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SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- High scoring answers usually included well-applied sociological material.
- High scoring answers had a sound understanding of positivism and interpretivism.
- Many answers were not clear on how education contributes to the process of socialisation.
- In ***Section B***, many essays lacked sufficient evaluative content.

General comments

In ***Section A***, only the most successful candidates focused clearly on the question set. **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)** require candidates to explain two identified points (characteristics and strengths). Many less successful responses gave more than two or did not focus attention explicitly on making an identification and developing an explanation via specific points. In ***Section B***, candidates overwhelmingly opted to answer **Question 4**. Many responses demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding, especially in **Question 4** where the focus was on gender identity. For both questions, only the most successful responses demonstrated strong evaluative skills. Many candidates offered a clear explanation of the view in the question but did not evaluate by considering arguments against the view. Teachers should note that marks awarded for the essays in ***Section B*** are weighted in favour of evaluation.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Only the strongest candidates were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of upper-class cultural characteristics. Very few candidates correctly identified and described relevant cultural characteristics such as an appreciation of high culture or participation in certain leisure activities. Many responses described general features of the upper class, defined them as a group possessing great wealth, or discussed the upper class from a theoretical perspective. While these answers may have contained accurate knowledge about the upper class, they did not contain characteristics of upper-class culture.

Question 2

(a) Most candidates showed a reasonable understanding of the interpretivist approach to research. The strongest answers made careful links between interpretivist concepts and methods of research with qualitative methods and a focus on the meanings that lie behind behaviour amongst the most popular. Less effective answers tended to outline interpretivism but with few or only implicit links to methods. Many less successful responses made a number of different points about interpretivism without clearly identifying and explaining two characteristics. For this question candidates need to identify a characteristic and explain it, using sociological material to support the point.

(b) Most candidates displayed some knowledge of closed-ended questionnaires and their uses, but only the most successful responses clearly explained two strengths of this research method. Many less successful responses made a number of different points about closed-ended questionnaires, which often included identification of a feature which could potentially be a strength. Only the most successful responses explained why the method has this feature and why the feature is a strength. For example, many candidates identified that questionnaires are high in reliability but only the most successful responses also explained why they are high in reliability (because all respondents

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answer the same set of questions in the same way) and why this is a strength (because it means it is possible for another researcher to repeat and verify the results of the study).

Question 3

(a) The majority of responses focused on the role played by education as an agent of socialisation but did not explicitly link this knowledge to how the processes within education shape identity. Many candidates described some relevant concepts, e.g. the hidden curriculum, but were less successful in applying this knowledge directly to the question. To achieve full marks candidates need only provide two clear and developed points. If these points are made with good reference to concepts, theories and evidence that are directed towards the question a response can achieve 10 marks.

(b) The majority of responses to this question simply described an alternative agent of socialisation and asserted its importance. Very often these responses did not explicitly refer to identity or education. For this question, candidates need to outline an argument against the proposition rather than simply state the role of some or all of the agents of socialisation. To achieve high marks a response needs to be sharply focused on the concept of identity and education. Links may be made to other agents but the relevance of the argument to education must be made clear. Many responses also gave more than one argument in their answer. In these cases, only one was rewarded.

Section B

Question 4

A number of good answers were able to use relevant concepts such as ‘pick and mix’, ‘fragmented identities’, ‘gender fluidity’ and to link these to the process of globalisation and the implications for gender identity. The most effective responses were able to contrast this with evidence supporting the continued existence of traditional gender identities. Many candidates were able to generate arguments on both sides of the debate although often these lacked convincing conceptual and empirical knowledge. Weaker responses used a more common-sense account of male/female roles with little or no engagement with ‘gender identity’. Some candidates offered sound explanation of the view but did evaluate by considering arguments or evidence against the view in the question. This approach significantly limited the marks they were able to attain as the essay questions are weighted in favour of evaluation.

Question 5

There were fewer responses to this question. Most candidates showed a reasonable understanding of positivism and interpretivism as sociological perspectives but were not always able to apply their knowledge to this particular debate. Good responses looked at how values might be involved in stages of the research process and the strongest ones linked these to how perspectives involve values (Marxist, feminist or functionalist). Few candidates introduced references to the freedom/neutrality distinction, and even fewer covered the debate directly. Attempts to evaluate were largely through juxtaposition; i.e. an outline of the interpretivist approach and/or qualitative methods without explicitly engaging with why these question the view that research should be value free.

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Paper 9699/22
Paper 22

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure they read questions carefully, paying particular attention to command words.
- Good responses applied relevant theories, concepts and research to demonstrate sociological knowledge and understanding.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material. Less successful responses tend to be descriptive and/or one-sided.
- Candidates should ensure the time taken to answer each question reflects the number of marks available.

