

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/11

Essay

Key messages

- Good knowledge and understanding were demonstrated in many of the answers.
- Questions were interpreted accurately overall.
- There was scope for further improvement in the analysis and assessment skills that are required to gain high marks.
- Some answers were too short or too tangential to the question.

General comments

Some of the candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the relevant topic areas and were able to offer analysis and evaluation of appropriate sociological arguments and theory. Other candidates gained high marks for knowledge and understanding but then needed to offer appropriate analysis and assessment in relation to the part **(d)** questions to gain further marks. There were a lot of scripts where the answers were too short to merit many marks. The candidates in such instances needed to be much more familiar with relevant material from the recommended textbooks. Some answers contained material that was irrelevant to the question set.

In general, the candidates would benefit from developing further the skills of interpreting the questions accurately and selecting appropriate material on which to base their responses. There were no rubric errors and candidates generally seemed to make good use of their time in the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

There were some answers fitting the lower mark bands that merely described the different agencies and/or forms of socialisation. Better answers were based on a discussion of different theories of socialisation, including the functionalist and interactionist perspectives. Answers that merited the top mark band included an assessment of the proposition that socialisation is the most significant factor in shaping human behaviour. Some candidates achieved high marks by contrasting sociological theories with biological and/or psychological perspectives on the determinants of human behaviour.

Question 2

The better answers to this question addressed the issues raised by the question at a more theoretical level, often focusing on the debates between positivists and interpretivists about the 'scientific' status of sociological investigation. Candidates gained credit for referring to different models of science and studies of scientific practice, such as those by Lynch and Medawar. Good answers considered both the strengths and the limitations of the positivist perspective, drawing plausible conclusions about the value of using scientific methods in sociological research. Those answers that were confined to a discussion of research methods associated with the positivist perspective could only gain limited marks.

Question 3

This question attracted fewer answers than the other **Section B** question. Some candidates offered a few points about objectivity in relation to different research methods. This type of response merited a mark in the lower half of the mark range. Better answers discussed different theoretical perspectives on the role of values in sociological research. Any discussion of specific research methods was developed within the context of this wider debate about values. There were some very good answers that explained and assessed both the positivist and the interpretivist perspectives on the role of values. Candidates who distinguished between the 'can' and the 'should' aspects of the question often produced very insightful responses.

Question 4

Most candidates who attempted this question were able to distinguish between the different types of interview. Better answers considered the specific strengths and limitations of each type of interview. Good answers often included references to group interviews as well as individual interviews. Another feature of better answers was the attempt to situate the discussion of methodological issues in the context of wider debates about theoretical perspectives. Good use of concepts, such as validity and reliability, was also a characteristic of answers that merited high marks. Responses that fitted the lower mark bands were often confined to a rather general discussion of the strengths and limitations of interviews.

Question 5

Better answers to this question addressed directly the reasons why the poor specifically may find it difficult to move up the social ladder. There were good references to the notion of 'situational constraints' and to structuralist explanations of poverty overall. Some candidates also saw the opportunity to reflect on the significance of cultural factors in influencing the behaviour of the poor in relation to opportunities for upward social mobility. Good answers often included an assessment of the relative merits of structural and cultural explanations of poverty. Those answers to this question that focused too much on the topic of social mobility in general were unable to gain high marks.

Question 6

Candidates needed to start by describing one or more feminist explanations for the existence of gender inequality in employment. Good responses often distinguished between Liberal, Marxist and Radical feminist theories. To achieve high marks, it was also necessary to assess the main feminist theories in terms of how adequately they explain gender inequality in employment. The assessment was often delivered through drawing contrasts between feminist explanations and contributions from other theoretical perspectives, such as the Weberian and Marxist viewpoints. Answers that consisted of just a few assertions about the nature of gender inequality had little sociological merit and could therefore only gain marks at the lower end of the mark range.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12
Essay

Key messages

- * More candidates demonstrated sound knowledge of relevant concepts and theories.
- * Good use was made of references to recent sociological studies and theories in some answers.
- * There was scope to write more about the links between research methods and theoretical perspectives for the **Section B** questions.
- * Answers to the **Section C** questions often lacked references to appropriate empirical evidence.

General comments

The level of response was pleasingly high overall. Many of the candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the relevant sociological arguments and research findings. There was further improvement in the use of references to appropriate concepts and theoretical issues. Some candidates made a concerted effort to illustrate their answers with references to contemporary sociological studies, i.e. those completed within the last ten years or so. It was also good to see candidates making use of concepts and ideas from post-modernist theory.

To improve the standard of response further, candidates might provide more detailed and direct assessments of the issues raised by the questions. More marks could also be gained for the **Section B** questions by exploring in greater detail the relationships between research methods and theoretical perspectives. More use of relevant empirical data would help in answering the **Section C** questions.

The questions in **Sections A** and **B** were the more popular. Comparatively few candidates attempted the **Section C** questions and the standard of response overall in answering those questions was lower than for the other two sections. There were no rubric errors and candidates generally seemed to make good use of their time in the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

A lot of the candidates attempted this question. Some answers demonstrated only limited knowledge of Marxist theory. Better answers described the main tenets of Marx's analysis of capitalism with reasonable accuracy. Some candidates went further in discussing different strands of Marxist thinking, for example by distinguishing between structural and humanistic interpretations of Marx's original ideas. The assessment offered by some candidates was limited to an outline of the main theoretical objections to Marxist ideas. Higher marks were awarded to candidates who were able to construct an assessment in terms of how well Marxist theory fits the reality of modern industrial societies today.

Question 2

Some candidates interpreted this question as an opportunity to provide a general discussion of the importance of socialisation. References to the historical and cultural differences in patterns of childhood needed to be discussed in order to provide an appropriate response to the question. Better answers often took the work of Aries as the starting point for the discussion. High marks were awarded to candidates who were able to identify a range of factors - class, gender, ethnicity, historical influences - that may account for variations in the identities associated with childhood. Some very good answers also challenged the idea of the social construction of childhood through, for example, references to biological and psychological theories of child development.

Question 3

This question attracted more answers than the other **Section B** question. Most of the responses demonstrated a sound understanding of the nature of official statistics. Some answers identified only a few simple points about the strengths and/or limitations of official statistics. Better answers discussed a range of practical and theoretical strengths and limitations. High marks were merited by candidates who linked their discussion of official statistics to wider theoretical debates between positivists and interactionists. Good use of appropriate concepts, such as objectivity and representativeness, was also a feature of answers that achieved marks higher in the range.

Question 4

Some candidates misunderstood what is meant by a longitudinal study, often confusing it with participant observation. A longitudinal study is carried out at regular intervals over a long period of time, usually involving the collection of quantitative data. Answers at the lower end of the mark range were often limited to just a few simple observations about strengths and/or limitations of carrying out research over a long period. Better answers covered a wider range of points for and against the use of longitudinal studies in sociological research. Credit was gained where candidates used references to appropriate studies to illustrate their arguments. Good answers recognised that most longitudinal studies involve the collection of quantitative data, as favoured by those in the positivist tradition.

Question 5

Better answers to this question focused on debates about class divisions. Many candidates referred to appropriate studies of embourgeoisement and proletarianisation. Good answers also included material on more recent debates about the relationship between the working class and the middle class. In many cases, this included well-informed references to post-modernist theory. Answers that merited low marks were often confined to a few simple observations about the concept of social class or about the Marxist theory of class specifically.

