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SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12

Socialisation, Identity and Research Methods

Key messages

- Greater observance of the new examination's rubric was shown in ***Section A.***
- Candidates showed limited knowledge and understanding of questions focusing on socialisation and identity.
- High scoring answers usually included well-applied sociological material to support points made in **Questions 2** and **3**
- In ***Section B*** many essay responses needed a broader range of supporting material
- Essay evaluation was primarily delivered via juxtaposition.

General comments

The standard of responses overall was moderate. In particular, some candidates found questions which focused on subculture and deviance challenging. For example, in ***Section A*** many candidates struggled with **Question 3(a) and 3(b).** Few responses made appropriate links between the concept of subculture and deviance.

In ***Section A*** **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)** required methodological knowledge. In both questions there was evidence of a sound knowledge base although responses could have been improved with an increase in range and depth in the use of sociological material to support points made. Generally, many responses adhered to the wording of **Questions 2(a)** and **2(b)** successfully. This was especially the case with **2(a)** where many responses were focused and less characterised by general discussions of the topic area. Centres should note that the marks for these questions are accumulated on a points-based approach as demonstrated by the mark scheme. Candidates would benefit from practising the skills required for all of the questions in ***Section A***.

In ***Section B***, **Question 4** was the more popular of the two questions, though slightly less well done with a tendency for a narrow range of developed arguments for the view and little depth to the evaluation points against. In **Question 5** candidates showed greater confidence in outlining the counter argument, the positivist approach, than the argument supporting the view, interpretivism; this left some answers rather unbalanced.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This question was answered very well by the majority of candidates. In most cases, candidates correctly identified two types of questionnaire and described these appropriately. Closed-ended and open-ended were the predominant types of questionnaire cited, followed by postal. The descriptive elements usually provided clear and accurate development points. Some candidates regarded postal questionnaires as synonymous with internet based ones; this is not the case. Answers to this question needed to identify and describe. Without a clear identification no mark was awarded.

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Question 2

(a) There was evidence that candidates paid close attention to the wording of this question. The best responses clearly identified a way, explained it, selected relevant sociological material and then showed how the selected material supported the point. Weaker responses did no more than identify a way and explain it which meant that they were unable to access all the marks available. The majority of candidates identified how the amount of money available affects the extent or quality of research, and some referred to how the funding body impacts on choice of method or topic; some identified both. Often development points were either absent or used examples that were not sociological. Many responses stated two ways that were the same or very similar, typically relating to the level of funding; these answers were not rewarded.

(b) Most candidates successfully pointed to some practical strengths of existing written sources, typically the ease of obtaining material or the time and cost-benefits of this method. Stronger answers identified the theoretical advantages of this approach and/or used specific sociological research to develop points. Candidates tended to be a little more confident in discussing limitations. The most popular example revolved around the subjective nature of much of the material and its interpretation. Some responses cited lack of reliability as a limitation but the use of this term was often incorrectly applied. A number of candidates focused their attention on discussing qualitative methodology but largely omitted mention of secondary sources. Those that took this approach and did not make concrete links to examples of secondary sources achieved one or two marks at best. Overall, there appeared to be some knowledge of this research method but a lack of understanding about its uses.

Question 3

(a) This question was not well-answered by most candidates. A significant number of responses lacked a clear understanding of the meaning of subcultures, especially in the context of deviant behaviour. Few provided clear definitions of the term and often there was little distinction made between cultural groups and subcultural ones. Many responses wrote long introductions without making concrete points. Those candidates that did use appropriate sociology identified appropriate examples such as ‘goths’ and ‘skinheads’. The few who adopted this approach very often only made one clear point in their response. Hence, not many candidates achieved the higher levels for this question. Stronger answers utilised education-related subcultures to make points although better use of concepts such as class, gender and ethnicity could have helped improve these. This question does not require an essay response to achieve full marks. Candidates need only provide two clear and sociologically developed points that are well directed towards the question.

