SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/11

Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research

Key messages

- Teachers should support candidates in accessing past exam papers and mark schemes to help make candidates aware of the different types of question they may encounter on a topic, and how to apply their knowledge and understanding of sociological material to answer that specific question.
- 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.
- Candidates need to ensure responses reflect marks available.

General comments

Overall performance across the cohort was mixed. Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of basic concepts, but struggled with question focus, conceptual development, and application of sociological theory and studies.

In ***Section A***, most candidates attempted all questions. For Question **2a**, many candidates appeared unfamiliar with the term 'study groups'. For many candidates, performance declined noticeably on **Questions 3a** and **3b** particularly where knowledge lacked conceptual depth and/or the role of religion was not always well applied to its impact on an individual's identity.

In ***Section B*** high marks were consistently achievable where candidates engaged analytically, applied sociological material effectively and made clear, well supported evaluative points. **Question 5** was the most popular and tended to produce the strongest responses.

Section A

Question 1

This question was generally answered very well. Most candidates identified appropriate positive social sanctions, examples such as praise, rewards, certificates, positive feedback, or recognition from teachers and peers. Where marks were lost, it was typically because candidates described negative sanctions instead, or described general behaviour learned through socialisation without linking their point to sanctions.

Question 2

(a) Performance on this question was varied. Many candidates misunderstood the term 'study group,' assuming it referred to a homework or revision group rather than a group being researched. Among those who understood the intent of the question, stronger answers clearly identified issues such as gatekeepers, ethical considerations, participant mistrust, or power dynamics, and supported points well with relevant studies or methodologies. Weaker answers sometimes wandered into issues associated with conducting research rather than gaining access, which limited marks.

(b) This question produced mixed results. Many responses offered very generic points applicable to any interview type or failed to make explicit comparisons with structured or unstructured interviews. Stronger responses highlighted flexibility of questioning, the ability to probe, and the balance between structure and openness. Weaker responses repeated the same point in different forms or lacked specificity.

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Question 3

(a) Candidates found this one of the more challenging questions on this examination paper. A significant number of candidates misread the question, answering instead how religion does influence identity. Among those who answered appropriately, relevant points included secularisation, individualism, alternative agents of socialisation, and postmodern identity fluidity.

Correct responses often lacked conceptual development or strong links to identity therefore limiting the ability of candidates to reach the higher mark bands.

(b) Correct answers identified ways religion does shape identity, such as through traditions, belonging, moral values, and community structures. Few candidates used studies or theoretical material, so only a small proportion of candidates reached the top mark band.

Some candidates again reversed the logic and supported the idea that religion has little influence, which could not be credited.

Section B

Question 4

This was the least popular question and produced mixed quality responses.

Stronger responses used sociological material and applied it to the question very well and went on to evaluate explicitly including points such as Postman on the disappearance of childhood, Aries on historical shifts, postmodern perspectives, and cross-cultural comparisons.

Many weaker responses simply described age categories rather than engaging with age identities being clear and fixed. Some weaker answers mentioned sociological content unrelated to age identity.

Question 5

This was one of the strongest questions overall.

Many candidates explained interpretivist concepts effectively and compared interpretivism with positivism using relevant studies and applied their arguments to the idea of understanding society.

Many candidates did not manage to reach the higher mark bands for the three assessment objectives as their points remained underdeveloped which could have been overcome with specific sociological supporting evidence for the points made.

Marks were also lost due to repetition, descriptive answers, or confusion between interpretivism and positivism. A small number focused incorrectly on the ‘sociology as a science’ debate.

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Paper 9699/12

Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research

Key messages

- Teachers should support candidates in accessing past exam papers and mark schemes to help make candidates aware of the different types of question they may encounter on a topic, and how to apply their knowledge and understanding of sociological material to answer that specific question.
- 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.
- Candidates need to ensure responses reflect marks available.

General comments

In ***Section A***, most candidates attempted all questions, though performance declined noticeably on **Questions 2b** and particularly **3a** where knowledge was often generic, and lacked conceptual depth and weak links to age identity where required.

In ***Section B*** **Question 4** was generally the strongest answered across the paper and helped many candidates improve their overall marks. **Question 5** was popular but produced mixed outcomes, with stronger candidates demonstrating clear methodological understanding and weaker candidates losing focus on the evaluative demands of the question.

Across the paper, a recurring issue was the tendency to write lengthy introductions and conclusions that were not rewarded, alongside descriptive responses that lacked focused analysis or explicit links to the demands of the question.

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates were able to identify two social roles, with the most common examples being candidate, parent (mother or father), child, grandparent. Stronger responses not only identified the roles correctly but also briefly described the expectations attached to each role, allowing candidates to access full marks. However, a significant number of candidates struggled with the concept of social roles, instead writing about norms, values, social control, or agents of socialisation. Weaker responses were often overly generic, while others provided unnecessarily long descriptions.

Question 2

(a) Responses to this question were mixed. Many candidates demonstrated some understanding of how funding can influence sociological research, most commonly referring to the impact of funding on the choice of research method, sample size, scale of the study, or research topic. Stronger answers clearly identified two distinct influences, such as pressure from funding bodies (including governments or institutions) to shape research focus or outcomes, budget constraints limiting methodological choices, or the introduction of bias. These responses explained how funding affected research design and linked points explicitly to funding.

Less effective answers often identified only one influence or treated high and low levels of funding as two separate points, only one of which was creditable. Some candidates wrote vague

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statements about research being 'better' or 'worse' with more money, while others discussed unrelated issues such as ethical controls or interviewer effects with little or no reference to funding.

(b) Many candidates showed some knowledge of longitudinal studies, particularly identifying the ability to track changes over time, detect trends and patterns, and collect in-depth data. Stronger responses explained why these features are strengths, for example by linking long-term observation to increased validity, richer data, or improved understanding of social change.

However, a large proportion of candidates indicated a lack of understanding of the key features of longitudinal studies. Common weaknesses included defining what a longitudinal study is without explaining its strengths, failing to link answers explicitly to the *time-based* nature of longitudinal research, or making unsupported claims about validity, reliability, or representativeness.

Question 3

(a) This was the most challenging question for many candidates. Very few responses demonstrated a strong or sustained focus on age identity. Most candidates discussed the family as an agent of primary socialisation in general terms, without explicitly linking family practices to the development of age identity.

Stronger responses linked specific family practices, such as rules, responsibilities, sanctions, parental control, or age-related expectations, to how individuals develop an understanding of age roles and identities. However, sociological material was often underdeveloped or not clearly applied.

(b) Responses to this question were generally stronger than those for **Question 3(a)**. Most candidates were able to identify at least one alternative agent of socialisation, most commonly peers, the media, or education. Stronger answers focused clearly on one agent and supported their argument with relevant sociological ideas.

However, many responses did not explain why the alternative agent might be more significant than the family in shaping age identity, therefore not fully addressing the question, which limited access to higher marks.

Section B

Question 4

Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the view that traditional gender identity is the most significant influence on male and female behaviour. Stronger responses drew on concepts such as gender-role socialisation, patriarchy, hegemonic masculinity, and the traditional division of labour.

Effective evaluation considered opposing arguments, including changing gender norms, feminist critiques, and shifting media representations.

Weaker responses tended to be descriptive and lacked sustained evaluation.