Question 6

Comparatively few candidates attempted this question. Answers needed to start by addressing the causes of inequality experienced by ethnic minority groups. Different explanations of ethnic discrimination were offered from within the main sociological perspectives, including the Marxist and Weberian theories. Good answers analysed directly the relationship between ethnic inequality and racial prejudice. Some candidates made good use of references to relevant studies of this subject. At the lower end of the mark range, answers were often limited to a few observations about the different forms that ethnic inequality can take.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/13

Essay

Key Messages

- * Good knowledge of concepts and theories was demonstrated by the majority of candidates.
- * There was scope for improvement in providing the analysis and assessment required to achieve high marks.
- * Some candidates need to develop their skills in interpreting the questions accurately.
- * More use of references to relevant studies would gain further marks.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts was similar to the corresponding session last time. Many answers offered detailed descriptive accounts of relevant sociological concepts and theories, but then needed to offer the analysis and assessment that are also required in order to gain high marks. Some responses needed to address the specific wording of the question and as they contained too much tangential material to merit more than a low mark. In order to achieve higher marks, it is recommended that more attention is given to practising exam skills, including the ability to interpret questions accurately and to construct answers that dissect and probe the relevant analytical issues. More use of references to relevant studies, as a way of illustrating key arguments, would be another way in which candidates could gain further marks.

There were no common misinterpretations of the questions. **Questions one, three and four** proved the most popular. There were comparatively few answers to **Questions two and six**. Most candidates appeared able to write two answers fully in the time available. There were no common rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a popular question that was answered competently by many of the candidates. Lower in the mark range, answers were often confined to a few simple points about the concept of socialisation and needed to include clear references to the functionalist theory in order to gain further marks. Better answers described the main features of the functionalist view of socialisation, often referring to the work of thinkers such as Durkheim and Parsons. To gain high marks, it was also necessary to assess the functionalist theory. In many of the answers, the assessment was delivered by contrasting functionalist views with other theories of socialisation, such as those within the Marxist and interactionist traditions. There were a few excellent answers that questioned the ideological and philosophical underpinnings of the functionalist theory, in some cases by referring to the ideas of post-modernist thinkers.

Question 2

Far fewer candidates attempted this question than the other question from **Section A**. Better responses interpreted the question as an opportunity to reflect on the debates about voluntarism and determinism in human behaviour. There were also some exceptionally good answers that focused on explaining what aspects of modern industrial societies today might promote greater freedom of choice for individuals in the construction of their social identities. References to post-modernist theory featured heavily in such answers. Answers that offered only a few basic observations about the nature of socialisation could only gain marks at the lower end of the mark range.

Question 3

It was evident from answers to this question that some candidates continue to be confused about the distinction between questionnaires and interviews. These candidates unfortunately contrasted interviews with participant observation and wrote nothing about questionnaires specifically. Answers that gained marks in the middle of the range often consisted of a sound descriptive account of questionnaires and participant observation as different research methods. Better answers also provided an assessment of the respective strengths and limitations of each method. Answers meriting the highest marks always included a discussion of the proposition in the question that the data collected using questionnaires is very limited in comparison with the evidence generated by participant observation studies.

Question 4

Answers needed to start by describing some of the practical factors that may influence choice of research method. To reach the higher part of the mark range, it was also necessary to consider other factors that might influence choice of research method. Theoretical and ethical factors were discussed in some of the best answers. Well-chosen references to the impact of values on choice of research method also featured in some good answers. There were a few answers that missed the point of the question by discussing the strengths and weaknesses of different research methods.

Question 5

Answers that merited the lower part of the mark range were often confined to a few basic observations about different forms of gender inequality. Better answers described one or more sociological explanations of gender inequality, with references to feminist theory often to the fore. Good answers unpicked the idea that sociological explanations of gender inequality may be too deterministic. For example, the post-modernist perspective was used by some candidates to highlight the determinism underpinning many Marxist and feminist accounts of gender inequality. The best answers also addressed the claim that sociological explanations of gender inequality may fail to take into account the contrasting experiences of different groups of women.

Question 6

There were comparatively few answers to this question. Better answers contrasted different theories of social class and linked the discussion to the issue of class divisions today. Good answers established a theoretical framework for assessing the claim that class divisions are disappearing in modern industrial societies. This type of response usually included references to the post-modernist claims that class has been replaced by other forms of social differentiation today. Answers that were confined to describing the main characteristics of a class divided society or that outlined Marx's theory of class without applying the material particularly well to the question were limited to marks at the lower end of the mark range.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/21
Data Response

Key messages

- To score more marks candidates should read the questions carefully for key words, and apply these to theory and evidence to improve explanatory skills.
- Questions requiring straightforward recall of knowledge were generally well done, but parts **(c)** and **(d)** require candidates to use information to discuss and explain.

General comments

Some candidates produced answers that reached a high standard, with very good work in the definition of terms and in the demonstration of knowledge and understanding. In many cases a wide range of relevant sociological study material was used to illustrate answers. This enhanced the quality of responses and was rewarded. Further improvement could have been achieved by candidates reading carefully, answering the questions closely as set and by relying on detailed sociological support, especially in the part **(c)** and **(d)** questions. Explanation questions require candidates to use theory and method analytically to show how the research process operates or explains social behaviour. Questions that call for assessment are looking for a discussion of a range of viewpoints that relate detailed evidence and theory to the question asked. **Questions 2 and 3** were the most popular choices. There were a few candidates who answered all three questions, but in the main there were no rubric errors and most candidates were able to do justice to the paper in the time provided.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)** Most candidates answered this well with a clear definition of what is meant by 'value-neutral'. Where a state of detachment by the sociologist was not specified, it was in many cases implied and there were strong responses to the idea that personal values were left on one side. Weaker answers did not mention the link to the research process or referenced bias. Candidates who linked value-neutral to what happened after the research process was over and how the research findings were used could not gain credit for their answers.
- (b)** The question was well understood and answered thoroughly by many candidates. Marks were awarded on the quality of explanation. Weaker candidates relied on saying 'funding' or 'what was in the news' as examples of how a sociologist might choose their research topic. Better answers made a link between funding and sponsors' demands. Indicating that a sociologist might be interested in a topic was not as strong an answer as saying it was a good career move and might lead to publication. The question specified 'apart from personal values', so candidates who referred to religious views or ideological position could not gain credit as both of these would be considered personal. Some candidates were able to give study and sociological examples to support their points, and although this was not necessary to gain full marks, in most cases it enhanced the quality of response.
- (c)** The quality of answers to this question depended on the ability of the candidate to make links between the methodological process and an understanding of how values might enter into research. There were good answers which discussed using scientific methods and specified examples such as the hypothetical deductive model, random sampling, testing research for reliability, using secondary data, or working with teams of colleagues who might check the research. The highest marks were awarded to candidates who could demonstrate in their

explanations how values might enter the research process. Weaker answers asserted that the researcher should detach themselves from interest in the research, or cover topics that they were not interested in, with little development.

- (d) There were a number of general answers to this question which asserted that Sociology should exist to bring about change, and discussed how this might bring about change in society or influence social policy. These included a number of responses where candidates made passing reference to theoretical positions but did not develop any links or explanations to how they might view change in society. Better answers discussed perspective positions on social change, or arguments that were supported with evidence about how research has contributed to helping society in fields such as women's rights, class struggle, poverty or educational standards as examples. Assessment was seen in answers where candidates discussed the difference between positions on the issue of whether research should bring about improvements, comparing for example Marxism with positivist approaches that argue for value-free views. There were some interesting responses that attempted to discuss flaws in the research process, and reasons for research being carried out in the first place, which were many and varied.