(b) Although candidates produced better responses in this question than **3(a)**, the lack of appropriate understanding of the concept of subcultures limited the quality of answer. Many candidates simply outlined an alternative explanation for deviant behaviour and asserted its greater significance than subcultures. Typically this involved outlining the explanation with few links to subcultures. Those that attempted to make a link were rewarded accordingly. Only a small number of responses made any direct reference to subcultures in their answers, for example by showing how any given alternative explanation might provide a more convincing account of deviant behaviour. There was little use of relevant sociological material in responses to this question. This meant that the majority were not able to reach the highest level. Many responses also gave more than one argument in their answer. In these cases, only one was rewarded.

Section B

Question 4

By far the more popular of the two essays. Overall, the responses to this question were rather weak. Effective answers used a range of arguments to shape their essay. These included: evidence supporting the impact of socialisation on human behaviour from language acquisition to identity formation, cross-cultural variations in gender roles and the incidence of feral children. For the most part, candidates selected a very narrow range of material, often only focusing on the process of socialisation via different agents. These responses were often highly descriptive with insufficient application made to the question. In outlining arguments against the view responses were similarly limited in range. Most responses discussed sociobiological accounts of human behaviour. However, the points made were often underdeveloped. Typically, these arguments were delivered through juxtaposition and instead needed more focused evaluation. A number of scripts offered few or no evaluation points.

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Question 5

Most candidates successfully identified interpretivism as the view in the question, and described the strengths and limitations of this approach. Many also linked this to the counter argument and to positivism. The most successful responses focused on the interpretivist approach and its rationale. These candidates directed their attention toward interpretivist methods and the key concepts shaping them, invariably making links to the key ideas of this approach such as subjectivity, meanings and verstehen. Generally, candidates were more comfortable evaluating the view, and showed greater confidence in outlining the positivist position. Weaker answers were much more list-like and simply described the two approaches. In weaker responses, the key concepts of validity and reliability were often used inaccurately. Few responses focused directly on individual methods as a way of illustrating the theoretical arguments put forward, with many settling for general descriptions of quantitative and qualitative approaches.

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Paper 9699/22
The Family

Key messages

- Candidates should familiarise themselves with question structure and ensure they understand the requirements of the questions prior to the examination. The mark schemes can be used as teaching and learning tools, particularly for **2(b).**
- Candidates should ensure they focus responses on the family rather than wider society, as this is the context of the unit.
- Good responses applied relevant sociological theories, concepts and research to demonstrate sociological knowledge and understanding.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses engage in competing views, looking at different sides of the issue in the question and apply relevant sociological material. Less successful responses tended to be descriptive and/or one sided.

General comments

Most candidates provided a response to all questions set, and in general showed some grasp of what is required of them in answering the paper. However, it is evident that others may not have been fully prepared in understanding the requirements of the question (*see comments for individual questions below*). Candidates in general appeared to demonstrate a reasonable grasp of Marxism and functionalism, however wider sociological knowledge and understanding appears rather limited, particularly of radical feminism, often demonstrating confusion. Less successful candidates often demonstrated a more basic level of sociological knowledge and understanding.

The more successful candidates produced responses that reflected the requirements of the question applied relevant sociological material to support their responses. Candidate responses that achieved lower marks tended to be descriptive and lacked application of sociological material in providing evidence of analysis and assessment. They often relied more on common sense / general knowledge. Some responses did not answer the question set.

Most candidates successfully named relevant sociological concepts; less successful candidates did not apply these to develop their response, often 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. Any rubric errors tended to occur within **Questions 2(a)** and **3(b)**, whereby candidates provided more points than were required.

In general, candidates need to be more aware of their use of time reflecting 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, e.g. several candidates appeared to run out of time providing essay responses cut prematurely short. The majority of candidates answered the questions in order; some perhaps could have benefitted from answering the essay first.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A

The majority of candidates answered all questions in ***Section A***. However, questions that candidates did occasionally fail to provide any response at all, were **2(b)** and **3(b)**.