General comments

The more successful responses focused clearly on the question set and applied relevant sociological material to support their answers. In general, candidates need to be aware of their use of time and ensure that time spent on each question reflects the marks available. For example, in **Question 1** a lengthy introduction and conclusion are not necessary; this uses up valuable time that could be utilised on other more challenging questions.

Most candidates displayed reasonable knowledge and understanding of sociological perspectives, particularly functionalism and Marxism. Most candidates were able to name relevant sociological concepts; however, less successful candidates did not apply these to develop their response. This was particularly noticeable within essay responses. Some candidates provided more points than were required for **Questions 2(a)** and **3(b)**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The most successful responses were able to clearly identify two policies with relevant description of how children's behaviour is restricted, either specifically named, for example*, compulsory education: prevents children from undertaking paid employment*, or more broadly applicable, for example, *children under the age of 18 in India are prohibited from consuming alcohol.*

Less successful responses often provided only one policy, or confused social policies with socialisation, discussing, for example, family-imposed sanctions or social norms; e.g. not being rude to elders or not shouting.

Note: Candidates should be encouraged to structure their **Question 1** responses as two bullet points, avoiding unnecessarily lengthy answers.

Question 2

(a) All candidates were able to provide at least one point, with the majority able to provide two. Overwhelmingly responses focused on Murdock or Parsons' functions of the family, discussing primary socialisation and stabilisation of adult personalities. More successful responses clearly demonstrated how the family benefits society and used relevant sociological material in support.

However, less successful candidates either did not provide any explanation, or stated how the individual/family benefitted rather than society. Some less successful responses made appropriate points but did not support them with appropriate sociological material such as a concept, study, or theory.

Note: Some candidates unnecessarily provided more than two ways, which uses up important time that could be allocated elsewhere.

(b) Most candidates were able to identify something about functionalism that could be seen as a limitation. However, only the strongest candidates were able to clearly explain why the feature identified was a limitation. Less successful responses simply described ideas associated with functionalism (e.g. discussed gendered roles within the nuclear family), or discussed characteristics of Marxism/feminism with no clear link to functionalism. To successfully answer this question, candidates need to identify a limitation of functionalism (e.g. it takes only a positive view of the family), explain why it has this limitation (e.g. because it focuses on how the family benefits society and its members), and explain why this is a limitation (e.g. functionalism is therefore unable to explain why negative things happen in some families such as neglect and abuse).

Question 3

(a) All candidates were able to provide some explanations of the view marriage has become less important in society. More successful candidates focused on two points and developed these using relevant sociological theories and concepts, clearly focused on marriage. Other slightly less successful responses tended to provide a more list like approach of multiple reasons with limited development. The least successful responses tended to use a more generalised/common-sense reasoning or attempted to use sociological material that lacked explanation and development. Two clear and developed points, supported with sociological material, is sufficient to achieve 10 marks for this question.

Note: a small number of candidates provided an evaluation of the claim in their answer to **3(a)**; this is not a requirement of the question (they have the opportunity to do this in **3(b)**).

(b) Most candidates were able to provide an argument against the view in the quotation with a large proportion of candidates applying some relevant sociological material. The small proportion of less successful responses relied on a more common-sense approach in their answer, or discussed more vaguely the importance of the nuclear family, without clear reference to the importance of marriage.

Note: a small number of candidates provided more than one argument against the view, using up time that could be useful elsewhere.

Section B

Question 4

Significantly more candidates answered this question than **Question 5**. The more successful responses were clearly focused on the family being harmful for some members, bringing points made explicitly back to this context, engaging with sociological theories and concepts in providing arguments for and against the view. However, few did this latter point explicitly, often relying on juxtaposition of alternative or opposing viewpoints. A few candidates examined beyond women and children, with some discussion of the elderly facing neglect or abuse for being considered a burden or unproductive in some cultures.
Less successful candidates tended to focus their answer on gender inequality/different roles in the family, without linking this material to the context of being harmful for some members, whilst others provided a more simple common-sense response of physical and psychological harm brought through domestic violence.

Question 5

Significantly fewer candidates answered this question than **Question 4**, with only a small amount of these engaging successfully with sociological theories, concepts and evidence. Few responses recognised cultural diversity within the context of the Rapoports' 5 types of diversity, whilst the majority of responses did at least try to examine some link between a particular culture/ethnic group and family type. Weaker responses tended to show limited understanding of how cultural factors impact family diversity, often relying on

common-sense descriptions rather than sociological evidence to support, or were one sided discussions. A few candidates seemed confused with the notion of family diversity, discussing how the nuclear family replaced the extended family.