Question 5

Performance on this question was mixed. Stronger candidates clearly linked positivism to quantitative methods and evaluated whether these methods are the best way to study social behaviour. Effective answers discussed strengths such as reliability, objectivity, and representativeness, often supported by examples such as Durkheim's study of suicide and clearly evaluated with interpretivist arguments, supporting studies and concepts.

Weaker responses tended to list methods without sustained evaluation or lost focus on the demands of the question.

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Paper 9699/13

Socialisation, Identity and Methods of Research

Key messages

- Teachers should support candidates in accessing past exam papers and mark schemes to help make candidates aware of the different types of question they may encounter on a topic, and how to apply their knowledge and understanding of sociological material to answer that specific question.
- 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.
- Candidates need to ensure responses reflect marks available.

General comments

Overall performance across the cohort was mixed. Many candidates demonstrated secure knowledge of basic concepts, but struggled with question focus, conceptual development, and application of sociological theory and studies.

In ***Section A***, most candidates attempted all questions. For Question **2a**, many candidates appeared unfamiliar with the term 'study groups'. For many candidates, performance declined noticeably on **Questions 3a** and **3b** particularly where knowledge lacked conceptual depth and/or the role of religion was not always well applied to its impact on an individual's identity.

In ***Section B*** high marks were consistently achievable where candidates engaged analytically, applied sociological material effectively and made clear, well supported evaluative points. **Question 5** was the most popular and tended to produce the strongest responses.

Section A

Question 1

This question was generally answered very well. Most candidates identified appropriate positive social sanctions, examples such as praise, rewards, certificates, positive feedback, or recognition from teachers and peers. Where marks were lost, it was typically because candidates described negative sanctions instead, or described general behaviour learned through socialisation without linking their point to sanctions.

Question 2

(a) Performance on this question was varied. Many candidates misunderstood the term 'study group,' assuming it referred to a homework or revision group rather than a group being researched. Among those who understood the intent of the question, stronger answers clearly identified issues such as gatekeepers, ethical considerations, participant mistrust, or power dynamics, and supported points well with relevant studies or methodologies. Weaker answers sometimes wandered into issues associated with conducting research rather than gaining access, which limited marks.

(b) This question produced mixed results. Many responses offered very generic points applicable to any interview type or failed to make explicit comparisons with structured or unstructured interviews. Stronger responses highlighted flexibility of questioning, the ability to probe, and the balance between structure and openness. Weaker responses repeated the same point in different forms or lacked specificity.

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Question 3

(a) Candidates found this one of the more challenging questions on this examination paper. A significant number of candidates misread the question, answering instead how religion does influence identity. Among those who answered appropriately, relevant points included secularisation, individualism, alternative agents of socialisation, and postmodern identity fluidity.

Correct responses often lacked conceptual development or strong links to identity therefore limiting the ability of candidates to reach the higher mark bands.

(b) Correct answers identified ways religion does shape identity, such as through traditions, belonging, moral values, and community structures. Few candidates used studies or theoretical material, so only a small proportion of candidates reached the top mark band.

Some candidates again reversed the logic and supported the idea that religion has little influence, which could not be credited.

Section B

Question 4

This was the least popular question and produced mixed quality responses.

Stronger responses used sociological material and applied it to the question very well and went on to evaluate explicitly including points such as Postman on the disappearance of childhood, Aries on historical shifts, postmodern perspectives, and cross-cultural comparisons.

Many weaker responses simply described age categories rather than engaging with age identities being clear and fixed. Some weaker answers mentioned sociological content unrelated to age identity.

Question 5

This was one of the strongest questions overall.

Many candidates explained interpretivist concepts effectively and compared interpretivism with positivism using relevant studies and applied their arguments to the idea of understanding society.

Many candidates did not manage to reach the higher mark bands for the three assessment objectives as their points remained underdeveloped which could have been overcome with specific sociological supporting evidence for the points made.

Marks were also lost due to repetition, descriptive answers, or confusion between interpretivism and positivism. A small number focused incorrectly on the ‘sociology as a science’ debate.

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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 requirements of the question.
- Teachers should sufficiently 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 need to ensure they focus responses on the context of **the family in 2b**.
- More successful candidates applied relevant sociological material/evidence to demonstrate a sociological awareness.

General comments

Overall, few candidates achieved in the higher marks range, with the majority achieving mid-range and lower, due to demonstrating 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). However, *few candidates explicitly evaluated the question*, relying on juxtaposition of opposing points. Some candidates failed to provide a response that addressed contrasting sides of the debate, providing one-sided responses thus limiting the marks that could be awarded.

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.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates were able to identify and describe one relevant way, with many of these providing the two required. Commonly, *socialisation into norms and values* (with specific cultural examples e.g. respect/care of the elderly), *parental expectations* (such as educational focus/'tiger moms' or, financially support the family) and *the impact of religious influences within the family* (dress, traditions, particularistic morals etc.) were discussed. Less popular responses included family type, as well as gender role expectations. Occasionally however, the second attempted way became a repetition of the first way, just with a different example, particularly when citing socialisation/norms and values and therefore, not rewarded. There were a few

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examples of responses that identified one way but gave two examples to describe that way and thus, only rewarded for one description.

Responses considered too vague to reward, or irrelevant included examples as: *children grow up ethically, cultural norms can be confusing and can corrupt a child's mind, children grow up without the support of parents.* Furthermore, there were responses that discussed outside the context of the family, for example, being bullied in class and experiencing racism from the police. Therefore, irrelevant and not rewarded.

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.*

Whilst most candidates were able to provide the two reasons required, many were unsupported with sociological evidence and so at best, could only be rewarded half the marks available to them. Where supporting sociological material was used, this tended to be concepts such as *patriarchy, breadwinner*, or the theoretical stance of *radical feminism*. Common responses included, *men are the breadwinner which gives them economic power, men are physically stronger than women and often use this to intimidate/abuse them into submission* and, *socialisation into male dominance/female submission.*

The more successful responses supported reasons given with relevant sociological material and then applied this back to the reason given.

Weak responses were simplistic and lacked explanation, often relying on benefit of doubt being given due to a lack of clarity. A common error was for candidates to provide illustrations/examples of men having more power, rather than the *reason for it*. For example, they have power over decision making. The question required candidates to give reasons for *why this is* – so, *why* do men have power over decision making? This was the requirement of the question. Other errors included, discussing that women are burdened in the family; this does not address *why men have more power*.

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

(b) It was encouraging to see that many candidates were able to identify two relevant strengths of radical feminist views of the family and responded in a clear and structured way, demonstrating they understood the requirement of the question. The most common response was that *they recognise the dark side of the family/the domestic abuse that takes place in the nuclear family.* Less common responses included, that *they recognise the influence of patriarchy on the family/influence of patriarchy in oppressing women in the family* and*, they highlight the inequalities of power within the family.*

However, there was evidence that some centres are still not preparing candidates effectively, as there were responses that discussed within the context of society and the workplace. Furthermore, there were some examples of critiquing the radical feminist approach, as well as providing more than the two required strengths, all of which were not required and therefore unrewarded.

Some candidates were confusing radical feminism with liberal and Marxist feminism, with statements such as, they see women as a reserve army of labour, that capitalism is the root of women's oppression, and incorrect statements such as, they believe men should be the head of the family.