Question 2

- (a) There were many very good answers to this question, with most candidates indicating that quantitative data were numerical and statistical, and many gave responses that also indicated how they were collected and displayed. There were a few weaker answers that said that quantitative data were about 'numbers' or 'counting', a few who only indicated where the data might be found such as in questionnaires, and a few who confused them with qualitative data.
- (b) Good marks were awarded to candidates who explained ethical issues such as deception leading to an invasion of privacy, or collecting and publishing material secretly, which worked against rights of confidentiality. Weaker candidates referred to 'lying' or 'illegal activities' without further development. Many candidates did not appear to understand the meaning of an ethical issue. They responded by giving drawbacks of participant observation, referring in many cases to dangers faced by the researcher, or the problems faced in collecting valid data.
- (c) This was a question about explaining the role of validity in interpretivist research, and in particular how interpretivists value validity and would explain this in their terms. The best candidates therefore defined validity explicitly, and went on to link it into their explanation, considering for example how participants might be better viewed in their natural environment so they would not change behaviour, or how being part of the group made it more possible to understand meanings, norms and values from the participant's perspective, and thus produce data that were true to the group's behaviour. Where candidates were able to imply an understanding of validity, they were rewarded for the quality of their explanation. The best candidates were able to unpack explanations of how the researcher needs to be 'inside' the study, or were able to refer specifically to what interpretivists believe to explain theory and method.
- (d) Many candidates fell into the mid-range of the mark scheme in this question as they could produce responses that concentrated on the strengths and weaknesses of participant observation, which were often accurate and detailed answers. The focus of the question was a positivist view of the interpretivist method, which required some understanding and statement of what positivists believe about research, and a concentration on what they value compared with how interpretivists work. Discussion of the scientific/humanistic debate, as well as quantitative versus qualitative data, reliability and validity and ethical issues, were all relevant. The best candidates, who reached the top mark band, were able to produce an interpretivist defence to counter positivist views, making specific links between arguments, and so assess the positivist critique.

Question 3

- (a) This question was very well answered, with most candidates able to say that social mobility involved movement in the social hierarchy. References were made to social class, levels, strata and the social ladder. Weaker answers referred briefly to 'getting a better job' or 'moving up in society'.

- (b)** There were many good answers to this question. Candidates who stated 'marriage' or 'education' in brief sentences produced weaker answers than those who pointed out that a degree or college education was likely to lead to a professional job and a higher salary, or that marrying someone of a higher social class meant that one adopted the social status of one's spouse as well as their economic advantages. There were many references to 'hard work' and life chances, both of which required specific examples, or links to issues such as education or promotion. The question was about achievement, and there were a number of candidates who wrote about ascribed status, and the inheritance of money and titles.
- (c)** There were some good attempts at this question. Many candidates saw the link to what functionalists believe and were able to write about what is functionally important for the stratification system, social mobility and incentives to make the modern economy work efficiently. Better answers accessed differential rewards in the economy and the issues of role allocation, the functional importance of certain jobs, equilibrium and fairness based on deferred gratification and sacrifices for educational reasons. Those candidates who could give a detailed explanation of this with study and theory references linked to what functionalists believe scored at the highest levels. Weaker answers tended to focus on incentive and the importance of working hard.
- (d)** This question focused on modern industrial societies and some candidates digressed into other types of societies. Many candidates gave general responses to the question where they discussed whether they thought that industrial systems were meritocratic, and some gave definitions for which they were rewarded. Reasoning was often good in such answers, but would have been enhanced by the use of sociological evidence or perspectives for support. Better answers discussed the availability of free education, the possibility of candidates from all social classes getting to university, or the improving role of women in the workplace as examples. Assessment began when candidates considered both sides of the argument, by comparing evidence, such as functionalist views on social mobility or Weber, with Marxism and radical feminism, or the hidden curriculum and labelling compared with an open education system. The best responses debated the quality of the evidence in a sustained way, and included an evaluative conclusion.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/22
Data Response

Key messages

- Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the relevant subject matter.
- More evidence of assessment skills is required to gain high marks for the part **(d)** questions.
- There were some high quality answers where excellent use was made of references to appropriate concepts and theories.
- References to post-modernist and post-feminist writers were a feature of many of the best answers.
- In many cases, further marks could be gained by drawing stronger links to relevant sociological theories.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts was good. Some candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the relevant sociological arguments and theories, but were unable to show sufficient evidence of assessment to gain high marks for the part **(d)** questions. Other candidates would have gained higher marks had they been able to develop their answers to the parts **(b)** and **(c)** with greater focus on the wording of the questions. There were some excellent answers that combined an accurate interpretation of the questions with a detailed application of appropriate conceptual and theoretical knowledge to explain and assess the relevant issues as required.

It was pleasing to see many candidates making good use of references to recent sociological studies and to contemporary sociological theory, such as the contributions of post-modernist and post-feminist writers. There was scope in some cases to write longer answers to the part **(c)** and **(d)** questions, with stronger links to appropriate theoretical issues and a better understanding of the contrasts between the different sociological perspectives.

Questions 1 and **2** proved the most popular. There were comparatively few answers to **Question 3**. Most candidates appeared able to write two answers fully in the time and space available. There were no common rubric errors.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)** Good answers noted that status refers to the value, in terms of honour and prestige, that is associated with a particular social position. A lot of answers gained one mark for linking the idea of status to social position, with no further development. A few candidates distinguished between achieved and ascribed status rather than defining the term 'status'.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to identify two appropriate rewards but then needed to elaborate on how the designated rewards might encourage social conformity in order to gain more than half of the marks available. Some confused rewards with sanctions.

- (c) Good answers focused directly on explaining the reasons why conflict theorists question the extent to which modern industrial societies are peaceful and stable. Some candidates opened their answers with quite long accounts of why consensus theorists believe society is peaceful and stable. This material was largely irrelevant to the question and so gained very few marks.
- (d) Answers that merited the bottom band of the mark scheme often comprised a few descriptive comments about the concept of socialisation based on a simple sociological understanding. Better answers provided a sound account of different views of socialisation, usually including the functionalist and interactionist perspectives. To gain high marks, it was also necessary to assess the extent to which sociologists have exaggerated the importance of socialisation in shaping human behaviour. This part of the discussion was often linked to the ideas of Dennis Wrong and to the work of psychologists and biologists. Analysis of the cases of so-called feral children also featured in many of the high-scoring answers.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates were able to gain full marks for this question by noting that validity concerns whether a research method gives a true picture of what it claims to have recorded and depicts social reality accurately. A few candidates confused the idea of validity with that of reliability.
- (b) Many candidates were able to identify one or two reasons why people may behave differently if they know they are being observed. Far fewer were able to secure full marks by developing their points with sufficient clarity to describe why the observational effect might occur.
- (c) A few candidates misinterpreted this question and wrote about the difficulties of avoiding influencing the study group when carrying out participant observation. Better answers focused on the specific problems of gaining access or entry to a group in order to begin a research study. There were a few very good responses that covered a wide range of practical and theoretical issues that might arise when planning and seeking to implement a group study.
- (d) Answers that merited marks lower in the range were often confined to a discussion of the strengths and/or limitations of participant observation in general. Better answers focused on the merits and deficiencies of overt participant observation specifically. Answers that covered mainly practical and ethical issues achieved marks in the middle of the range. Good answers also included some discussion of relevant theoretical issues, such as references to validity, objectivity and the nature of empathetic understanding.

