the question. Some responses also included references to research studies highlighting the power dynamics within the media that may result in large corporations, such as Disney and News Corp, exercising considerable control over new media content. Good answers challenged the idea of corporate control of the new media by discussing the influence of other groups, such as editors and journalists, government agencies, media pressure groups, and audiences. Some responses also drew relevant contrasts between the traditional media and the new media in terms of how control is exercised. Low scoring responses often lacked references to sociological material and offered only opinion about the power of the large corporations that own significant parts of the new media.

Section C

Question 5

This question provided an opportunity to consider the role of religion with reference to functionalist theory. Good answers offered a sustained account of different functionalist views, covering thinkers such as Durkheim, Malinowski, Parsons, and Bellah. High-scoring responses demonstrated a clear understanding of concepts such as collective conscience, sacred and profane, value consensus, social solidarity, psychological reinforcement, and civil religion. Evaluation was provided by contrasting functionalist ideas with other sociological accounts that have a fundamentally different view of the role of religion, such as the Marxist and feminist theories. Examples of where religion has contributed to social conflict and social change were also cited as a way of challenging the functionalist perspective. Some answers described different theories of religion without making it clear how they help to demonstrate potential strengths or limitations in the classical functionalist accounts. There were a few low-scoring responses that showed little understanding

of the functionalist perspective and instead discussed the role of religion in general, with little or no reference to relevant sociological material.

Question 6

This question provided an opportunity for candidates to discuss the idea that a religious revival is occurring in Western societies today. Good answers considered a range of reasons why there may have been a renewed interest in spirituality in recent times. Evidence of increasing religiosity and/or participation in religious practices was also provided as a support for the view in the question. This included references to the growth of new religious movements and to new forms of religious involvement, such as tele– evangelism and 'spiritual shopping'. The concept of secularisation often featured in good evaluative responses, with candidates arguing that the dominant trend in Western societies remains decline in the social significance of religion. A few candidates questioned the validity of evidence about the extent of religious revival today and some argued that developments such as the growth of new religious movements support the secularisation thesis rather than challenging it. There were some lower scoring answers that provided an evaluation of the secularisation thesis in general rather than focusing the discussion on the idea of religious revival specifically.

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Key messages

- Good answers combined detailed sociological knowledge with sustained analysis and evaluation.
- Low-scoring responses mostly lacked references to sociological explanations and evidence.
- Some answers lacked understanding of the issues raised by the question.
- More candidates are making good use of references to concepts and theories.
- Some answers lacked focus on the wording of the question and were too descriptive.
- Higher marks could be gained by making more use of references to relevant sociological studies.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts was good, with more of the candidates successful in demonstrating the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Some responses are still too descriptive, however, relying on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any explicit analysis. There is also scope for candidates to make more use of relevant research evidence to support their answers. High scoring responses often included detailed references to relevant concepts and theories. Some candidates made good use of relevant examples to demonstrate understanding of key points. Lower scoring responses lacked references to appropriate sociological material, relying instead on opinion and general knowledge. Some answers were too short to provide sufficient demonstration of the skills required to trigger the higher mark bands.

Examples of rubric error were rare. Some candidates answered more than the two questions required, with the extra answers rarely contributing to an improvement in the overall mark. Failure to reference answers with the appropriate question number occurred in the case of a few scripts. Candidates must ensure they include the question number and write the number illegibly, as it can make it difficult for the Examiner to identify which question is being attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

High quality responses to this question demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of different explanations of global poverty, with reference to the impact of colonialism. Marxist theories of development often featured in support of the view in the question and some candidates made good use of examples of colonial and post-colonial rule to illustrate key points in their argument. The concept of neo- colonialism was also used to extend the analysis in good answers. Evaluation was provided by considering alternative explanations of global poverty, particularly the arguments associated with modernisation theory. Some candidates also questioned the reductionism and over-generalisation in the view that poverty in developing countries is best explained in terms of the continuing impact of colonialism. Lower scoring answers were often characterised by a few simple points about global inequality, with no clear reference to colonialism or other concepts that have been used to explain disparities in wealth between countries.

Question 2

There were a few high scoring responses to this question that showed a good understanding of the consequences of global migration for migrants from poor countries. Good answers considered a range of cultural, economic, social, and psychological impacts. Contrasts between the consequences for different migrant groups often featured in the analysis in higher scoring answers. Some candidates included well-

chosen references to studies of migrant workers to illustrate both negative and positive consequences of relocating to another country for employment or other reasons. There were some lower scoring responses that considered the impact of migration at the societal level rather than focusing on how it affects the migrants as individuals. A few candidates discussed only negative consequences of migration and so these answers lacked an evaluation of the view expressed in the question.

Section B

Question 3

Good responses demonstrated a detailed understanding of the view, associated with conflict theories, that the media acts as an instrument of social control. Evidence from relevant studies was used to illustrate different ways in which media content may reflect ideological influences. Concepts such as propaganda, Ideological Support Apparatus (ISA), false consciousness, agenda setting, and gatekeeping often featured in good responses. High quality answers also included a sustained evaluation, often focusing on the competing claims of different theories about where power and control reside in relation to the media. Some candidates made good use of examples to argue that audiences exercise the dominant influence over media content and that this limits any ideological influence. Editors and journalists were also cited as actors who may exert a lot of control over media content, often acting as constraints on ideological manipulation of the media by owners or governments. Useful contrasts were often made between the traditional media and the new media in terms of how content is produced and transmitted. Lower scoring answers were limited to a few assertions about how the media may reflect the interests of the rich and powerful, with no specific references to ideological control.

Question 4

Good answers to this question demonstrated how the interactive nature of the new media may have given individual citizens and groups more opportunity to influence politics and challenge the dominant power structures in society. Debates between digital optimists and digital pessimists featured in many well-informed responses. Some candidates made good use of the distinction between democratic and authoritarian regimes to structure their analysis. Evaluation was provided by challenging the extent to which the new media has helped to democratise power, noting various ways in which privileged groups are able to defend their interests in the digital world. Lower scoring responses gave a few basic points about how the new media may reflect the interests of the rich and powerful rather than individual citizens generally, with no critical analysis. A few candidates discussed control of the media overall rather than linking the discussion to the new media specifically.

Section C

Question 5

This question provided an opportunity to consider the role and social position of women within religious organisations. Good answers offered a sustained account of a range of arguments and evidence supporting the view in the question. This was often supported with references to relevant examples of where women may have achieved equality with men in particular religious organisations. Evaluation was provided by discussing feminist arguments that women continue to experience discrimination and inequality within the religious sphere. The concept of patriarchy featured heavily in the analysis and some candidates also challenged the extent to which recent actions taken by some religious organisations to elevate the position of women have resulted in a meaningful improvement in female status and power. Contrasts between the way females are treated within different religions today helped to illustrate the complexity of the issues raised by the question. There were some lower scoring answers that outlined different theories of religion without linking the material well to debates about how far women experience gender inequality in religious organisations today.

Question 6

This question provided an opportunity to discuss the extent to which religion may have lost social significance in Western societies today. Links to the secularisation thesis featured in many of the higher scoring answers and evidence from appropriate research studies was used to support the analysis. Strong evaluative responses considered a range of arguments and evidence challenging the claim that religion has little influence in society today. The growth of new religious movements was often considered in that respect. Some candidates questioned the extent to which secularisation has occurred in all communities and affects all religions. Difficulties of defining and measuring the extent of religious belief and practice was a further line

of analysis seen in good evaluative responses. Lower scoring answers demonstrated little understanding of the secularisation thesis and relied on a general discussion of the role of religion today.