Teachers and *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, to aid teaching and learning.*

Note: centres should encourage candidates to adopt a clear and structured approach to answering 2b: *A strength/limitation is…./X have this as a strength/limitation because they…/This is a strength/limitation because…*

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Question 3

(a) Candidates generally performed reasonably well, with a large number demonstrating a good level of knowledge and understanding of Marxism in the context of how the family supports capitalism. Most cited, were how the *family socialises children into capitalist ideologies, the family as a unit of consumption providing profits and, how families ensure a current workforce/produce a future workforce*, with references made largely to Zaretsky and Althusser. The quality of points varied from developed, some development (often descriptive), to more simple statements. There was clearly a Marxist context to this question, there were some examples of candidates applying functionalist ideas e.g. Parsons' warm bath i.e. relaxes the breadwinner so he can return to work. This was fine as considered relevant (ensures the economy is supported).

Weak responses were very simple and often common-sense, as opposed to Marxist based responses. These included for example, providing more people for the future means new minds and new ideas and, workers pay taxes which is used for infrastructure.

(b) Few candidates addressed the contextual issue of *main role*, instead simply providing an alternative.

The most popular approach to answering this question, was to focus on a specific function e.g. primary socialisation or stabilisation of adult personalities. This was acceptable but tended to result in less developed responses compared to those minority of candidates, who focused on the bigger picture of a role. For example, of promoting social cohesion/stability, value consensus or patriarchy. Those that did this, tended to produce stronger responses as they were more able to unpack the point as they were not simply describing a function the family performs.

Section B

Question 4

Most candidates opted to answer this question over **Question 5**, and quality of responses were mixed, though few achieved in the higher marks range. Stronger responses understood the question context of *structure;* this context has been used in exam questions in previous years, so candidates should understand by now that this is not concerned with the nuclear family being the most important or ideal due to its functions. *This was a family diversity question, not a role of the family question.* Generally, candidates were stronger in their AO1 supporting arguments, citing growth in diversity of family structures e.g. lone-parent, same-sex, childless. More successful points examined the reasons for this growth, whilst weaker ones simply described different family types that now exist. Candidates tended to be limited in their AO3 arguments; there was a noticeable lack of comprehension of the arguments suggesting the continued dominance of the nuclear family structure. Commonly cited was the universality of the nuclear family, as well as cultural examples of its dominance. However, few discussed Chester's idea of rather than disappearing, the nuclear family has adapted to become the neo-conventional nuclear family, or how it forms the basis of most other family structures. Discussing how dysfunctional non-nuclear families are according to the New Right, is irrelevant to addressing whether the nuclear family remains the dominant family structure.

Weak responses included those that lacked focus on the context of the question, instead discussing diversity of conjugal roles, whilst stating that there should/should not be diversity is not the same as confirming that diversity does or does not exist. Therefore, irrelevant and not rewarded. There were examples of candidates making unsupported statements that fail to explicitly address the question e.g. more women are getting divorced without explaining the *impact on the nuclear family as the dominant structure.*

Question 5

The quality of the responses to **Question 5** was mixed. Unlike **Question 4**, candidates were generally more successful with their AO3 arguments against the claim, rather than AO1 supporting points. The more successful responses understood how women's social position had improved and the reasons for this, supported with relevant concepts/thinkers, with counter arguments examining most commonly, the impact of secularisation, changes in divorce laws making it easier to achieve and, increased individualism (there was a lack of examining *the main reason*, rather candidates simply proposed alternative reasons).

Weak counter points simply gave reasons for divorce e.g. infidelity, no longer in love and, women no longer fulfil their domestic duties so the husband demands divorce. The question indicates that something has

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changed socially; these examples are simply reasons why people get divorced. There were a few candidates that did not focus on the context of the question, for example discussing not getting married e.g. women have become financially independent and therefore do not need to get married. Such responses were irrelevant and as such, not rewarded. Other irrelevant responses included statements such as, women love to gossip so their men divorce them.

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Paper 9699/22
The Family

Key messages

- Teachers should support candidates in accessing past exam papers and mark schemes, to make candidates aware of the requirements of the question.
- Teachers should sufficiently 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 be able to distinguish between the different strands of feminism.
- Candidates need to ensure they focus responses on the context of **the family in 2b**.
- More successful candidates applied relevant sociological material/evidence to demonstrate a sociological awareness.

General comments

Overall performance across the paper was mixed, with a clear polarisation between well-prepared candidates, and those lacking examination technique and/or a secure sociological knowledge and understanding. Knowledge and understanding of Marxism and the role of the family in supporting capitalism was good; knowledge and understanding of radical feminism and their views of inequality in the family was generally weak. There are significant numbers of candidates who do not appear understand the different strands of feminism; rather, their knowledge and understanding is often demonstrated through an umbrella term of *feminism* – which is disadvantaging them. Weaker candidates relied on common sense/anecdotal evidence as opposed to demonstrating a sociological awareness and 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). *It is encouraging to see some candidates explicitly evaluating the question*; however, these were few, with most relying on juxtaposition of opposing points. Some candidates failed to provide a response in **Question 4/5** that addressed contrasting sides of the debate, providing one-sided responses, thus very much 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**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates performed well and achieved all the marks available, demonstrating a grasp of Marxism and the role of the family. It was evident by the clearly laid out responses, that some centres had prepared their

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candidates for this format of question. Most candidates were able to identify two relevant ways with descriptions. Common responses focused on: *acting as a unit of consumption/provides profits for the bourgeoisie, reproduces the next generation of workers/replacing the retired and dead which ensures production can continue, acts as an ideological state apparatus/socialises children into obedience and acceptance of hierarchy in the workplace.*

Less popular responses included how the *family acts as a safety valve for the workers to relieve frustrations of alienation that would otherwise be aimed at bosses,* or how *the privatised nuclear family distracts from the exploitation and oppression experienced in daily life to ensure no backlash against the system*. A common approach was to take the functionalist idea of *provides a warm bath for the breadwinner/ensures he is fit for work the next day.* Whilst this was evidently a contextually Marxist based question, such a response was acceptable as it was deemed relevant to ensuring a functioning economy (capitalism).

Less successful responses included those that only identified and described one way or, identified the two ways required but did not describe them. Weak/simple responses included for example, *pay taxes*.

Responses considered too vague to reward included those that were not clear in identifying how capitalism is supported. For example, through conjugal roles, through inheritance, primary socialisation in general terms. These examples could have been made relevant but were not.

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.*

Overall, this was answered reasonably well with most candidates able to provide at least one sociologically supported way, with stronger responses providing the two as required. Common relevant responses were; *welfare dependency in creating a lack of motivation to find work and contribute economically to society/be a drain on government resources, lack of a male role model in creating deviant behaviour especially in boys, cannot provide the required gender socialisation to fulfil expected roles for society…*

The more successful responses supported reasons given with relevant sociological material and then applied this back to the reason given.

Weak responses included candidates discussing what they thought of lone-parent families and why they were harmful to society, or generic views rather than from a New Right perspective, whilst the most common error was for candidates to discuss harm to the child or parent, and therefore irrelevant as this is not answering the question set. Other irrelevant responses included discussing why the New Right favour the nuclear family/why it is seen as ideal.

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

(b) Whilst performance was mixed, it was encouraging to see examples of candidates using the language and structure suggested in PE reports/mark schemes/training materials, i.e. *they identified a relevant limitation*, *they then explained what it is about the New Right that leads them to have this as a limitation and, why it is a limitation.* This approach enabled these candidates to construct clear responses that fulfilled all the required elements, suggesting some centres had prepared their candidates effectively.