Question 3

- (a) There were a lot of correct answers to this question, noting that gender inequality refers to differences in the opportunities and rewards that society distributes between males and females respectively. Some responses gained only one mark, as they defined the term 'gender' without reference to 'inequality' as specified in the question.
- (b) A lot of answers described factors that might make it difficult for women to achieve upward social mobility. This type of response gained some credit. To achieve full marks, it was necessary to develop the answer in a way that described the processes through which women may experience downward mobility.
- (c) There were a lot of answers that fitted the middle of the mark range, as they described general difficulties that women may face in securing employment and advancing occupationally without linking the material specifically to the topic of positions of power in management and the professions. Better answers included some discussion of the barriers to women entering high-powered positions in employment. This included, for example, discussion of the glass ceiling, male boardroom cultures, and patriarchy within the professions.
- (d) There were some answers that were confined to a few basic assertions about the reasons for gender inequality in employment. Better answers described the arguments of Marxist writers that it is the ruling class that benefits most from gender inequality in employment. High marks were awarded to candidates who also assessed the claim on which the question was based. The assessment was often delivered through discussing contrasts with other explanations of gender inequality in employment, including those contained within different strands of feminist theory.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/23
Data Response

Key messages

- Improvements were noted in exam technique.
- Improvements were noted in candidates' ability to draw links between methods and theoretical perspectives for **Question 2**.
- Answers to the part **(a)** questions often needed to be more precise to gain full marks.
- Answers to the part **(b)** questions often lacked sufficient development for full marks.
- The answers to **Question 3** left much room for improvement in many cases.

General comments

There were many positive developments on which to comment. The candidates continue to demonstrate greater skill in meeting the demands of answering the structured data response questions. More candidates are avoiding the mistake of writing over-long answers to the part **(a)** and **(b)** questions. Some answers to the part **(b)** questions lacked appropriate development this time and the opportunity to gain full marks for these questions was lost as a consequence. The development required for answering the part **(b)** questions does not need to be extensive, but it should be well focused on addressing the question.

Question 3 attracted the fewest answers. Good answers to this question were rare. Surprisingly, many candidates appeared not to understand the concept of an underclass. Some candidates also had no understanding of the term relative poverty. For part **(d)**, quite a few candidates thought it appropriate to discuss poverty through reference to Marx's analysis of class inequality. This was a rather tangential way of addressing the topic. It would have been better to focus the answer on specific theories of poverty.

There were no rubric errors and candidates generally seemed to make good use of their time in the examination.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a)** Good answers to this question noted that a value judgement is a decision about what is right or wrong, good or bad, that ultimately depends on personal belief. Some candidates linked the idea of value judgements to the expression of personal opinions or beliefs, but omitted to make the link to judgements about right or wrong, good or bad. Such responses gained one mark. Some candidates confused the term value judgements with the idea of value freedom.
- (b)** A large majority of the candidates were able to identify correctly two research methods favoured by positivists and gained two marks for this part of the answer. To gain the other two marks, it was necessary to describe briefly the main features of each research method. Some of the candidates were unable to meet this requirement and instead wrote about the advantages of the methods they had cited. A few candidates demonstrated misunderstanding of what is meant by a research method. For example, some incorrectly cited the hypothetico-deductive approach as a research method.

- (c) Answers to this question that merited marks in the lower half of the range were often confined to a basic statement of the contrasting perspectives on values in the positivist and interpretivist traditions respectively. Better answers provided some elaboration in order to demonstrate depth of understanding about the debates surrounding the role of values in sociological research. There were some good answers that made effective use of references to the ideas of thinkers such as Becker, Berger, Gouldner, C Wright Mills, Kuhn and Weber.
- (d) Most of the candidates seemed well informed about the debates surrounding the scientific status of sociology. There were a few answers that demonstrated only a limited knowledge of the positivist position. There were many better answers that explained the positivist viewpoint in some detail. Good answers also included an assessment of the positivist perspective. This was usually delivered through drawing contrasts with the interpretivist perspective. Some candidates also made good use of references to contributions from the philosophy of science, including the ideas of Popper, Kuhn, Lynch, Medawar and Lakatos.

Question 2

- (a) Researcher bias refers to a situation where some attributes or characteristics of the researcher contaminate the research data in a way that distorts the findings. A lot of the candidates were able to provide an acceptable definition along these lines for two marks. Answers that gained only one mark were characterised by lack of clarity or precision in the definition provided.
- (b) Most of the candidates who attempted this question were able to identify two appropriate reasons why it may be difficult to avoid influencing the answers when carrying out interviews. Good answers went beyond identifying relevant reasons to describe how the answers might be influenced by the interviewer. A few candidates gave two reasons that were rather too similar to be credited separately.
- (c) Answers that merited marks at the lower end of the range were often characterised by lack of knowledge about the terms 'reliability' and 'validity'. Some candidates confused the meaning of the two terms. Better answers used the two terms accurately and provided a clear explanation of why unstructured interviews are thought to be high in validity. Answers at the top of the mark range also included an explanation of why unstructured interviews are thought to be low in reliability. The best answers showed good theoretical understanding, often drawing links between the use of unstructured interviews and the ideas of the interpretivists.
- (d) There were a few answers that discussed the strengths and limitations of interviews in general rather than of structured interviews specifically, so could gain only a few marks. Better answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the main features and qualities of structured interviews. Good answers also linked the use of structured interviews to the positivist perspective. Answers that gained high marks included references to relevant concepts, such as reliability, objectivity and validity. A further feature of high quality answers was an attempt to draw reasoned conclusions about the value of using structured interviews in sociological research.

Question 3

- (a) Good answers noted that relative poverty is poverty that is seen in relation to the standard of living of the majority of the people in the society. There were many answers that demonstrated some understanding of the concept of relative poverty, without being able to define the term with sufficient accuracy. One mark was awarded for answers of that type. A few candidates confused relative poverty with absolute poverty.
- (b) Many candidates were able to identify one factor that may influence the level of poverty in a society, but some struggled to identify a second factor. Unemployment was most often cited as an influence on the level of poverty. Other factors that were mentioned in the answers included welfare provision, wage levels and the state of the economy. Good answers described how each of the two factors identified may influence the level of poverty in a society.

- (c) Quite a few candidates appeared not to understand the concept of an underclass. They often wrote about poverty in general. Better answers discussed what is meant by an underclass, sometimes linking the idea to Marx's concept of the lumpenproletariat. Good responses explained why some sociologists have questioned whether an underclass exists. There were very few examples of high quality answers to this question.
- (d) Some candidates saw this question as an opportunity to discuss Marxist theory in general. Such answers were rather too general to merit high marks. Better responses focused on describing Marxist accounts of poverty. Good answers also provided an assessment of the Marxist approach to explaining poverty. The assessment was often delivered through making contrasts with cultural explanations of poverty. The best answers also included a direct critique and evaluation of the Marxist arguments, often noting the highly deterministic nature of the Marxist perspective.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/31

Essay

Key messages

- To gain full marks in section A i definitions have to be accurate and avoid being generalised.
- To gain full marks in A ii examples need to be clearly different, they need to be detailed and specific examples are preferable to generic ones.
- To improve marks in section B answers need to focus on at least two key debates and evaluate the material used both in the way in which research has been conducted and the strengths and limitations of theory.

