

# SOCIOLOGY

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**Paper 9699/12**  
**The Family**

## Key messages

- Candidates should read the questions carefully and ensure they respond to the specific question set rather than the general topic.
- Candidates should include specific sociological material such as concepts, theories and studies.

## General Comments

Many candidates produced excellent responses, showing a sound grasp of sociological theories and concepts. This was particularly noticeable in relation to conjugal roles within the family. In order to improve performance candidates need to apply their knowledge to the question that has been set. Frequently candidates have responded with knowledge generally related to the topic rather than specifically focused on the question. This was particularly evident in **Question 2** when many students did not take into account the focus on modern industrial societies and included lots of accurate but irrelevant detail on pre-industrial and extinct societies.

All candidates should be encouraged to read the paper fully before starting in order to identify what the questions require before they begin to answer them. It may help to underline key concepts and key instructions before answering. In **Section B**, some excellent responses demonstrated clear and thorough knowledge of appropriate sociological theories, concepts and studies. However, many responses were less successful in demonstrating evaluation.

Candidates generally used their examination time wisely, with the exception of over lengthy answers to **Question 1(b)**, and there was little evidence of rushed final answers. There were few rubric errors.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) Most candidates had some understanding of the meaning of dysfunctional family in terms of a family failing to function properly, with the best answers also recognising that dysfunctional families also cause harm to society or the individuals within them. Common errors were to give examples of supposedly dysfunctional families, such as single parent families, or to describe how some family members may be dysfunctional, without directly defining the term.
- (b) Most candidates were able to show a good understanding of the expressive role but many included unnecessary and lengthy descriptions of the reasons why single/lone parent families exist. The most successful answers identified two specific features, such as care of children and domestic responsibilities, and then described these features. The concept of emotional work was often identified but development of this aspect varied. Housework/domestic chores were also commonly identified but not always developed fully. Childcare was rarely developed successfully. However, many candidates structured their answers well, clearly identifying and then developing each point and the length of many responses was suitable for 4 marks with few including unnecessary theory. There were some successful responses which used the 'warm bath theory' and explored the role in light of partner/grandparents. Some less successful answers identified two similar features such as carer-giver or emotion work without making it clear how each point was different and in some cases repeating the same explanation for each point. Others made generalised references to primary

socialisation that could have applied to either the expressive or the instrumental role, thereby scoring no marks.

- (c) Many responses to this question successfully identified social policies but were less successful in explaining how these policies influence family life. Many candidates offered a good list of policies but many lacked depth. For example, many candidates named divorce reform or China's one child policy as an influence on family life with only a few pointing out that these result in single parent families or smaller families. Very few candidates developed this further to describe a more sociologically informed influence on family life such as the development of beanpole families, gender imbalance or 'little emperors'. In order to improve performance candidates need to support their answers with relevant sociological concepts. Some candidates seemed better prepared to write about the impact of state policies on society, rather than on family life; the latter was often restricted to impacts on family forms, e.g. divorce legislation or welfare benefits leading to a rise in single parent families. At the top end, there were some impressive examples of government policies with detailed examples of how they affect families, especially using recent examples such as recent legislation in India to permit gay marriage. Only a small proportion of students developed three or more reasons with enough development and focus to attain the top marks. In addition, some wrote about the managerial state and not precise policies. A common misunderstanding of the question was to describe New Right views about what governments **should** do in terms of laws or policies to encourage nuclear families and discourage single parent families, which was not what the question asked.
- (d) Most candidates demonstrated a firm understanding of the negative views held by the New Right in terms of single parent families and many candidates understood that a two-sided response was required. Responses often focused on poor socialisation, mental health issues, high levels of crime and delinquency, levels of poverty and welfare dependency. Some sophisticated answers related this to the tax burden imposed on those in other family structures. Many candidates made good use of the work of Murray. Fewer responses were able to show good evaluation and relied upon the information about Swenson given in the supplied data. Candidates who were less sure how to assess New Right views simply produced generalised or anecdotal 'defences' of single parent families. Others took a more sociological approach, but struggled to find relevant material. The most popular line was to argue that nuclear families were just as bad, drawing on studies about the 'dark side' of nuclear families. The most successful evaluations often explored diversity and used appropriate postmodern sociologists. Although many who addressed postmodern defences of diversity still found it difficult to relate these directly to the New Right criticisms they had identified, e.g. there was a tendency for these students to write about the single parent family as an 'escape' for abused wives/children, focusing only on the issue of harm to individuals, rather than society. Some less successful responses simply described New Right views on nuclear families or the supposed effects of lone-parent families on individuals (rather than society). Common errors were to assert that single parent families are harmful with no development, or to assess the success of the nuclear family which was not what the question asked. Some candidates over-relied on the information in the supplied data; it is there to be developed but should not be copied extensively.