The most common response was in identifying that they *ignored the dark side of the nuclear family* (note, many candidates relied on benefit of doubt being given as they neglected to identify specifically the *nuclear* family, instead simply stating *the family* which is not entirely accurate), whilst they fail to consider the oppression and exploitation of women in the nuclear family and, they exaggerate the negative impact of family diversity were also fairly common.

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Few candidates achieved all the marks available to them, failing to address either what it is about the New Right approach that leads them to have the limitation identified, or why it is a limitation, or indeed both elements.

The most common error was to claim that the New Right ignore family diversity. This is not accurate. They *do* recognise family diversity, just in a negative way (*they ignore the positives/benefits of family diversity is the accurate statement*). Approaches not rewarded included critiquing the nuclear family for the domestic violence that can take place – *this is a negative of the nuclear family rather than a limitation of the New Right* – failing to recognise the domestic violence that takes place within the nuclear family, would be a New Right limitation.

Note: centres should encourage candidates to adopt a clear and structured approach to answering 2b: *A strength/limitation is…./X have this as a strength/limitation because they…/This is a strength/limitation because…*

Question 3

(a) Quality of responses varied, with many candidates demonstrating a sociological awareness that ranged from a basic level through to a good comprehension. Commonly, the *impact of secularisation, changes in policies and increased financial independence of women* were discussed as reasons for greater diversity resulting in there being no dominant family type today. The more successful responses were well focused in applying sociological material to unpack and support the point made. Weaker points however, tended to simply list/describe the existence of different family types.

A common issue that resulted in weak and often too vague to reward responses, was for candidates to make unsupported statements such as: globalisation or migration has created family diversity with no explanation of how, or that divorce has become more common, without demonstrating/explaining the impact of this on the dominance of a family type, and that women are focusing on their careers, again without addressing the impact on family type. There were a small number of candidates who turned this into a question of why women delay marriage/do not get married, without demonstrating relevance by linking to the question context of there being no dominant family type. Such an approach could have been made relevant i.e. in creating diversity e.g. lone-parenting or DINKs but were not and therefore irrelevant.

(b) Performance from candidates was mixed. Common approaches to answering this question, were to discuss Murdock's universality of the nuclear family, the nuclear family as forming the basis of other family types and, the cultural significance of the nuclear family to many societies. However, development was often limited, relying on description or simple statements; an unpacking of the point and engaging the question for development was at times lacking.

As with 3a, there were a small number of candidates that took *dominant family type* to mean that domination takes place within the family e.g. men are violent towards women/children, men dominate women because they are the breadwinners, or that older generations tell parents how to raise their children, therefore not addressing the context of the question. Occasionally, benefit of doubt was given if the response appeared to imply/could be interpreted as suggesting, that patriarchal families are still dominant, as this does have some connection to the context of the question. However, such responses were limited to Level 1 rewarding due to the lack of clarity.

The common error made by candidates, was to discuss the importance of the nuclear family in carrying out particular functions. This was not the question set. Being important in carrying out functions *does not mean* the nuclear family is *dominant.* This was a question on diversity, not the role of the family. Such responses were irrelevant and not rewarded.

Section B

Question 4

Responses identified those candidates with a comprehension of radical feminist views of the family, and how these are distinct from other strands e.g. liberal, Marxism etc., from those candidates that demonstrated a more generalised grasp of feminist ideas (*using 'feminism' as an umbrella term for all the different views, not recognising the distinctive differences between them e.g. feminists believe that there is inequality in the family/believe that gender equality has improved/feminists believe men are more involved in*

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housework/believe women have more power now…). There were candidates that incorrectly applied liberal and Marxist feminist arguments as radical feminist. For example, *radical feminists believe that gender inequality is caused by capitalism…*This demonstrated a lack of understanding of the specific views of radical feminism and the family, and therefore not rewarded. It is therefore suggested that centres help their candidates to distinguish between the different feminist approaches, understanding how whilst they may have some similarities, there are clear distinctions in their views.

The more successful responses had a clear focus on the question; AO1 supporting arguments applied and discussed radical feminist ideas in the context of gender inequality in the family, engaging discussions of patriarchy, oppression and, exploitation of women due to biology, whilst counter arguments for AO3 applied and discussed various opposing views (e.g. other feminist approaches, functionalism, postmodernism), either engaging in explicit evaluation or more commonly, juxtaposition. Generally, candidates tended to be stronger with AO3 than AO1.

Weak responses tended to simply discuss whether there is/is not gender inequality of roles (and occasionally power) in the family, rather than explicitly engaging the context of the question. Other weak/irrelevant responses discussed radical feminism in the context of society, or general feminist ideas in relation to the workplace (glass ceiling) rather than the family.

Question 5

Overall Question 5 was not answered particularly well. The more successful responses explicitly demonstrated a comprehension of the debate surrounding the changing nature of motherhood and fatherhood; how they are becoming alike and, how they remain different. These responses were well focused on the context of parenthood.

Commonly, weak responses however, were the result of candidates simply discussing gender equality/inequality; mother/father were used as alternative terms for women/men. Discussing domestic labour in general terms e.g. how men are more involved in the washing and ironing or, how women are now in paid employment, is not addressing the context of parenthood. Candidates adding at the end of their point ‘this shows that there is little difference between motherhood and fatherhood’, does not mean the point they have made *actually* does this.

Other errors in approach that resulted in weak or irrelevant responses included: discussing why women are rejecting motherhood or delaying it (*this does not address whether there is little difference between mother/fatherhood or not*), describing/stating what the role of mother/father should be, describing the symmetrical family without attempting to apply this to actually addressing the question.

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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 requirements of the question.
- Teachers should sufficiently 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 need to ensure they focus responses on the context of **the family in 2b**.
- More successful candidates applied relevant sociological material/evidence to demonstrate a sociological awareness.

General comments

Overall, few candidates achieved in the higher marks range, with the majority achieving mid-range and lower, due to demonstrating 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). However, *few candidates explicitly evaluated the question*, relying on juxtaposition of opposing points. Some candidates failed to provide a response that addressed contrasting sides of the debate, providing one-sided responses thus limiting the marks that could be awarded.

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.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Most candidates were able to identify and describe one relevant way, with many of these providing the two required. Commonly, *socialisation into norms and values* (with specific cultural examples e.g. respect/care of the elderly), *parental expectations* (such as educational focus/'tiger moms' or, financially support the family) and *the impact of religious influences within the family* (dress, traditions, particularistic morals etc.) were discussed. Less popular responses included family type, as well as gender role expectations. Occasionally however, the second attempted way became a repetition of the first way, just with a different example, particularly when citing socialisation/norms and values and therefore, not rewarded. There were a few

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examples of responses that identified one way but gave two examples to describe that way and thus, only rewarded for one description.

Responses considered too vague to reward, or irrelevant included examples as: *children grow up ethically, cultural norms can be confusing and can corrupt a child's mind, children grow up without the support of parents.* Furthermore, there were responses that discussed outside the context of the family, for example, being bullied in class and experiencing racism from the police. Therefore, irrelevant and not rewarded.

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.*

Whilst most candidates were able to provide the two reasons required, many were unsupported with sociological evidence and so at best, could only be rewarded half the marks available to them. Where supporting sociological material was used, this tended to be concepts such as *patriarchy, breadwinner*, or the theoretical stance of *radical feminism*. Common responses included, *men are the breadwinner which gives them economic power, men are physically stronger than women and often use this to intimidate/abuse them into submission* and, *socialisation into male dominance/female submission.*

The more successful responses supported reasons given with relevant sociological material and then applied this back to the reason given.