General comments

The level of success that candidates achieved depended on the amount of theory and relevant texts that they were able to use in their answers. Those with in-depth knowledge wrote intelligent arguments, demonstrating sociological insight and an obvious enthusiasm for the subject and there were some original conclusions. These candidates offered three well-developed analytical answers and all questions were completed to a high standard.

Many candidates attempted some form of evaluation of the work of key sociological thinkers. Some candidates had limited knowledge of sociological theory. To develop their answers, they need to have a more thorough understanding of the key debates. Comments that are merely assertive do not enable candidates to progress: they need to be thinking of examples or theory to support their assertions.

Candidates need to be secure in their understanding of key sociological terms. For some individuals, this was limited, even with concepts such as meritocracy.

Many candidates offered information in the form of a list. To develop more sophisticated answers, they need to think about developing links between their points and adding conclusions to their essays.

There were very few rubric errors, mostly made by candidates answering a question from each section.

All questions on the paper were answered but there were few responses to the questions in **Section E** and a limited number of responses to the questions in **Section F**.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to identify that households are made up of people living in economic and emotional support. In order to gain full marks it was necessary for candidates to note that this could either be family members or individuals who were not related.
- (ii) Most candidates elected to describe extended and nuclear families. A few inaccurately described the Kibbutz or tribal societies as households.
- (b) A variety of family forms were discussed and some very good answers were well supported with evidence of the growth of diversity and the enduring nature of nuclear families. Strong candidates offered an intelligent debate, juxtaposing theory and supporting this with evaluative comments. A number of candidates ignored the modern industrial societies in the question and included a number of family types like the Nayer and other preindustrial families that did not fit that

description. Other candidates answered a question about the functions of the family, whether the family is a 'good' or 'bad' thing or described what they saw as problem 'families' in modern industrial societies. Some candidates interpreted the question as being about the supposed universal nature of the nuclear family.

Question 2

- (a) (i) The majority of candidates had a firm grasp of the meaning of the nuclear family. Those who did not address the 'isolated' in the term and did not include living separately from wider kin could not gain full marks.
- (ii) Most candidates identified socialisation as one of the functions and were able to describe it. The second example ranged from stabilisation of the adult personality to reproduction. A few interesting answers gave examples linked to theories like Marxism and reproducing labour power controlled by false consciousness.
- (b) This question was asked in reference to modern industrial societies and many candidates took this as an opportunity to write at length about Murdock's definition of a family and its functions. Whilst there was some merit in this approach, it did not enable candidates to do much more than offer a list of points. Some candidates displayed limited knowledge about the role of the state and as this was in the question it needed to be included. There were many assertive comments about the roles of the family not being carried out well in modern societies. In order to gain high marks candidates, needed to show understanding of the nature of loss of function and the way that families still operate in modern industrial societies. There were some very detailed debates by some candidates that included a range of sociological perspectives such as the 'New Right' theory.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) (i) Meritocracy was generally well understood. Some candidates needed to show that this can cause individuals to be treated differently because they have different levels of ability, rather than everyone being treated the same. Some candidates had difficulty in giving an appropriate definition of the term.
- (ii) This question gave rise to some interesting examples like uniform policies and the introduction of a common curriculum such as the National Curriculum in Britain. Some candidates related their answers to social inequality rather than equality.
- (b) The majority of candidates outlined the differences between Marxist and functionalist theories of education and equality. The best examples debated the relationship between class, ethnicity and gender in terms of education systems and supported their answers with a range of evidence, both theoretical and empirical. Occasionally, the opportunities or constraints that candidates themselves may experience were explored really well and thoughtful conclusions developed. Weaker candidates struggled to give a balanced argument and limited themselves to social class. In order to develop answers, candidates need to outline at least two viewpoints.

Question 4

- (a) (i) Although the majority of candidates defined streaming as the way candidates are grouped based on their perceived abilities, there were a number who were confused and described it as the process of Internet streaming.
- (ii) Candidates who had not defined the term sociologically in part (a)(i) were unable to identify two appropriate examples of the impact of streaming. Some candidates did not relate their answers to educational success as the question asked.
- (b) Labelling as a process was well understood and there were many examples of excellent essays which outlined interactionist theories as well as those of the functionalists, Marxists and feminists. The very best of these supported their answers with evidence and were analytical, offering a conclusion. Some candidates spent too long describing the work of Rosenthal and Jacobsen, when they would have done better to have summarised this and then described another piece of work. Candidates who based their answers on personal experience and made assertions but did

not look at the other influences on educational success, like class position or material factors, were limited in the number of marks they could gain.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) (i) The majority of candidates described this term as when there are several religions in one society, but they needed to include aspects such as toleration to gain full marks.
- (ii) Good examples of characteristics of plural societies included high levels of migration and allowing freedom of speech.
- (b) It was appropriate to make use of the classical theorists, such as Durkheim, Malinowski and Comte, in the answer to this question. Some candidates, though, gave unduly long descriptions of features of their work that turned their essays into lists rather than discussions and made it difficult to relate their work to modern industrial societies. Those candidates who interpreted this question as one about social change rather than the influence religion has in modern industrial societies could only gain limited credit for their answers.

Question 6

- (a) (i) Some candidates described 'church' as a building, rather than as a large religious organisation.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to identify growth in numbers as one reason why religious organisations develop into churches but many were unable to identify a second explanation.
- (b) There were responses that showed consistent analysis and a clear and sometimes sophisticated knowledge of the relationship between traditional religious institutions and new religious movements. Many of these drew evidence from a variety of different cultures and societies. Most candidates had some understanding of the new religious movements that are developing but needed to include a theoretical perspective or develop a range of ideas in order to access the higher mark bands.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) (i) Most candidates gave clear definitions of the term in relation to its sociological meaning. Candidates who said that it was when the public have a panic about morals could not gain full credit.
- (ii) There were some very thoughtful and perceptive responses to this question from some candidates but many were unable to identify an appropriate study and focussed only on issues surrounding either 'morals' or 'panic' rather than in relation to crime and deviance.
- (b) There were some very good analytical responses from strong candidates. Weaker candidates provided limited responses as they could not distinguish between deviance and crime and needed much greater understanding of what constitutes the 'interests of the powerful' in society and issues surrounding 'control' and the 'creation of crime' in society.

Question 8

- (a) (i) Many candidates were able to define delinquent or sub-culture. Fewer candidates were able to define them together.
- (ii) The most successful answers described two sociological studies of delinquent sub-cultures, such as that studied by Jock Young. Some candidates gave generic examples, such as the behaviour young men, but these rarely worked as well as references to specific studies.
- (b) Answers to this question included some comprehensive arguments, covering a range of different sociological perspectives. Some candidates needed a greater knowledge of the different

theoretical perspectives in order to attempt an evaluation of the usefulness of the contribution of Marxist studies to an understanding of the nature of crime and deviance.

Section E

Question 9

- (a) (i) This question was answered by candidates who clearly had some understanding of the history of Fordism in their own country. Many of these responses were from weaker candidates and there was often little distinction between 'Fordism' and 'post-Fordism' in their answers.
- (ii) Few candidates were able to identify two characteristics of post-Fordism.
- (b) This question proved to be challenging, with many candidates misunderstanding the term 'deskilled workforce'.

Question 10

- (a) (i) Of the few candidates who answered this question, not all were able to define 'frictional unemployment' correctly.
- (ii) Candidates attempted to give two examples of government policy affecting levels of employment.
- (b) This question proved to be challenging to those candidates who opted to answer it as there was often confusion as to what constituted 'non-work' as opposed to 'work'. To develop their answers further, they needed to include more theory.