Question 1

More successful candidates clearly identified and described two ways grandparents may provide benefits for the family. Most responses tended to focus on the idea of '*childcare' / when both parents are working*, and *'financial support' / paying for grandchild's education.* Less successful responses did not focus their explanations on grandparents, rather were general to elderly people. There seemed to be an assumption that being elderly meant being a grandparent, with explanations not focused on the specifics of the question and addressing the grandparent relationship, therefore did not achieve the additional mark for the explanation.

Occasionally candidates provided more than the two responses required and some that provided unnecessary introductions and/or definitions of grandparents. There were also occasional responses in which the second way provided was a repetition of the first (e.g. child caring), with wording slightly altered. Therefore, these candidates at most achieved half the marks available.

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

Question 2

(a) Most candidates successfully provided at least one appropriate point and relevant explanation, with the majority able to provide two. There were some very good answers that achieved full marks. In the main, candidates appeared to focus responses on the differences in socialisation and tighter restrictions for girls.

More successful responses clearly demonstrated two ways that girls experience family life differently to boys, supported with the application of appropriate sociological material. Less successful responses did not apply sociological material and therefore at most were awarded half the marks available to them. To improve, candidates needed to apply appropriate sociological evidence, e.g. concepts, studies, relevant policies and apply these in supporting the original point made. Irrelevant responses did not focus on girls/boys as required, rather women/men and often in the context of the workplace. Such responses were not credited.

Too often, candidates wasted their time providing lengthy introductions and conclusions, and/or provided more than the two ways required. All of these issues raised are not required; candidates should be encouraged to get straight into the response, and only give the two points requested. A small number of candidates who gave lengthy evaluations, e.g. that girls do not experience family life differently to boys. Again, this was not a requirement of the question.

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

(b) In general, candidates did not answer this question well, demonstrating minimal understanding of requirements of the question and the relevant knowledge of strengths of radical feminist views of the family. However, there were examples of candidates showing some good comprehension, with responses largely focused on how radical feminists recognise patriarchy as the cause of female oppression in the family, and how changes in the law are not enough to improve the position of women within the family.

Where candidates tended to go wrong, was to simply describe views of radical feminism or discuss strengths of liberal and Marxist feminism. Furthermore, there were some responses that did not discuss radical feminism within the context of the family, rather wider society. Several candidates provided limitations of radical feminism, which was not a requirement of the question.

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

Question 3

(a) The majority of candidates were able to recognise that this was a question that leant towards Marxist ideas, tending to discuss Althusser and the family as an ISA, recreation/perpetuation of the workforce, as well as consumerism. Some candidates had the knowledge and understanding to extend these to discuss the notion of creating false class consciousness, or how the family perpetuates capitalism by buying in to false needs which fuels consumerism and profits. A few candidates answered the question through an application of functionalist ideas e.g. economic needs, stabilisation of adult personalities. However, these responses often did not connect the functionalist ideas back to the context of capitalism (i.e. discussed how the family helped society in general), thus limiting marks that could be awarded.

Again, there were candidates that gave unnecessary definitions of the family and occasionally a candidate provided an answer within the context of wider society or how education/media supported capitalism, rather than the family.

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

(b) Most candidates were able to provide a response to this question, with the majority of successful responses discussing functionalism and functions of the family serving the needs of the individual and/or wider society. Occasionally there were successful responses that critiqued Marxism and the idea of family serving capitalism as being too deterministic. Less successful responses, either did not provide relevant sociological material to support their point, largely relying on description or common sense, or did not provide a relevant argument against the view. A small number of candidates provided a critique of their argument against the statement, which is not a requirement of the question.

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

Section B

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

Question 4

Slightly more candidates answered **Question 4** than **Question 5**, with those candidates who answered **Question 4** tending to demonstrate more of a sociological knowledge and understanding throughout ***Section A*** than those who opted for **Question 5**.

Many candidates based their discussion on a historical context (medieval, pre-industrial, seventeenth century), rather than as the question required, *today*, thus limiting the marks that they would be awarded. The more successful responses were clearly focussed on an assessment of the view conjugal roles are equally shared between men and women today, demonstrating good application of relevant sociological material in supporting key points. This tended to focus on liberal feminism, New Man/Father, and the more dated work of Willmott and Young. Occasionally candidates expanded this to include more post-modernist arguments about choice and negotiated relationships.