Weak responses were simplistic and lacked explanation, often relying on benefit of doubt being given due to a lack of clarity. A common error was for candidates to provide illustrations/examples of men having more power, rather than the *reason for it*. For example, they have power over decision making. The question required candidates to give reasons for *why this is* – so, *why* do men have power over decision making? This was the requirement of the question. Other errors included, discussing that women are burdened in the family; this does not address *why men have more power*.

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

(b) It was encouraging to see that many candidates were able to identify two relevant strengths of radical feminist views of the family and responded in a clear and structured way, demonstrating they understood the requirement of the question. The most common response was that *they recognise the dark side of the family/the domestic abuse that takes place in the nuclear family.* Less common responses included, that *they recognise the influence of patriarchy on the family/influence of patriarchy in oppressing women in the family* and*, they highlight the inequalities of power within the family.*

However, there was evidence that some centres are still not preparing candidates effectively, as there were responses that discussed within the context of society and the workplace. Furthermore, there were some examples of critiquing the radical feminist approach, as well as providing more than the two required strengths, all of which were not required and therefore unrewarded.

Some candidates were confusing radical feminism with liberal and Marxist feminism, with statements such as, they see women as a reserve army of labour, that capitalism is the root of women's oppression, and incorrect statements such as, they believe men should be the head of the family.

Teachers and *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, to aid teaching and learning.*

Note: centres should encourage candidates to adopt a clear and structured approach to answering 2b: *A strength/limitation is…./X have this as a strength/limitation because they…/This is a strength/limitation because…*

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Question 3

(a) Candidates generally performed reasonably well, with a large number demonstrating a good level of knowledge and understanding of Marxism in the context of how the family supports capitalism. Most cited, were how the *family socialises children into capitalist ideologies, the family as a unit of consumption providing profits and, how families ensure a current workforce/produce a future workforce*, with references made largely to Zaretsky and Althusser. The quality of points varied from developed, some development (often descriptive), to more simple statements. There was clearly a Marxist context to this question, there were some examples of candidates applying functionalist ideas e.g. Parsons' warm bath i.e. relaxes the breadwinner so he can return to work. This was fine as considered relevant (ensures the economy is supported).

Weak responses were very simple and often common-sense, as opposed to Marxist based responses. These included for example, providing more people for the future means new minds and new ideas and, workers pay taxes which is used for infrastructure.

(b) Few candidates addressed the contextual issue of *main role*, instead simply providing an alternative.

The most popular approach to answering this question, was to focus on a specific function e.g. primary socialisation or stabilisation of adult personalities. This was acceptable but tended to result in less developed responses compared to those minority of candidates, who focused on the bigger picture of a role. For example, of promoting social cohesion/stability, value consensus or patriarchy. Those that did this, tended to produce stronger responses as they were more able to unpack the point as they were not simply describing a function the family performs.

Section B

Question 4

Most candidates opted to answer this question over **Question 5**, and quality of responses were mixed, though few achieved in the higher marks range. Stronger responses understood the question context of *structure;* this context has been used in exam questions in previous years, so candidates should understand by now that this is not concerned with the nuclear family being the most important or ideal due to its functions. *This was a family diversity question, not a role of the family question.* Generally, candidates were stronger in their AO1 supporting arguments, citing growth in diversity of family structures e.g. lone-parent, same-sex, childless. More successful points examined the reasons for this growth, whilst weaker ones simply described different family types that now exist. Candidates tended to be limited in their AO3 arguments; there was a noticeable lack of comprehension of the arguments suggesting the continued dominance of the nuclear family structure. Commonly cited was the universality of the nuclear family, as well as cultural examples of its dominance. However, few discussed Chester's idea of rather than disappearing, the nuclear family has adapted to become the neo-conventional nuclear family, or how it forms the basis of most other family structures. Discussing how dysfunctional non-nuclear families are according to the New Right, is irrelevant to addressing whether the nuclear family remains the dominant family structure.

Weak responses included those that lacked focus on the context of the question, instead discussing diversity of conjugal roles, whilst stating that there should/should not be diversity is not the same as confirming that diversity does or does not exist. Therefore, irrelevant and not rewarded. There were examples of candidates making unsupported statements that fail to explicitly address the question e.g. more women are getting divorced without explaining the *impact on the nuclear family as the dominant structure.*

Question 5

The quality of the responses to **Question 5** was mixed. Unlike **Question 4**, candidates were generally more successful with their AO3 arguments against the claim, rather than AO1 supporting points. The more successful responses understood how women's social position had improved and the reasons for this, supported with relevant concepts/thinkers, with counter arguments examining most commonly, the impact of secularisation, changes in divorce laws making it easier to achieve and, increased individualism (there was a lack of examining *the main reason*, rather candidates simply proposed alternative reasons).

Weak counter points simply gave reasons for divorce e.g. infidelity, no longer in love and, women no longer fulfil their domestic duties so the husband demands divorce. The question indicates that something has

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changed socially; these examples are simply reasons why people get divorced. There were a few candidates that did not focus on the context of the question, for example discussing not getting married e.g. women have become financially independent and therefore do not need to get married. Such responses were irrelevant and as such, not rewarded. Other irrelevant responses included statements such as, women love to gossip so their men divorce them.

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Paper 9699/31
Education

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure every point is explicitly linked back to the question or the view expressed, to maintain a well-focused answer.
- Candidates should develop each point using relevant sociological material, demonstrating how a concept, theory, or study supports their argument.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses consider competing views by examining different sides of the issue raised in the question and applying relevant sociological material.

General comments

Performance across the paper was mixed. Some candidates simply stated points without developing them. Stronger candidates were able to develop points by applying relevant supporting evidence such as studies, theories, concepts, statistics, or examples.

Candidates can only gain full marks for responses that are **directly** related to the question and applied to it. Candidates should understand the importance of linking every point back to the question.

Candidates should present balanced essays in **Question 4** that include arguments from both sides of the issue. They should critically discuss the evidence used on each side and show awareness that arguments are rarely completely true or false—they may be more or less applicable for different people, times, and places. Evaluation requires 'weighing up' the view. Strong candidates concluded by explaining how far the view was useful after considering all evidence and alternative points of view.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Few candidates provided an accurate explanation of how compensatory education seeks to support working-class children. Many interpreted it simply as offering financial help like scholarships, rather than policies addressing cultural and material deprivation. Marks were lost for some candidates through a gap in knowledge of a concept on the syllabus.

Question 2

Many candidates lacked material specifically on the effect of ethnic background on educational attainment. Some responses did not include any sociological material, while others used material (e.g., Bernstein, Bourdieu) that relates more to social class than ethnicity. To gain the marks for relevant support material and the application of it, material would have to be shown to be relevant, such as by explaining how certain ethnic minorities may be overrepresented in lower social classes. Answers could show clear understanding, but a lack of relevant material prevented progression beyond one or two marks.