## Section B

### Question 2

This was a popular question with many candidates producing well-constructed and planned two-sided essays discussing the dominance of nuclear families in modern industrial societies. The most successful answers evaluated effectively by exploring the emergence and growth of family diversity and the most sophisticated responses addressed the issue of whether this now means the nuclear family is no longer the dominant family form. The majority of candidates were able to explore the reasons why diversity in society may have eroded the dominance of the nuclear family and link this to a broad range of examples. Even less successful responses used some concepts such as Parsons' 'fit thesis'. There was some vague use of Marxist theory but functionalism and postmodernism were applied well. Some responses also discussed neo-functionalism. Those using feminist theory varied in success, with some not linking theory to the question, and instead exploring gender roles in the family. Some answers focussed on the 'fit thesis' and spent a long time assessing whether the nuclear family had caused industrialisation or resulted from it and in doing so lost focus on the question. Others examined various perspectives on whether the nuclear family is a 'good thing', without explicitly addressing how this related to its dominance or decline. A common error was to confuse dominance with universal or to use them as interchangeable concepts. Another common error was to ignore the question's focus on 'modern industrial societies' and include irrelevant historical detail (e.g. from Gough, Laslett or Anderson). The most successful responses dealt with the historical aspects briefly

before moving on to compare continued numerical superiority and idealisation of the nuclear family with the rise in alternative structures, drawing on a range of appropriate studies and perspectives. Some also considered cross-cultural variations or the persistence of extended family structures.

### Question 3

There were some excellent responses exploring roles relating to gender, age and ethnicity, explaining how they were fixed in the past and how this has changed in modern societies. The best of these then went on to discuss how these roles may not have changed that much, frequently quoting different societies. The most popular way to do this was by an exploration of the continuing influence of traditional conjugal roles. A very small number then went to assess the ways in which the roles of different age groups may also be more similar to those patterns seen in the past. All candidates made some use of conjugal roles but there was some misunderstanding of key terms such as the symmetrical family and many tangential answers went on to discuss whether or not there is equality or not in conjugal roles today, rather than comparing roles today to the past. Answers which maintained focus on 'roles' were often unbalanced, with some discussing fixed roles to a greater extent or some presenting aspects of change and choice in conjugal roles. Those taking the latter approach used feminism or postmodernist theory as support. There were fewer attempts to evaluate the whole of the question and consider whether roles are still fixed today. However better responses considered cultural differences in gender roles, dual burden/triple shift in nuclear families and also considered the changes in the roles of a children and grandparents in families. A number of answers relied on common sense with little if any sociological material. In order to improve performance candidates need to use sociological theory, concepts and studies in their answers.

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<p><b>Paper 9699/22</b> <b>22 Theory and Methods</b></p>
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## Key messages

- Good answers showed knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts and theories.
- Many essay responses contained sound knowledge of theoretical perspectives but these were not always applied well to the question. Evaluation was invariably by juxtaposition.
- Many candidates are more comfortable with methodological questions than theoretical ones.
- Some methods were less well understood than others; for example, many candidates struggled to define content analysis.
- Most candidates allocated their time effectively to the questions.
- Some key concepts were not well understood or applied, e.g. reliability.

## General comments

There were very few candidates that made rubric errors and most candidates produced answers commensurate with the requirements of the questions – the exception to this was **1(d)** and, to a lesser extent, **1(b)** in **Section A**. There is a tendency for some candidates to tackle **1(d)** as if it were an essay question. Many candidates spent too much time evaluating in this question when only three marks are available for this skill. In **1(b)** many candidates spent time defining what a structured interview is before identifying and explaining its strengths. This is not necessary to do and did not score marks. Whilst there was some sound knowledge of sociological methods, only partial understanding and weak application of some key concepts continues to undermine some responses (in particular, validity and reliability). This was most notable in **Question 1(c)** on questionnaires. In **Section B** the overwhelming majority of candidates opted to answer **Question 2**. Many responses to both questions contained sound theoretical knowledge and there were some very good scripts that showed analytical and evaluative skills. Other candidates showed theoretical understanding but this was not closely applied to the question. There is clear room for improvement in this area. Evaluation in many scripts was invariably by juxtaposition.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A**

#### **Question 1**

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate some understanding of content analysis as a research method used to analyse the meaning/content of qualitative material by measuring patterns in the data. However, while most identified a connection to the media, few responses provided definitions that fully captured the key elements of the method.
- (b) Most candidates provided a sound account of two advantages of structured interviews, with many achieving full marks. The most common advantages recognised were reliability, cost and time efficiency, clarification by interviewer and researcher bias. Many candidates were able to develop these points to good effect but some found this element a challenge. A number of responses misapplied the key concepts of validity and reliability in their descriptions.
- (c) Many responses to this question suggested that candidates lacked in-depth knowledge of reliability as a concept, with many confusing it with validity and representativeness. Whilst a number of candidates were able to produce reasonable responses from their general knowledge of questionnaires, few were able to go on to explain why questionnaires are considered to be high in reliability with assurance.