Counter arguments tended to focus on how women continue to undertake the bulk of domestic labour, and how men continue to dominate the power sharing etc. predominantly through radical and Marxist Feminism. However, few responses explicitly engaged in an evaluation of the question, often relying on juxtaposition of alternative or opposing viewpoints.

Weaker responses tended to simply present viewpoints or relied on description rather than a clear engagement of material, whilst a few relied on common-sense or anecdotal observations. Occasionally, candidates only addressed one side of the debate, either agreeing that conjugal roles are equally shared

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between men and women, ***or*** that they are not, thus hugely limiting the AO marks that the response could be awarded. The tendency to simply present material limited the marks that candidates could be awarded, they earned some AO2 acknowledgement but not AO1 or AO3. A few candidates showed no understanding of conjugal roles and discussed how women are not suited to undertake certain jobs in industry / that men are more suited to more physical occupations.

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

A large proportion of candidates answering this question did not recognise it as a family diversity question, focussing their responses on the role of the family / functions of the family / loss of functions, or discussing why the nuclear family is the best type of family.

Those candidates that did answer the question within the context of diversity, tended to focus on historical discussions of early functionalist writers, rather than a more contemporary focus such as Chester. Arguments against, tended to rely on common-sense observations such as there are other family types, e.g. lone parent, same sex, without sociological evidence / material to support. Only a very small minority applied sociological concepts/theorists, e.g. post-modernist ideas of choice/family is whatever you want it to be, or the impact of the changing lives of women.

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

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Paper 9699/32
Education

Key messages

- Candidates should read each question carefully and respond to the command words.
- Response time should be divided between the questions according to the marks allocated for each.
- Responses should be fully explained and supported where required.

General comments

Candidates should aim to use detailed and accurate sociological knowledge. Responses should be related to the question asked and their relevance clearly demonstrated.

In **Question 3** candidates need to use evaluation in their responses and argue against a given statement. Arguments against it can include criticisms of the logic and generalisability of the theory, as well as presenting alternative points of view.

In **Question 4** candidates should give balanced essays which will include arguments from both sides equally. This question requires a conclusion, not just a list of points of view. This will usually acknowledge that there are useful insights from more than one perspective and that some points are more relevant to certain times and places.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

The best responses clearly identified two clear policies that aimed to reduce inequality and gained full marks by showing how each policy aimed at reducing inequality. A vague aspiration, such as 'gender equality' would not be rewarded as a policy. Mention of a specific policy, such as 'Sure Start' would get an identification mark. To get a second mark the explanation needed to show some knowledge of *how* this policy might reduce inequality rather than merely stating that it aimed to do so. A few candidates were not aware of what is meant by 'policy'.

Question 2

The strongest responses clearly identified two separate 'ways' in which negative labelling by teachers could affect pupils' educational attainment, explaining each point and including some sociological material (studies, concepts, etc.). Weaker answers tended to describe the labelling rather than focussing on its effects. The better answers drew on interactionist studies of teacher decisions, pupils' responses, streaming or subcultures.

Question 3

Relevant arguments often focused on out of school factors, such as the effects of material or cultural deprivation, or on in-school issues that were not racist such as the ethnocentric curriculum. Both approaches gained credit. A feature of weaker answers was a tendency to lose focus on ethnicity and discuss class or gender in a way unrelated to the question.

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Question 4

There were some very strong responses to this question. These answers contained a very good knowledge of the key Marxist arguments supported with developed evidence from Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu or other Marxist thinkers and a focus on the legitimising of inequality. They showed an ability to evaluate with evidence, for example Willis on pupil agency, as well as to consider alternative perspectives on 'the role of education' that were well developed. Weaker answers generally outlined aspects of inequality and juxtaposed the different theoretical perspectives without engaging in debate about the key Marxist concepts.