Question 3

This question was frequently approached through functionalist theory. While many candidates accurately described functionalist concepts, such as education promoting social solidarity or value consensus, they did

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not relate their points back to the question, which kept many at Level 2. Another common issue was the lack of explanation of how concepts could be applied in practice to how education works. For example, points on role allocation or meritocracy often lacked detail on how education performs this function (e.g., through standardised exams and a common curriculum), keeping answers at Level 2 rather than Level 3

Question 4

This question was generally well answered, though very high-scoring responses were rare. Many candidates listed alternative factors influencing attainment (such as class and ethnicity) without explaining why gender has little influence today, which limited AO1 marks to a maximum of Level 3. AO2 performance was often stronger, though some candidates simply listed names or theories without fuller explanation or application. AO3 was generally reasonable, but answers often focused heavily on a single issue, typically the gendered curriculum, rather than exploring a broader range of evaluative points such as the feminisation of education, crisis of masculinity, or teacher expectations. Good answers examined the reasons why gender might positively and negatively affect the educational attainment of both boys and girls.

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Paper 9699/32
Education

Key messages

- Candidates should ensure every point is explicitly linked back to the question or the view expressed, to maintain a well-focused answer.
- Candidates should develop each point using relevant sociological material, demonstrating how a concept, theory, or study supports their argument.
- Candidates should ensure essay responses consider competing views by examining different sides of the issue raised in the question and applying relevant sociological material.

General comments

Performance across the paper was mixed. Some candidates simply stated points without developing them. Stronger candidates were able to develop points by applying relevant supporting evidence such as studies, theories, concepts, statistics, or examples.

Candidates can only gain full marks for responses that are **directly** related to the question and applied to it. Candidates should understand the importance of linking every point back to the question.

Candidates should present balanced essays in **Question 4** that include arguments from both sides of the issue. They should critically discuss the evidence used on each side and show awareness that arguments are rarely completely true or false—they may be more or less applicable for different people, times, and places. Evaluation requires 'weighing up' the view. Strong candidates concluded by explaining how far the view was useful after considering all evidence and alternative points of view.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Some candidates wrote too generally about the hidden curriculum instilling norms and values and helping to achieve value consensus, without being specific enough to achieve any marks. Others were able to accurately identify things that candidates learn in school through the hidden curriculum but did not state how this may help them in the workplace/wider society. For candidates who did well on this question, the most common references were to respect for hierarchy, punctuality and obedience, showing how they were learned at school and applied at work or in the wider society.

Question 2

Many candidates provided two clearly separate points, which makes identification of them more straightforward. Most candidates were able to identify two reasons why labelling may affect candidates in school. The most common responses referred to gender, ethnic and class-based stereotypes, the self-fulfilling prophecy, anti-school subcultures, and setting/streaming. The most common references made by candidates were to Becker, Rosenthal and Jacobsen, and to a lesser extent, Wright, Fuller, and Gillborn and Youdell. Some candidates did not gain maximum marks due to not clearly linking the material presented to the point made. A substantial number did not present any material in support of their arguments so were unable to score above 4 marks out of the 8 available.

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Question 3

Most candidates were able to identify two arguments against the view that education maintains value consensus in society. The most common responses referred to the two Marxist-based arguments relating to imposing ruling class values (Althusser, Bowls and Gintis) or schools reflecting middle class habitus (Bourdieu). The next most common arguments related to the feminist view of education maintaining patriarchy and subcultural rejection of school. A smaller number of candidates referred to issues relating to the ethnocentric curriculum and institutional racism in schools. Many candidates were able to identify an argument and able to provide enough evidence to at least get into Level 2. Candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of relevant studies. However, many candidates applied these studies to inequality in school rather than value consensus. For example, answers which talked (appropriately) about cultural capital or the ethnocentric curriculum often then failed to link these explicitly to value consensus. Only a very few misunderstood the question and made points in support.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to demonstrate a basic knowledge and understanding of the view that education systems today are meritocratic. This commonly included the functionalist views of Davis and Moore, Parsons and Durkheim. Better candidates also provided examples of meritocracy in the education system, such as the national curriculum, GIST and compensatory education policies.

In terms of interpretation and application, a common issue was that candidates gave a general description of the functionalist view on education and value consensus without applying it two how it contributed to meritocracy. This was particularly in relation to Durkheim and to a lesser extent Parsons. Similarly, many candidates who presented the arguments of the New Right and the Social Democratic perspective, often did not show clearly how they related to meritocracy.

In terms of analysis and evaluation, most candidates were able to provide some arguments against this view, (namely by reference to Marxist and to a lesser extent feminist views). Most candidates 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 ethnocentric curriculum. However, a substantial number of candidates wasted time on external factors affecting achievement rather than on how far the education system itself affected meritocracy. This was particularly the case for points relating to cultural and material deprivation experienced by candidates from a working-class background. A few responses struggled with the concept of meritocracy and gave generalised points on the education system without any real focus on the question.

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Paper 9699/33
Education

There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

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Paper 9699/41
Globalisation, Media, Religion

Key messages

- Some good theoretical knowledge demonstrated in many scripts and some candidates use strong sociological vocabulary.
- Candidates should maintain focus on the specific question rather than trying to use pre-prepared answers.
- Sociological material including concepts, theories, studies and empirical evidence should be used to support points both for and against the view in the question.
- Candidates should aim to explain points rather than just assert them and clarify their relevance to the question.

General comments

The scripts showed a range of responses with some answers showing a clear and in-depth understanding of the debate highlighted by the view in the question. These answers were able to support the points made with relevant sociological material. High level answers were also able to show explicit evaluation of the view in the questions with evidence to support the counter argument. Often there was a reasoned conclusion giving a judgement on the view.

Middle range answers showed some good understanding of the view in the question although points often lacked any depth of explanation. Evaluative points in these answers were presented rather than linked to view showing juxtaposed or more limited evaluation.

Weaker answers often lacked supporting material and so showed a more basic understanding of the material. In some cases, evaluation was weak or counterarguments were stated without development or explanation of how they differed from the view in the question.

Some candidates attempted to make less relevant material fit the question they chose, but this was often unsuccessful and their response, though often sociological, could not achieve high marks since it was very generalised and had limited relevance. Candidates should be encouraged to use past papers to practice a wide variety of different essays and understand how to decode questions and identify which content is relevant for a particular essay question.

Most candidates answered the correct number of questions. ***Sections B*** and ***C*** received the highest number of responses. The vast majority followed the rubric with a handful answering more than two questions. The standard was variable across the full mark range.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

'Globalisation has led to greater equality between countries.' Evaluate this view.

This question was answered well overall. Many candidates had a strong grasp of Marxism, as well as globalisation theories such as Dependency theory, World Systems Theory and Modernisation theory. Points in favour of the view used concepts such as TNC, global village and democracy. Counterarguments cited westernisation, brain drain and the unequal nature of global capitalism. Evaluation in these answers was

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often strong, offering both the opposing view and evaluating the soundness of their own material used in support.

With lower marked answers, candidates were less explicit with their use of sociological material, offering colloquial examples to illustrate quite basic points. Some answers focused heavily on examples showing only limited understanding and a lack of theoretical analysis and evaluation.

Candidates generally answered well, showing good understanding of globalisation. Strong use of neoliberal, modernisation and Marxist perspectives. Some candidates needed to make clearer links to equality between countries, often making points in relation to a specific country without explaining how this may lead to greater or lesser equality. In some cases, answers showed some confusion on whether trade or aid might lead to equality. Some cited that TNCs as creating equality but without explanation of why that might be the case or critique of the view.

Question 2

'Global migration makes developing countries poorer.' Evaluate this view.