Section F

Question 11

- (a) (i) Some candidates did not understand the term 'logic of capitalism'. Those candidates who did answer the question correctly gave full and meaningful explanations.
- (ii) There were some very reasonable responses to this question and stronger candidates were able to identify two good examples, each with a clear description and sometimes a full explanation of the 'change' identified.
- (b) Some detailed arguments were offered in response to this question by able candidates, who sometimes made use of knowledge and experience of their own societies. Some candidates whose knowledge and understanding of relevant theory was limited made assertive comments but did not include any attempt at evaluation. Evaluation, even if by juxtaposition, enables candidates to improve their marks.

Question 12

- (a) (i) Many candidates found it difficult to define the term 'representation' in relation to the media, with many giving examples of representations rather than a definition of the term.
- (ii) Most candidates gave reasonable examples but answers varied in terms of appropriateness and accuracy. The term 'sensationalise' sometimes appeared to confuse candidates when responding to this question, as they occasionally offered different meanings rather than different examples of the ways in which the media might sensationalise news stories.
- (b) Able candidates offered thoughtful responses to this question, demonstrating appropriate knowledge and understanding of related theory and argument. Some candidates appeared to be confused about the meaning of the term 'marginalise'. Where there was confusion, candidates attempted an uncritical response which lacked any reference to alternative theory, key thinkers, or relevant texts. In order to improve their levels of response, candidates need to develop their understanding of theories, thinkers and texts.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/32

Essay

Key messages

- To gain full marks in section A i definitions have to be accurate and avoid being generalised. Brief answers are all that is required in this section.
- To gain full marks in A ii examples need to be clearly different, they need to be detailed and specific examples are preferable to generic ones.
- To improve marks in section B answers need to focus on at least two key debates and evaluate the material used both in the way in which research has been conducted and the strengths and limitations of theory.
- Essay planning enables answers to develop arguments rather than just listing relevant information.

General comments

Many candidates produced impressive answers and the level of knowledge and understanding was generally sound. There has continued to be an improvement in the application to the questions of more relevant and contemporary sociology, particularly in reference to feminism and post-modernism.

Candidates can improve their performance by developing in the following areas.

In part **(a)**, candidates should keep answers brief, avoiding unnecessary length and restricting the examples given to two. It is best when these examples are clearly different and there is no overlap between them.

In part **(b)** answers, candidates should develop an argument. At its most basic level, this can be by juxtaposition of ideas, but a more analytical answer will develop the strengths and limitations of evidence and find the connections between theories and data. List-like answers, even if full of evidence, can rarely achieve high marks. In this section, candidates should show some understanding of chronology and not link all theoretical material together, for example Marx and Bruce, as if they were contributing to sociology at the same time. In order to score in the top band, an evaluative conclusion should be included.

Also in part **(b)**, candidates should be encouraged to produce an essay plan as this will enable them to focus their argument in a coherent way and avoid writing long descriptive passages. Most candidates who produced a plan then completed their essays with worthwhile conclusions. The best answers included a range of empirical research and relevant theory as well as examples drawn from contemporary societies, including their own. These answers were able to engage with the issues raised in the question and did not go into lengthy descriptions of the work of individual theorists or researchers.

Candidates should read the rubric carefully, as some candidates answered six questions, one from each section.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i)** There were many good answers to this question, even from candidates who struggled with the rest of the paper. Parsons was named by many candidates. Candidates needed to include the reason for the stabilisation of the adult personality, which is to enable the adults to carry on in their role in the isolating world, in order to gain full marks. Some candidates described the socialisation of children for this term.

- (ii) Those candidates who understood the term offered good examples and some candidates who had described socialisation in (a)(i) then went on to give two examples of stabilisation in (a)(ii). Many quoted examples of conflict, marital breakdown, mental illness and inability to function at work amongst others. Some candidates quoted examples of socialisation in their answer.
- (b) There were some very good answers to this question. Most answers concentrated on functions for the individual rather than society but the best answers did both. There were some over-lengthy descriptions of Murdock and time spent on this could have been used to better effect in addressing other points. Some very good answers described how the same action, such as the experience of family life, could be both functional and dysfunctional for different people. There were some excellent descriptions of feminism and the work of feminist writers. The best answers not only outlined the functions of the family but also related these to both society and individuals, whereas other candidates used this as an opportunity to list the functions of the family.

Question 2

- (a) (i) Domestic labour was well described as work carried out in the home. Some candidates could have improved their answer by including a reference to unpaid labour. Many candidates wrote very long answers and then repeated what they had said in their answer to part (a)(ii). Some candidates thought that the term to be defined was domestic labourer.
- (ii) Nearly all candidates gave two reasons why domestic labour can be seen as exploitative. One of the more unusual examples referred to young girls having to walk miles to fetch the family's water. Others included long hours and underpayment of servants. The most effective answers to this question gave examples that were clearly different. A small number of candidates referred to domestic roles rather than labour as stated in the question.
- (b) Almost all answers focused on the relationship between husbands and wives in their answers and a wide range of source material was examined, including the work of Edgell, Dobash and Dobash as well as an enormous amount of feminist material. All of these looked at domestic labour, with the more successful answers also opening up the debate to look at issues of decision-making, power and if 'joint' means 'joint'. Other answers were limited by over-lengthy descriptions of the work of Young and Willmott. A better use of the candidates' time would have been to make brief reference to their work and then move on to other evidence. Better answers opened up the debate beyond husbands and wives not only to include the relationship between parents, children and the elderly but also to outline the difficulty in making of generalisations in the light of diversity of family types across societies and cultures. There were some very interesting comparisons made between the status of siblings in the family in relation to rights, behaviour and education. Candidates need to understand that debates about whether there should be equality in family life are inappropriate in a sociology examination.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) (i) Many candidates defined cultural reproduction as culture. Those who understood the concept gave some accurate definitions such as 'a term used by Bourdieu to describe the reproduction of dominant middle class values from one generation to the next'. It was excellent to see him named by many candidates but it was possible to gain full marks without doing this. Some candidates did not link it to Marxist views but to socialisation.
- (ii) Those candidates who had thought cultural reproduction was the passing on of culture gave two examples of the process of socialisation. Those who had correctly defined it gave examples which included language codes, the passing on of inequalities and cultural capital.
- (b) There were many excellent answers that not only outlined the way in which education systems can be meritocratic but also the way in which inequalities can be maintained, by looking at factors of class, ethnicity and gender. Many of these referred to Althusser as well as Bowles and Gintis. Excellent answers were supported by sociological studies and developing this is one way in which candidates can improve their performance. Some candidates produced long accounts of different inequalities but did not evaluate Marxist views on education or address the question of 'legitimise'.

Very few candidates seemed to take account of the fact that all candidates have class, gender and ethnicity but rather seemed to see these as independent factors.