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Paper 9699/32
Paper 32

Key messages

- Candidates should read the questions carefully, paying particular attention to the specific wording of the question.
- Candidates should use relevant sociological materials, explaining their relevance to the question asked and weighing up their strength in supporting or opposing the view stated in the question.
- Candidates should practise thinking sociologically while preparing for the examination.

General comments

The most successful candidates demonstrated the ability to think sociologically about the questions asked, rather than simply recall factual information they have learned. For example, while many candidates were able to define characteristics of the elaborated code, only the strongest candidates were able to think about and explain the processes that enable those who use the elaborated code to attain more in education.

Sociology is often a challenge to common sense. That is why it is so important to back up statements with evidence and to logically explain arguments that question other peoples' assumptions about how society works. However, candidates should not abandon their general awareness of society if it is relevant to evaluating sociological material. Those who can quote statistics from one country showing more girls than boys go on to university, but also know societies where, for example, girls often leave school early to get married, should remember to show this awareness where relevant.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There was widespread knowledge of Bernstein's codes and the most successful candidates described how these could lead to differences in understanding, communication or labelling that could affect educational attainment. Less successful answers explained the details of the codes without describing *ways* in which they could affect achievement. The same way repeated for a different code could not be rewarded twice; for example, communication with teacher as better with elaborated code but worse with restricted code is only counted as one way.

Question 2

Many candidates explained how the material or cultural advantages of some ethnic groups helped their educational attainment. Others successfully identified how aspects of the ethnocentric curriculum or teacher perceptions or interactions in the classroom could favour some ethnicities. Some candidates referred to majority or dominant ethnic groups while others identified characteristics of minorities, such as high parental expectations, for example Chinese 'Tiger Mums' in Europe or the USA. Less successful answers simply specified some basis for advantage; for example, 'cultural capital' without relating this to ethnicity. It was vital to note that the question asked for reasons for *high* attainment rather than perhaps the more familiar reasons for low attainment.

Question 3

There was generally good understanding of both the feminisation of schools and the gendered curriculum as well as awareness of studies of classroom interaction favouring either gender. Less successful answers either simply argued that boys and girls are treated more equally today or focused on the inequalities of the

past without exploring how far they might still apply. The use of accurate and detailed sociological material to back up assertions was key to benefitting from all the marks available.

Question 4

The best essays had both a strong theoretical approach and a range of empirical studies. These usually explained the Marxist model of the intentional barriers inherent to the capitalist system and used empirical studies to show how barriers to equal educational opportunity, and therefore to mobility, work out in practice in the education system. Good evaluation often explored functionalist and social democratic views of society where the role of education is to enable mobility. This was then backed up with evidence of mobility and contexts of increased opportunity.

The most successful responses not only used concepts but also explained how they were relevant to the question, such as *how* education as an ideological state apparatus *limits mobility*. Less successful responses used concepts without explaining how they were relevant. For example, simply *listing* that Althusser says education *is* an ideological state apparatus. Many candidates diligently distinguished between inter and intra generational mobility at the start of their answer, but seldom linked this to the question by discussing whether education might be a barrier to one more than the other.

Several essays juxtaposed a functionalist introduction with a Marxist critique without explicitly framing the answer to the question asked or evaluating the relative strength of either view. Candidates can be rewarded for evaluation on several levels – for example, Willis 'Learning to Labour' can be used to criticise the determinism of classic Marxism, but also to show the subcultural constraints on meritocracy working in practice, as well as itself being methodologically evaluated in terms of its sample, date and qualitative analysis. The best answers also reach a balanced evaluative conclusion, taking into account how education may have different effects on mobility according to the time, place, prevailing policies or the social groups concerned.

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Paper 9699/42
Paper 42

Key messages

- Good knowledge of relevant sociological material demonstrated in many of the scripts.
- High-quality answers made sustained use of relevant concepts and theories.
- Higher marks could be achieved by including more analysis and evaluation.
- Some low-scoring responses lacked focus on the key terms in the question.
- References to appropriate research evidence were lacking in some of the answers.

General comments

The standard of the scripts overall was good, with the majority of candidates demonstrating at least a sound knowledge and understanding of the issues raised by the questions. High-scoring answers included a sustained evaluation of the view on which the question was based. While some candidates seemed well prepared in the skills of analysis and evaluation, others struggled with this aspect of the test. Answers that lacked evaluative content were usually characterised by uncritical support for the view on which the question was based. By contrast, higher-scoring answers showed awareness of potential limitations with the stated view and/or explored relevant alternative arguments and perspectives.