Fewer candidates answered this question. The responses were varied. Where candidates answered this well, their answers included concepts such as brain drain, remittances and skill development. These were used appropriately and with development and examples to show deeper understanding. In many cases Marxist views were used to support the view that migration leads to disruption to local labour markets and disadvantages developing countries. Counterarguments linked to the ability to support family 'at home' and the skills that migrants may be able to bring home on their return.

Many answers were limited in scope. Some candidates offered the argument as to whether globalisation more generally improved life for those in developing countries, whilst others focused on what impact migration has on the developed destination countries. Both ways of answering show limited application of material to the question set and so limit the marks. Evaluation in these answers was not always strong, especially in answers where the candidates were confused on the intention of the question, leading to a lot of overly vague or confused work. Many did not focus on developing countries. Brain drain was often described but not explained. Evaluation of benefits such as remittances and skill return was limited.

Section B

Question 3

'The media has a direct influence on social behaviour.' Evaluate this view.

This was a popular question and there were some strong answers. Candidates clearly understood direct versus indirect effects. There was good use of hypodermic syringe model, Bandura, and evaluation through uses and gratifications and cultural effects.

Many candidates had a strong grasp on hypodermic syringe model, illustrating this theory with great examples such as the BoBo Doll experiment, the War of the Worlds and the case of Jamie Bulger. Many candidates also tied Marxism and propaganda into these answers, which was often done well.

Evaluation in these answers, was often strong including many audience reception theories that engage with the indirect or continuous aspect of media exposure. Stronger candidates also offered evaluation of their supporting material, e.g. the deterministic nature of the hypodermic syringe model, showing they understood the complexity of the question well.

Where candidates fell short in this question, instead of offering audience reception theories as points for and against, the focus was on strictly offering Marxist, Feminist and Functionalist views on the media. Because of this angle, these candidates did not engage with the 'direct' aspect of the question well.

Question 4

'Governments lack the power to control media content.' Evaluate this view.

This was the less popular of the media questions, but this question was answered well when attempted. Candidates recognised challenges governments face in regulating global and new media. There was a strong grasp of media privatisation, pluralism and the new media and prosumers. Fewer candidates focused

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on journalists/editors as other agents of control and discussed their ability to portray views that oppose governments. Some answers tended to illustrate a sound understanding of the lack of control through other explanations such as a comparison between new and traditional media.

In evaluation, candidates had a strong grasp of agenda setting, censorship, and authoritarian governments. Examples such as China and North Korea were popular in showing where the government has a strong control over the media. Historical examples such as Nazi propaganda were also used effectively to demonstrate counter arguments. In some cases, the evaluation was descriptive rather than explicitly critiquing the view in the question. Marxist views were used effectively to show evaluation. Many answers also covered the use of legislation as a means by which governments can control all forms of media.

Section C

Question 5

'Religion is a means by which the ruling class maintain social control.' Evaluate this view.

This was the less popular of the religion questions but there were some comprehensive responses to this question. These responses utilised a range of Marxist concepts including ideological state apparatus, 'opium of the masses' and false class consciousness. Candidates where able to illustrate these ideas with real-world examples from a range of religions such as by citing passages from the bible or illustrating the power systems in religious organisations. Many candidates also recognised that feminist views could be used to support the view in the question. Good responses showed an understanding of patriarchal control as a form of ruling class control and gave a range of examples of this from a range of religions. Other candidates chose to use feminist views as a critique of Marxist views. In some answers this was effective and demonstrated the difference between class and gender inequalities and controls.

Other evaluation used functionalist perspectives to demonstrate religion as a form of consensus, solidarity and harmony. Religion as a force for change was also used effectively as evaluation with examples from Liberation theology, American Civil Rights and Calvinism.

In some weaker answers there was sometimes confusion in the application of different schools of thought, such as using Functionalism to illustrate how the ruling class maintained social control. In some cases, when trying to apply feminism to this question: in evaluation, this was seen as offering an alternative perspective (i.e. Religion is means by which the ruling class maintains patriarchal control), however this distinction was not illustrated or developed very well – leading to vagueness.

Question 6

'Religious organisations have lost their social significance.' Evaluate this view.

The more popular of the religion questions this question covered familiar ground for candidates and there were some good responses. Strong candidates spoke of the loss of functions of religious organisations, tying this to secularisation and rationalisation well. Many answers cited evidence of declining church attendance and statistics that demonstrate a decline in religious affiliation. Good answers also discussed structural differentiation and the change to social institutions such as education. Others also linked to the decline of religion in governments.

Evaluation used examples of societies where religion is still dominant. Fundamentalism was also used effectively as an example of the dominance of religion in some cultures. Strong candidates were also able to use ideas of religious revival and the growth of new religious movements to show a change to organisations rather than a loss of significance. The privatisation of religion was also used effectively in many cases to show change rather than decline.

Where candidates were weaker, this was mainly due to a lack of application, not relating these answers back to the 'organisation' aspect of the question. Evaluation in these answers surrounded the lack of secularisation globally and the concept of religious revivals (although illustrated less sociologically in many cases).

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Paper 9699/42
Globalisation, Media, Religion

Key messages

- Candidates should read the question carefully and check that they have answered the set questions rather than a pre-prepared question.
- Sociological material including concepts, theories, studies and empirical evidence should be used to support points both for and against the view in the question.
- Candidates should demonstrate debate in their answers.
- Some candidates started with an opposing view to that in the question, suggesting they were producing a pre-prepared debate rather than using their knowledge to respond to the essay set.

General comments

Most candidates were able to access the paper and provide focused answers to varying degrees of sophistication. The scripts showed a range of responses with some answers showing a clear and in-depth understanding of the debate highlighted by the view in the question. These answers were able to support the points made with relevant sociological material. High level answers were also able to show explicit evaluation of the view in the questions with evidence to support the counter argument. Often there was a reasoned conclusion giving a judgement on the view.

Middle range answers showed some good understanding of the view in the question although points often lacked any depth of explanation. Evaluative points in these answers were presented rather than linked to view showing juxtaposed or more limited evaluation.

Weaker answers often lacked supporting material and so showed a more basic understanding of the material. In some cases, evaluation was weak or counterarguments were stated without development or explanation of how they differed from the view in the question.

A common issue seen throughout was candidates writing the essays they had prepared for rather than the ones which were set. So, there were many candidates who wrote essays on the pros and cons of globalisation, media representation of gender or ethnicity, gender and religion, religion and social change and so on, none of which featured on this paper. Some attempted to make the material fit the question they chose, but this was often unsuccessful and their response, though often sociological, could not achieve high marks since it was very generalised and had limited relevance. Candidates should be encouraged to use past papers to practice a wide variety of different essays and understand how to decode questions and identify which content is relevant for a particular essay question.

Most candidates answered the correct number of questions. ***Sections B*** and ***C*** received the highest number of responses. The vast majority followed the rubric with a handful answering more than two questions. The standard was variable across the full mark range.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

'Transnational organisations have been unsuccessful in reducing global poverty.' Evaluate this view.

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Whilst not a widely answered question, those that did answer it had clearly studied globalisation and answered the question very well. Stronger candidates engaged well with the concept of transnational organisations (TNOs) and supported their arguments with relevant examples. Most focused on how TNCs exploit developing countries, often under the guise of providing support for their own ends. Most responses were able to assess the roles played by the World Bank, IMF, NGOs, WTO, and other institutions in reducing global poverty.