- (d) Most candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of what is meant by 'interpretivist arguments' and 'unstructured interviews' and how these two are linked. This led to a number of good responses that were well-supported with references to key thinkers and empirical studies. Most responses were balanced and included sound evaluative points, often referring to positivist critiques and utilising concepts such as representativeness and reliability. A significant number of candidates produced answers that were structured like an essay, spending too much time assessing interpretivist arguments when only three marks are available for this.

## **Section B**

### **Question 2**

The majority of candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of what is meant by 'social order' but were less precise in relation to the 'rich and powerful.' The key themes of Marxist theory were often covered well, notably Althusser's description of state apparatuses. In most cases, the Marxist analysis of social order was linked to functionalist arguments with Durkheim's concepts of organic and mechanical solidarity, and Parsons' AGIL model of the social system often used to provide alternative explanations. Good responses were also able to apply an interactionist perspective. The most sophisticated responses addressed the issue of who the 'rich and powerful' are and how they are defined. This led to the inclusion of perspectives other than Marxists and these answers were often analytical and evaluative. Less successful answers gave an overview of Marxist/neo-Marxist, feminist, functionalist and postmodernist views but with few direct links to the question.

### **Question 3**

This was a less popular question. There were some excellent responses that showed accurate knowledge and understanding of structuralist and interactionist theories. Often these responses were supported by the appropriate use of studies and key concepts. Invariably, these answers also discussed structuration and postmodernist views. In the best responses, theoretical points were applied carefully to the question and a reasoned conclusion was reached. Often such answers were evaluative throughout. Less successful answers drifted into accounts of all that the candidate knew about the two approaches, including links to research methods that were unrelated to the question. There remains a tendency for some candidates to see interactionism as a perspective simply supporting the view that individuals are able to exercise freedom of choice in decision-making.

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Paper 9699/32  
32 Social Inequality and Opportunity

## Key messages

- There were some excellent answers, combining detailed sociological knowledge and mature analysis.
- References to relevant sociological concepts and theories were often absent in lower scoring answers.
- Good answers to the part (b) questions included a sustained evaluation of the view expressed in the question.
- Further marks could be gained by using evidence from sociological studies to support key points.
- Some low scoring answers relied on assertion and general knowledge rather than relevant sociological material.

## General comments

The overall standard of the scripts was high, with many answers combining detailed sociological knowledge with thoughtful and well-informed analysis. The best responses were tightly constructed in a way that demonstrated depth of thought and skilful application of relevant sociological concepts and theories. Lower scoring answers would have benefitted from a more analytical and evaluative approach to the (b) questions. Higher marks for the (a) questions could have been gained by making more use of examples to support key points. There were a few low scoring answers that lacked focus on the key terms in the question. For example, some candidates attempted to answer **2(a)** without referring to gender stereotyping, even though the latter term was central to the question. Some candidates answered more than the three questions required.

## **Section A**

### **Question 1**

- (a) Good answers provided an accurate account of several ways in which language codes may influence educational achievement. Many candidates made appropriate links to Bernstein's distinction between restricted and elaborated language codes. Some responses included examples of how language may influence educational achievement for particular social groups, including ethnic minorities and girls. There were some lower scoring answers that were limited to a few assertions about the role of language in the education process.
- (b) There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained evaluation of the view that the education system is a barrier to social mobility. Good responses examined claims that the education system reproduces social inequality, helping to keep people in their class origin rather than promoting social movement. Some candidates achieved high marks for evaluation by considering different types of education system and whether some are more conducive to social mobility than others. Evaluation was also delivered in some responses by comparing opportunities for short-range mobility with opportunities for long-range mobility. Low scoring answers often lacked clear references to social mobility, focusing instead on a range of general points about the role of education.