Question 4

- (a) (i) This question did not specify education but many candidates answered the question as if it had. Better candidates defined the term in general and that was what was needed to gain full marks. Some candidates did not refer to the relative nature of material deprivation in their answers or confused 'material' with 'maternal'.
- (ii) Most candidates gave two advantages of middle class children and the best offered an example of a cultural advantage and an example of an economic advantage. Other good answers emphasised the structural factors inside schools. It was possible to give examples that had similar features but the best answers avoided this and gave two distinct reasons. A very small number of candidates misinterpreted the question and described the disadvantages of working class candidates, for which they could not gain credit.
- (b) This was a well-understood question and most candidates were fairly successful at it, with many giving superb answers covering several theoretical perspectives including Marxism. Some candidates wrote lists of factors, evidence or 'write all you know' type answers with little assessment and innate ability was presented as an uncontroversial fact. Other undeveloped answers tended to give over-lengthy descriptions of details such as Bernstein's language codes. Although this was creditable, a few lines should suffice rather than a page. Candidates could gain more marks by making the point and then moving on to discuss another home or in-school factor.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) (i) This was a well-understood concept. Nearly all candidates recognised that it had a connection to basic beliefs but some did not make the connection that fundamental groups seek to return to an earlier, purer form of religion. A small number of candidates misunderstood the question and described why fundamentalist groups develop or defined terrorist groups who have no religious connection.
- (ii) Better answers named a fundamentalist religious group such as the Taliban and Born Again Christians. Candidates who only named a group could gain no more than one mark. They then needed to describe some of the features of that group to gain further credit. There was confusion in some answers between fundamentalism and extremism. Some candidates named religions such as Islam and Christianity. Some candidates only named one example.
- (b) Most candidates interpreted this question to be about the role of religion in relation to social change either occurring or not. This was a reasonable approach but the best candidates noted that social order means stability and that while change can happen within the functionalist view, that change should be in an orderly way. There were some very long descriptions of the work of Durkheim, Malinowski and Weber, and although these were all relevant, candidates would do better to keep their descriptions brief in order to expand their argument. Some candidates found it difficult to keep their answers objective for this question. Answers at the top of the mark bands covered a wealth of contemporary and empirical evidence that included the classical theorists as well as Holm, Maduro, McGuire, Nelson, El Saadawi, and many others.

Question 6

- (a) (i) There were many good definitions of sects as small religious groups, led by a charismatic leader and requiring commitment. Some candidates gave long and detailed descriptions of sects. Two or three key points were needed to gain full marks. A few candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about why sects were formed.
- (ii) Some candidates described the features of a sect in this section of their answer, sometimes putting detail here that would have scored them marks in the first part of the question. Others gave good examples of sects cooling down, gaining membership or changing following the death of the founding leader. The best examples were from contemporary society, although it was appropriate

to use Protestant sects, as long as it was clear that this related to their conception. Some candidates struggled with a second example and others confused 'denomination' with 'domination'.

- (b) The key to answering this question well was to focus on the concepts of power and influence of religious organisations. Many candidates interpreted the question as one about secularisation and produced formulaic answers with long descriptions of the work of such key thinkers as Comte. The very best answers placed their discussion of the secularisation debate firmly in the context of religious organisations, discussing both the way they exercise power as well as the influence they may hold in societies both in the past and now. This was frequently juxtaposed against the growth of new religious movements. Although some candidates relied too heavily on the classical theorists, better answers related their discussions to 'power' and the growth of fundamentalism and post-modernist theory.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) (i) Some candidates took master status to mean 'the master', rich people or people with power. More appropriate answers saw it as the status that overrides all others, which can be positive or negative.
- (ii) Candidates who defined master status accurately in part (a)(i) were able to give appropriate explanations of how it can be achieved. Some candidates offered a second example that was identical to the first. It is always better to give examples that are clearly different in the way they are described to gain full marks. Other candidates only gave one example.
- (b) Candidates were obviously well prepared to discuss the data that relate to who commits crime. Some limited answers agreed with the view in the question that it is a working class problem and supported this with references to the crime statistics. Many of these answers were very long and contained a lot of knowledge that needed to be applied more clearly to answering the question. More evaluative answers looked at the interpretation of crime statistics, selective application of the law and a range of theories about who commits crime and why they may or may not appear in the crime statistics. Good understanding of Marxist theories was particularly evident. A number of candidates still treated women as a separate social group that is not linked to the working or middle classes.

Question 8

- (a) (i) This term was well defined by many candidates. Some candidates did not include the role of media or police, which is central to an accurate definition.
- (ii) The best examples were taken from sociological studies, such as that of Hall, Cohen and Young. Other candidates gave generic examples, such as the way the police treat youths, but many were vague. Answers had to be focused on the processes in order to gain good marks. There were some excellent examples, such as reactions to the wearing of the hijab in France, that showed excellent understanding.
- (b) Most candidates had a good understanding of the interactionist theories, which were outlined well in their answers. Higher order answers also contrasted interactionism with a range of explanations such as sub-cultural, structural and Marxist accounts.

Section E

Very few candidates attempted a question from this section.

Question 9

- (a) (i) The few candidates who answered this question were unsure of the meaning of scientific management.
- (ii) Candidates were unsure of the nature of the human relations school of management.
- (b) The majority of answers to this question were limited to generalisations and speculation.

Question 10

- (a) (i) This term was understood and described clearly.
- (ii) Although some candidates achieved full marks, most examples were drawn from everyday activities such as men playing football and women knitting. Many of the leisure activities of women, such as cleaning, sounded like work.
- (b) Power in the work place was described by many candidates from a common-sense point of view. Candidates had a limited idea of how to approach this question.

Section F

Question 11

- (a) (i) The way in which the media try to influence the behaviour or beliefs of audiences was described well. Some candidates omitted to link this to the owners of the mass media.
- (ii) Candidates gave many good examples of the factors that influence the content of the media, including the views of owners and controllers, gatekeeping, news values and sensationalism amongst others.
- (b) Pluralist theories were very well understood, with most candidates comparing them with other views such as conflict theory and hegemony. Some answers were characterised by a list-like approach and others relied most heavily on pluralist views. Better answers not only produced balanced conceptual responses including post-modern views, but also referred to the present with references for example to the role and views of embedded reporters in the first Iraq war.

Question 12

- (a) (i) Some candidates found it difficult to define the concept of mass culture.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to give two valid examples of the influence of the media, although many of these relied on common-sense observations.
- (b) Most candidates used models of media effects in answering this question, which was valid, but to access the higher mark bands they needed to discuss specific studies of the media that refer to politics or the role of the media in elections.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/33

Essay

Key messages

- To gain full marks in section A i definitions have to be accurate and avoid being generalised. Brief answers are all that is required in this section.
- To gain full marks in A ii examples need to be clearly different, they need to be detailed and specific examples are preferable to generic ones.
- To improve marks in section B answers need to focus on at least two key debates and evaluate the material used both in the way in which research has been conducted and the strengths and limitations of theory.
- Essay planning enables answers to develop arguments rather than just listing relevant information.

General comments

A pleasing number of candidates performed well in this examination. Candidates from some Centres showed that they had been well prepared with detailed sociological knowledge and produced three analytical essays. Some candidates included a lot of detail in their answers but would have used this time better to plan their answers so that they were more focused on the question, rather than writing 'all you know' type answers.

Most candidates responded well to the straightforward answers in part **(a)**, while the answers to the essays in part **(b)** required detailed explanations or discussion. Some candidates wrote very long introductions to all their questions and this time could have been better used in making new points or referring to more evidence.

A number of candidates made rubric errors in only completing two questions. In many of these cases candidates included little sociological data to support their answers.