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Paper 9699/42
Globalisation, Media, Religion

Key messages

- Good answers combined detailed sociological understanding with well-directed evaluation.
- Some answers discussed the general topic raised by the question while lacking focus on the specific wording.
- High scoring responses made good use of relevant sociological concepts and theories.
- Low scoring answers often relied on assertion and general knowledge rather than relevant sociological material.
- Higher marks could be gained by offering a more sustained evaluation of the view on which the question is based.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts was high, with many candidates demonstrating the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation alongside good knowledge and application. High-scoring answers combined detailed sociological understanding with sustained evaluation of the issues raised by the question. Use of sociological evidence and theories to support the evaluation was also a feature of answers in the higher mark range. Some candidates wrote long answers where the material was poorly linked to the question and there was a lack of relevant evaluation. Candidates who fall into this category would be better advised to write shorter answers and take more time to think about the requirements of the question and how best to structure their response. Many responses made references to relevant theories, but sociological concepts were less widely used and a lot of answers lacked references to relevant studies.

Most candidates answered two questions in the time available. The questions on the Religion and Media proved most popular, with those on Globalisation less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Good answers to this question provided a detailed account of how globalisation may have led to cultural convergence. High-quality responses also included a sustained evaluation of the view expressed in the question. Some candidates made good use of examples of global cultural forms to support their analysis. Likewise, helpful references to Westernisation were often made to suggest that there is a power imbalance in the spread of global influences. Lower scoring answers were often confined to a few basic points about cultural convergence with no evaluation. There were also a few responses that discussed globalisation without referring to its influence on cultures.

Question 2

There were relatively few answers to this question. Good responses demonstrated a clear understanding of modernisation theory and how it attempts to explain global inequality. High scoring answers also challenged whether modernisation theory provides the best explanation of global inequality. The evaluation often drew on references to alternative theories of global inequality, including dependency theory and Wallerstein's world systems perspective. Some candidates made good use of references to particular examples of global inequality to support their analysis. Lower scoring answers described some features of modernisation theory without a clear focus on explanations of inequality.

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Section B

Question 3

This was a popular question that was answered well by many candidates. Good responses provided a detailed account of why governments might find it hard to control the media. Some candidates made good use of the distinction between authoritarian and democratic political systems when evaluating the scope for governments to influence the media. There were some high-quality answers that captured the nuanced nature of the relationships that often hold between government and the media. Contrasts between the new media and the traditional media also featured in some well-directed responses. Lower-scoring answers often offered an uncritical acceptance of the view expressed in the question, omitting to consider possible ways in which governments might be able to exercise control over the media.

Question 4

Good answers to this question demonstrated a clear understanding of the two-step flow model and how it contributes to understanding the influence of the media on human behaviour. High scoring responses also provided a sustained evaluation of the view expressed in the question. Some candidates made good use of references to relevant sociological studies of media influence to support their analysis. Alternative models of media influence were also used to highlight strengths and limitations in the two-step flow model. Lower scoring responses were often limited to a few basic points about the two-step flow model with no evaluation.

Section C

Question 5

Good responses to this question demonstrated a detailed understanding of the feminist view that religion contributes to gender inequality. This was complemented by a sustained evaluation of arguments and evidence supporting the view expressed in the question. Some candidates made good use of examples to show that the position of women varies between religions and may also have changed over time. Lower scoring responses were limited to a few basic points about how women may be oppressed by religion, with little use of relevant sociological material and analysis to support the answer. There were a few answers that discussed gender inequality in general rather than focusing on the part that religion may play in female oppression.

Question 6

This was a popular question that was answered well by many of the candidates. Good responses discussed several reasons why claims that secularisation has occurred might be exaggerated. References were often made to the growth of new religious movements and the putative increase in privatised religion. The difficulty of measuring the extent of religious belief across time was also mentioned as a complicating factor when assessing claims that secularisation has occurred. High-scoring answers often used evidence from appropriate research studies to support the analysis. Strong evaluative responses considered a range of arguments and evidence that has been used to refute the claim that the extent of secularisation has been exaggerated. Lower scoring responses lacked references to relevant sociological material and relied mainly on personal opinion and assertion in answering the question.

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