## Question 2

- (a) Good answers highlighted several ways in which gender stereotyping may influence the educational performance of female pupils. High scoring responses were often supported with references to relevant studies, such as those by Stanworth, Sharpe, Grafton, and Kelly. Lower scoring answers were confined to one or two limited points about the influence of gender in general on the educational performance of girls.
- (b) High scoring answers demonstrated a good understanding of the functionalist approach to explaining educational achievement. Other sociological perspectives, including Marxist and feminist theories, were used to provide an evaluation of the functionalist approach. Effective use of concepts such as meritocracy, functional imperatives, social control, cultural capital, and social deprivation was often a feature of answers that triggered the top mark band. Lower scoring answers were often unbalanced; for example, discussing the functionalist approach, but lacking an evaluation of the view on which the question was based. A few responses lacked references to relevant sociological studies and arguments.

## Section B

### Question 3

- (a) Answers that merited high marks offered a well-informed account of how poverty may lead to high mortality rates in developing countries. Some candidates also considered how high rates of mortality might be part of the cycle of poverty. There were some low scoring answers that discussed the reasons for high mortality rates without reference to poverty.
- (b) High scoring answers used relevant sociological arguments and concepts to assess the view that government policy is the main factor determining whether a country can achieve economic growth. Good responses often distinguished between different types of government policy and used particular examples to illustrate key points. Neo-liberal views supporting the role of government policy in promoting economic growth were often contrasted with dependency theory in strong, evaluative responses. Lower scoring answers often relied on a few assertions about the determinants of economic growth in general.

### Question 4

- (a) There were a few good answers that identified a range of both push and pull factors leading to migration from rural to urban areas. Some less successful responses lacked detail and were confined to making just one or two relevant points.
- (b) High scoring answers demonstrated a good understanding of the differences between cultural and structural explanations of development. Some candidates made good use of case studies to illustrate why some countries have developed more rapidly than others. Answers that gained marks in the middle of the range often relied on a few basic points about how cultural factors may influence rates of development. Higher scoring responses were more nuanced and considered arguments both for and against the view that cultural factors explain why some countries have developed more rapidly than others. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the relevant sociological debates about factors influencing economic development.

## Section C

### Question 5

- (a) Good answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept of agenda setting in relation to the media. Examples of how media organisations contribute to agenda setting often featured in high scoring answers. Some low-scoring responses demonstrated little understanding of what is meant by agenda setting.
- (b) High scoring answers provided a sustained analysis of the role of owners in controlling the media. Evaluation was provided by considering other social actors and agencies that might exercise a controlling influence over the media, including journalists, editors, media pressure groups, and governments. Some good responses also included references to sociological studies that help to

illustrate where power lies within the media. Lower in the mark range, less use was made of relevant concepts/theories and knowledge about how owners might control or influence media content was limited.

#### Question 6

- (a) There were a few good answers that demonstrated a sound understanding of the cultural effects model of media influence. Examples from relevant studies were often used to support key points in high quality responses. There were many low scoring answers that demonstrated little or no understanding of the cultural effects model.
- (b) High quality answers demonstrated a good understanding of the arguments and evidence about the impact of the media in influencing violent behaviour. Some candidates made good use of references to models of media effects, such as the hypodermic syringe model, as a way of illustrating the issues surrounding the relationship between the media and violence. Good use of the conceptual distinction between direct and indirect models of media influence were deployed in some answers. There were a few low scoring answers that discussed the impact of the media in general, with no direct links to violent behaviour specifically.

#### Section D

#### Question 7

- (a) Good answers used relevant concepts to explain the key features of the functionalist theory of religion. Durkheim's contribution to the functionalist theory of religion was frequently cited in high scoring answers. Lower scoring answers demonstrated only a partial understanding of the functionalist theory.
- (b) Good answers correctly linked the view expressed in the question to the Marxist theory of religion. High scoring answers made use of relevant concepts, such as false consciousness and economic determinism, in explaining the possible links between religion and the interests of the ruling class. Some candidates made good use of references to relevant studies to support their analysis. Answers that merited the middle of the mark range often relied on a largely uncritical summary of the Marxist viewpoint. Higher scoring answers included a sustained evaluation of the idea that religion serves ruling class interests. There were a few low scoring answers that attempted to answer the question without reference to relevant sociological theories.

#### Question 8

- (a) High scoring answers provided several well-developed points about how sects differ from other religious organisations. Some candidates used examples of particular sects to illustrate key points. Lower scoring responses were limited to one or two vague points about sects, with no contrasts drawn with other types of religious organisation.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the arguments supporting the view that religious influence is still strong in modern industrial societies. High scoring responses also included a sustained evaluation of this view. The evaluation was often developed through a discussion of the arguments for and against the secularisation thesis. Some candidates made good use of examples from particular countries to examine how far religion remains an important influence in modern industrial societies. There were a few low scoring answers that discussed contemporary attitudes to religion without reference to relevant sociological concepts and theories.