In order to improve performance, candidates should note that only two examples are required in part **(a)(ii)** questions and that including more does not gain more marks. Also, some candidates have a tendency to refer to individuals as having gender, ethnicity or class and this can limit the success of their evaluation.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i)** The socialisation process within the family was described well. Candidates who did not show that primary socialisation is connected to the early years were unable to get full marks. Some candidates wrote very long answers to this question.
- (ii)** Most candidates offered two appropriate examples, amongst the most popular of which were canalisation, verbal appellation and the learning of language. A few candidates wrote one paragraph in which only one example was given and other candidates gave more than two reasons. Some candidates ignored the question, which asked for 'brief' descriptions.
- (b)** Candidates wrote some very interesting essays on the nature of childhood in which they compared the past with the present and also compared the experience of childhood in different contemporary societies. The very best answers included references to the work of key thinkers such as Aries and

also considered the differences in length of childhood, responsibility and the treatment of young people within one society, which could include the dark side of the family.

Question 2

- (a) (i) Most candidates defined the term, although some described the work done by partners in conjugal relationships. Other answers showed confusion with the work of maids and other cleaning staff.
- (ii) The key to answering this question was to address the word 'change'. Most candidates described the changes as movement to symmetry or shared decision-making and there were some interesting references to the way in which changing technology has influenced conjugal relationships. Some candidates described roles with no reference to change and some wrote about single-parent families where there is no conjugal relationship.
- (b) In this question about marriage, most candidates wrote, quite rightly, about divorce and the implications of this for the status of marriage. The best answers then went on to consider remarriage and supported their answers with reference to key thinkers such as Young and Willmott, Oakley and feminist writers. The question was focused on modern industrial societies but some candidates relied almost solely on the work of Murdock. Although it is acceptable to refer to his work, he was writing over 60 years ago, so candidates should include some more contemporary references like Hart or Morgan in order to gain more marks. Some candidates wrote about the value of family life rather than marriage.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) (i) The best answers defined this term as one concept. Other candidates defined gender or stereotyping, while a number struggled with this definition or left it blank.
- (ii) Candidates gave good examples of characteristics of groups that fail. Class features was one of the most prominent. Other valid points were made about some ethnic groups, language, lack of cultural capital, immediate gratification and the following of a counter-school culture. Some candidates seemed to have been anticipating a question about peer groups and so described different types of groups to be found in school. Other candidates described why some groups fail, which was not what the question asked.
- (b) Nearly all candidates began their answer by looking at the links between education and gender. Some described how girls under-achieve, which may have been true in the past but is not the picture in many societies today. Many candidates described girls as if they do not have class and even candidates who were writing about the work of Fuller described them solely as girls and overlooked their ethnicity. There were many detailed answers to this question that referred to a great deal of evidence and some of these would have benefitted from some comments on the quality of the information they had referred to.

Question 4

- (a) (i) Almost all candidates understood that positional theory is connected to social position but only a few were able to define it as linked to position on the stratification system and the implications of that for social mobility of individuals at different points on the system. A few candidates named Boudon in their answer.
- (ii) Many excellent examples were given, the majority of which related either to material or cultural factors. The majority of answers were based on material circumstances.
- (b) The best answers to this question began by looking at how education may integrate individuals into their society in a positive way. They then looked at the counter-argument that its function was that of ideological conditioning and provided evidence for these standpoints. Other answers interpreted the question as describing the functions of education without reference to culture. Many candidates were able to relate to a range of both in- and out-of-school factors. Some relied on rather out-dated material, such as that of Douglas, and these answers would have been improved by the inclusion of some more contemporary material.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) (i) Many candidates gave full definitions while some candidates did not know what privatised forms of worship meant.
- (ii) Most candidates were able to name two ways in which statistics of attendance can be misleading. Some candidates wrote very long answers to this question.
- (b) There were some excellent and very detailed responses to this question. Supporting evidence came from a range of classical theory as well as more specific consideration of the role of women in religion. Good use was made of the work of key thinkers such as Bruce, Wallis, Armstrong, Giddens, Holt, de Beauvoir and El Saadawi.

Question 6

- (a) (i) Disenchantment was generally well defined, though some candidates confused the term with disengagement.
- (ii) This question was well answered, with candidates outlining a range of ways in which religiosity can be measured, as well as the ways in which reasons for attending places of worship can be misleading.
- (b) Candidates had been well prepared for a question on secularisation so responses to this question were good. Not only did candidates look at a vast range of ways in which secularisation can be defined, but they also supported their answers well with both theory and empirical data. Weber, Bruce and Martin were all used well. A few candidates considered change over time, and one or two gave examples of the continued or renewed use of power by some religious organisations in different countries such as Iran, Poland and The Christian Right in the USA. There were some few really excellent answers.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) (i) This was a well-understood concept, although few candidates noted that the person who commits white-collar crime usually holds a position of authority.
- (ii) Examples of the problems in measuring crime were well explained. Most of these centred on recording and reporting. A few candidates described judges letting people off if they were in positions of authority or giving them a lesser sentence, but in that case the crime had been discovered and so it would form part of the crime statistics.
- (b) Some answers were well constructed. They looked at factors in relation to crime and the position of the ruling class to construct and operate the legal system in their own interest, and then compared this with other theories. Many candidates were able to write sophisticated answers, looking at the work of Miller, Cohen, Sutherland and the neo-Marxists and analysing the material referred to. Other answers lacked focus and offered catch-all questions that looked at sociological theories about the nature of crime and deviance. Some gave very lengthy descriptions of the roughnecks and the saints and how the latter were treated more leniently, again overlooking the point that their criminality had been observed.

Question 8

- (a) (i) There were some very clear explanations of chivalry thesis but some candidates went on to describe why it does not work, for which they gained no more marks. Candidates need to tailor the length of their answers to the number of marks available. Some answers to this question were long enough to be described as mini-essays, which was not needed for three marks.
- (ii) Female socialisation and the effects of social control on females were amongst the most popular responses to this question.

- (b) The best answers explained what feminists had to say about female crime and then addressed the question correctly by assessing the credibility of those theories. Others explained the extent of female crime and then went on to describe which other people commit crime and compared the amount of crime committed by different groups. A few really excellent answers used the work of Becker and Lemert but then the essays were developed to include Miller, Merton, Cohen, Young and others to explain why deviance happens.

Section E

The questions in this section were answered by too few candidates to report on.

Section F

Question 11

- (a) (i) There were some very detailed answers to this question, many of which used the example of Disney. A number of candidates struggled with this concept and a few left the answer blank.
- (ii) This question was well understood by candidates and there were many good responses that included gatekeeping, agenda setting, ownership, government censorship and audience demand. Some responses to this question were longer than to part (b).
- (b) At the top end of the mark range there were some excellent evaluative essays that not only outlined the Marxist and pluralist views of the relationship between ownership and the content of the media but supported their answer with a range of evidence which included Hall, Bagdikian, Morley and the Glasgow University Media Group. A small number of Centres appeared to have specialised in this topic, and their candidates produced very full answers to this question

Question 12

- (a) (i) Gender stereotyping had to be related to the mass media to gain full marks and only a limited number of candidates did this.
- (ii) Many different representations of females were outlined, of which passive and submissive and as sex objects were the most popular. It is worth noting that the answers of some candidates from some Centres were very long and they could have gained full marks with a lot less detail and only two examples included in their answer.
- (b) Candidates tended to agree with the question uncritically and give few sociological references to support their answer. Instead they gave several, very long, descriptions of films and TV programmes. Those candidates that disagreed tended to do so from the view that the media promote ruling class ideology and could see no link between that and patriarchy. A few really good answers contrasted Althusser with Whale and included references to Berlusconi, Murdoch and the Sun's various campaigns, as well as Philo and the miners' strikes.