Not focusing on the key terms in the question was a problem with some of the answers. For example, some candidates attempted to answer **Question 1** without analysing the underlying causes of the rise in global crime. Encouraging candidates to make a note of the key terms in the question before starting to answer is to be recommended. Referring back to the key terms at regular intervals in the answer is also advisable. Higher marks could also be gained by making more use of appropriate research evidence to illustrate key points and to support analysis and evaluation.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

High-scoring answers to this question demonstrated a good understanding of different types of global crime, both financial and non-financial in character. Explanations for the origins of each type of global crime were explored and a well-reasoned conclusion was reached about whether there is a single underlying cause of global crime. Some candidates made good use of the Marxist perspective in arguing that the spread of global capitalism is the main factor behind the rise in global crime. Weaknesses in the Marxist argument were also identified in answers that were strongly evaluative. Lower-scoring answers were often limited to a discussion of just one or two types of global crime and there was little focus on the underlying causes of these forms of criminality. A few candidates discussed the causes of crime in general, with little or no reference to global crime specifically.

Question 2

Most candidates recognised that this question provided an opportunity to discuss different theories of development. Good answers linked the wording of the question specifically to dependency theory, using the work of thinkers such as Gunder-Frank to explore ways in which developed countries use their economic power to exploit poorer countries. Some candidates also made relevant connections with Wallerstein's world systems theory, highlighting ways in which global capitalism creates barriers that keep developing countries locked in a state of poverty. High-scoring responses included a sustained evaluation of the view on which the question was based. The evaluation was often developed through discussion of cultural explanations of development, chiefly modernisation theory. Some answers highlighted weaknesses in dependency theory directly, referring in particular to evidence that the theory is over-deterministic and fails to take account of differences between developing countries. Lower-scoring answers often lacked references to relevant sociological theory and concepts, relying instead on a general discussion of factors that may contribute to poverty in developing countries.

Section B

Question 3

This was a popular question and there were some good answers that provided a sustained discussion of how far, and in what ways, the media shape the way people think and behave. The hypodermic-syringe model was often used to support the view that the media is able to control behaviour. Good evaluative responses highlighted weaknesses in the idea that the media has a direct influence on behaviour, drawing on logical arguments and evidence from relevant studies. Some candidates also used the two-step flow and uses and gratification models of media effects to argue that audiences are active rather than passive consumers of the media. Lower-scoring answers often agreed with the view that the media is able control thought and behaviour, without providing much supporting analysis. References to relevant sociological evidence and theory was often lacking in these responses.

Question 4

There were relatively few answers to this question. Good responses demonstrated a clear understanding of why it might be difficult for individual national governments to control the new media. Some candidates made good use of examples to illustrate how the new media has been used to bypass governmental controls in struggles such as those occurring during the Arab Spring and in the democracy protests in Hong Kong. High-scoring responses also included a sustained evaluation of the view that national governments are powerless to control the new media. Ways in which national governments might be able to oppose or restrict the activities of the new media were discussed, with censorship and control of digital technology among the factors widely mentioned. Lower-scoring responses lacked examples of new media influence and often uncritically accepted the view that national governments are powerless to control these new forms of media communication. There were also a few answers that discussed the power of the media in general rather than focussing on the new media specifically.

Section C

Question 5

High-scoring answers demonstrated a good understanding of the functionalist view that religion encourages social solidarity through involvement in collective worship and acceptance of shared values. Evaluation of this view was provided by considering contrasting theories of religion, such as the Marxist and feminist perspectives. Some candidates also used evidence of religious conflicts to question the idea that religion contributes to social solidarity. There were some lower-scoring answers that lacked an evaluation of the functionalist perspective. Some answers also conflated the concepts of social solidarity and social order in discussing the role of religion. Answers in this category focused on whether religion has an ideological role in creating social order rather than on the specific issue of whether religion contributes to social solidarity.

Question 6

High-scoring answers to this question demonstrated a good understanding of the view that religion has just as much social significance today as in the past. Concepts such as religious revival, re-sacralisation, new religious movements, and new age spirituality were used to support claims that religion still exercises considerable influence over thought and behaviour today. Evaluation of this view was often provided through a summary of arguments and evidence associated with the secularisation thesis. Some candidates also

showed good analytical skills by questioning whether religion was a powerful social force in the past, noting a shortage of reliable evidence about religiosity in previous epochs and suggesting that the social significance of religion may vary greatly between societies and between different time periods. There were some lower-scoring answers that described the secularisation thesis without considering arguments for the alternative view that religion has just as much social significance today as in the past. A few answers at the lower end of the mark range were confined to a discussion of the functionalist and Marxist theories of religion with no direct links to the question set.