Weaker candidates tended to drift into general discussions of poverty without focusing on TNOs, which limited their marks. The core weakness lay in the failure to establish a rigorous conceptual definition of transactional organisations and to link these organisations to relevant theoretical frameworks of poverty and development. Apart from transnational corporations, candidates seemed unable to identify other types of international organisations.

There was a notable absence of engagement with concepts such as neoliberalism, structural adjustment policies, or dependency theory, which are crucial for evaluating the structural impacts of these organisations. The supporting material was often anecdotal rather than evidence based.

A significant number of candidates approached the topic in a general or largely descriptive manner, focusing on poverty itself rather than evaluating the effectiveness of transnational organisations as required.

Question 2

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

Not a popular option but it elicited some very good responses with sound knowledge of global crime albeit from a narrow range; drug trafficking, people smuggling, green crime mainly with the odd mention of cybercrime. Some candidates were able to outline arguments in support of the claim regarding the transnational nature of some crimes, including cybercrimes, which are beyond the reach of various governments. In evaluation, some mentioned international bodies such as Interpol, and some cross-border initiatives which have been successful.

Many responses consisted of descriptions of global crime trends rather than an assessment of governments' capacities to control or prevent such crime. Answers frequently lacked analytical depth and were overly descriptive, with limited sociological evaluation.

Weaker candidates often wrote about explanations for crime rather than addressing global crime specifically. The primary issue was a poor understanding of the global dimension of crime and a superficial treatment of governments as singular entities. Candidates focused on domestic crime statistics rather than engaging with transnational organised crime (e.g., human trafficking, cybercrime, money laundering, drug cartels). The evaluation of government capabilities was restricted to national policing without addressing the critical challenges of state sovereignty limits, jurisdictional complexity, or the necessity of international cooperation (e.g., Interpol, UN conventions, bilateral treaties). The evaluative element was weak, lacking analysis of whether the inability stems from political will, resource constraints, or the inherent fluidity and digital nature of modern crime.

Section B

Question 3

'The media has only an indirect influence on social behaviour.' Evaluate this view.

This question was highly popular and often well-executed. Some candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of contrasting media effects models. These candidates demonstrated an ability to apply relevant sociological perspectives and evidence in their evaluations. Strong responses successfully marshalled theoretical evidence supporting the indirect view, frequently utilising models such as the Two-Step Flow Model, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and Reception Theory, emphasising the role of opinion leaders, social context, and active audience interpretation. These points were well-developed and supported by relevant sociological concepts like selective exposure and reinforcement.

Less successful responses tended to rely on general observations about the positive and negative effects of the media rather than addressing the nature of its influence on behaviour specifically. Some struggled to focus on the debate surround indirect or direct, suggesting that they had prepared for a different question.

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Other candidates did not focus on the influence of media on behaviour instead focusing on the way different groups are represented in the media, or how the content of the media is controlled.

There were some occasions when candidates appeared confused about the 'indirect influence' on social behaviour. Such responses could mention the hypodermic syringe model as having an indirect influence but ultimately conclude by saying that people behave according to the content they consume. There were some who also mixed up the models themselves either by using incorrect terminology or by naming one theory but explaining another. Some answers suggested a direct effect but did not interrogate the point by outlining the extent to which the influence is mediated, e.g. whether patriarchy is imposed, cumulatively or otherwise or resisted, suggesting all media is patriarchal when clearly there are many examples which might challenge this.

Question 4

'Control of the media is shared between different groups.' Evaluate this view.

Performance on this question was varied but with some strong answers. Many candidates engaged effectively with sociological debates surrounding media ownership and control. There were some good responses to this question that referred to the arguments from Pluralists, digital optimists and the role of the new media to support the claim. Evaluative points used the arguments by Marxists, digital pessimists and the existence of authoritative regimes. Some candidates applied ideas from pluralists and postmodernists to support the view that control is shared, sometimes using examples from new media effectively, discussing prosumers and citizen journalism. Such responses then contrasted this with Marxist ideas about control being centralised. Some also referred to State control and used examples such as China and North Korea.

Some candidates successfully identified the groups (media owners, government regulators) but failed to explore the full spectrum of influence. There was a lack of engagement with the power of advertisers and commercial pressure, the technological gatekeepers (social media platforms), and the subtle influence of source bias (e.g., reliance on powerful institutional sources). Furthermore, the theoretical evaluation was superficial, with candidates failing to contrast the Pluralist Model (which aligns with the shared control view) with the Marxist/Hegemonic Model (which argues for a primary concentration of ideological control).

A challenge faced by some candidates was their inability to clearly show how the media was controlled by men. Some responses focused on how the media was promoting patriarchy without reference to how men in senior positions dominated and controlled the media.

Section C

Question 5

'Religion is an instrument of ideological control.' Evaluate this view.

This was generally a well answered question. Good responses demonstrated strong analytical and evaluative skills, effectively utilising core sociological materials. These responses were sophisticated, clearly defining ideological control and engaging directly with classical sociological perspectives such as Marxist. Good answers used ideas such as 'opium of the people' and false consciousness. The evaluation successfully introduced robust counterarguments, specifically citing the role of religion as a radicalising force for social change e.g. Liberation Theology, the Civil Rights Movement, or fundamentalist groups acting against state power. The successful integration of contrasting theoretical evidence showing religion as both a conservative and a revolutionary force was the hallmark of high-scoring scripts. Some used secularisation as an opposing view, to argue that religion cannot achieve ideological control since it is declining in its power, which was an appropriate approach.

Some were confused regarding feminism and tried to argue that religion promoting patriarchy is NOT a form of ideological control, thus trying to use this as evaluation. The arguments against the view were often presented as alternatives views on religion, rather than being applied to directly challenge the view in the question. However, some responses relied too heavily on feminism for both sides of the argument, limiting depth. Candidates who incorporated a range of perspectives performed better.

There was a tendency in weaker candidates to write all they knew about a perspective rather than stay focused on the concept of ideological control. In these answers there was considerable repetition of the Marxist perspective on ideological control. Many candidates discussed the general roles or functions of religion rather than ideological control.

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Question 6

'Religion has little role in people's lives today.' Evaluate this view.

Performance on this question was often robust, with many candidates offering well-rounded and deeply supported arguments. Candidates expertly structured their responses around the debate concerning secularisation theory. Arguments supporting the view relied on evidence of declining church attendance, religious pluralism, and the privatisation of belief in Western industrialized nations.

Arguments against the view were particularly strong, exploring concepts like the 'believing without belonging' phenomenon, the rise of New Religious Movements (NRMs), and the global evidence demonstrating the continued, profound political and social role of religion in regions outside of Western Europe.

Addressing the word 'today' was in the end a good differentiator for the higher-level responses. Unfortunately, some answers were let down by a lack of focus on the question and its emphasis on 'today'.

There were some candidates who wrote an argument about why religion should have an important role and criticised the decline in morals in today's world, with little sociological basis for their response.

Another limitation was the lack of critical evaluation, which meant that a descriptive outline of opposing views was provided followed by a weak conclusion. Similarly, ideas from postmodernist Lyon were often used, but not always fully understood of effectively applied to address the debate in the question. Some candidates had clearly prepared a different essay, on whether religion is a conservative force or a force for change and presented this debate instead, trying to make it fit but not focusing on the question set.

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There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.

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