

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- Candidates need to read questions carefully and ensure that they answer the question that has been set.
- Candidates need to include relevant contemporary sociology to support their arguments.
- Candidates should ensure that time spent on each question reflects the marks allocated.

General comments

The performance of many candidates was excellent, showing a sound grasp of sociological theories and concepts. Most candidates demonstrated good sociological knowledge and understanding but some need to divide their time more effectively between the questions as answers to **1a** and **1b** were frequently too long. The definition on **Question 1a** does not require examples and answers to this question should be brief.

In order to improve performance, candidates need to be able to apply their understanding to the question that has been set. Too frequently candidates have responded by using general knowledge from the topic rather than selecting knowledge that applies to the specific question. Only the strongest candidates were able to evaluate effectively in questions **1d** and **2/3**. Less successful candidates attempted to demonstrate evaluation by criticising particular sociological studies, rather than evaluating the claim in the question. Candidates need to ensure they support their points with relevant sociological material and that this material is applied to answering the specifics of the question. Many candidates made points that were not directly related to the question. There were few rubric errors and very few questions were not attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates had a good understanding of the term as a living arrangement like a marriage without formal recognition. Some answers displayed some understanding but were vague leaving it possible to interpret the answer as one referring to friends/candidates sharing a residence. A common error was to interpret the concept as one referring to individuals living on their own.
- (b) Most candidates had a good understanding of reasons why people marry at a later age, with many quoting secularisation, increasing length of education or the lessening of traditional practices such as arranged marriage. Again, answers lacked focus on the question; for example, by explaining why people used to marry early in the past rather than why they marry later now or explaining changing social attitudes to cohabitation. Other common errors were to argue that in contemporary societies individuals marry at an earlier age than in the past or to explain why people divorce or do not marry at all.
- (c) There were many sound answers identifying a variety of reasons why the divorce rate has increased in many societies, quoting a variety of opportunities to end marriage that were not available in the past, such as the changes in divorce law and changes in society, such as growing female economic power and changes in attitudes. Common errors included outlining reasons why people do not to marry rather than reasons for an increase in divorce or asserting that the dark side of the family is a new phenomenon. Many answers also asserted that domestic violence or empty shell marriages are new phenomenon in marriage and cause a rise in the divorce rate. Others

confined themselves to reasons for an individual divorce rather than accounting for a rise in the rate. Many answers would have benefitted from including sociological material to support points made.

- (d) This question was well understood by the majority of candidates with all being able to make comments on conjugal roles and many knowledgeable and sophisticated answers outlining a variety of ways in which the roles of males and females can be seen as both equal and unequal, frequently making reference to the work of Oakley, Wilmott and Young and various feminists. The best of such answers took the debate beyond that of the domestic labour debate to include other family members, most notably daughters and sons, using the work of Postman. Those candidates who made reference to grandparents were frequently very successful. A number of responses were characterised by over lengthy introductions about conjugal roles before the industrial revolution that were irrelevant to the question and others answered about the role of the family in society rather than roles in the family. A generally held misconception was that the symmetrical family represents equality as opposed to being equal but different. Many answers did not focus on equal roles but rather drifted into the role of women versus the role of men. Responses could have been improved by making specific evaluation of the question by pointing out which behaviours can be said to reflect equality and which inequality.

Section B

Question 3 was more popular than **Question 2**.

Question 2

There were a small number of excellent answers to this question which analysed the influence of ethnicity on diversity (frequently supporting their answer with the work of Madood, Mann and Bhatti) then going on to contrast this to other factors which influence diversity, frequently supported by the work of the Rapoport or O'Neil. The most sophisticated of these answers outlined the connections between ethnicity and culture. A small number of answers confined themselves to describing the increase in mixed marriages caused by the movement of populations and many of these were repetitive. Other limited answers only addressed diversity referring to matrifocal families; if these did try to explore the factor of ethnicity it was only discussed in relation to religion and little was made of different family roles as well as structure in relation to ethnic diversity. Other answers only discussed industrialisation and the changes it made to families or outlined the fit thesis and offered little else. Some offered vague generalisations about the effect of migration with little reference to the question. Some answers did not discuss ethnicity at all and instead just presented alternative factors. Where candidates did address ethnicity with relevant evidence, they produced more successful answers, comparing different family arrangements between various ethnic groupings. Most answers attempted to evaluate the view that ethnicity is the main factor leading to ethnic diversity by exploring other factors. The most successful answers developed these to explain why other factors, such as social class, were more important than ethnicity. For example, by drawing out the links between class and ethnicity.

Question 3

Most candidates had some understanding of the functions of the family, but some used the terms role and function as if they are interchangeable. In order to improve performance, candidates need to have a sound understanding of terms. Common errors were to give irrelevant explanations of what makes an ideal family, to describe what 'being there' means to different family members or to assess how valid different definitions of the family are instead of considering which is the most important function of the family. A number of answers just described the different functions of the family with no attempt to show which, if any, might be the most significant one. Other answers outlined how the family can be dysfunctional with little reference to the question. A number of responses acknowledged the stabilisation of the adult personality as potentially the most significant function of the family but made no links between it and emotional support, thereby demonstrating a lack of understanding of the material. Likewise, a number of answers described the warm bath theory but did not link it to emotional support. Many candidates did refer to Murdock's four functions and Parsons' two irreducible functions of the family, but often with no reference to emotional support. Many also used Feminist and Marxist views on the role of the family, but only presented these views without application to the question. Successful answers used socialisation as an example of an alternative function that may be more significant than emotional support or used Marxism to argue that emotional support functions to benefit capitalism. However, those that argued the family benefits capitalism, with no reference to emotional support, were not answering the question as set.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/22
Paper 22

Key messages

- Good answers showed knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts, methods and theories. For example, official statistics appeared to be well understood.
- Most candidates allocated their time effectively to the questions.
- Some confusion over the meaning of validity and reliability, notably in **Question 1(c)**.
- There was a deficit in knowledge and understanding of secondary qualitative sources.
- Key concepts not always applied effectively to the question, notably in **Question 1(d)**.
- Some essay responses contained sound knowledge of theoretical perspectives but these were not always fully focused on the question.
- More careful reading of the essay questions may help improve responses.

General comments

There were very few candidates that made rubric errors and most produced answers commensurate with the requirements of the questions – the exception to this was **Question 1(d)** in Section A and, to some extent, **Question 2** in Section B. Whilst there was generally sound knowledge of sociological methods (e.g. official statistics), this was not the case with secondary qualitative sources, which appeared to be much less well understood. Misunderstanding of key concepts undermined a number of responses. This was most notable in **Question 1(c)** on questionnaires where there was confusion between reliability and validity. 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 Section B there was a fairly even distribution of responses between **Question 2** and **3**. Many answers 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. In both, there was a tendency to drift away from the core elements of the question and to drift into marginal areas or to write generalised accounts of theoretical positions. A more careful reading of the question may have improved a number of scripts.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate an understanding of primary data but only the most successful were able to write a definition that fully captured the meaning of the term. Many responses repeated the word 'data' in their answers.
- (b) Most candidates provided a sound account of two reasons why official statistics may lack validity, with many achieving full marks. Most gained at least 2 marks, usually referring to the 'dark figure of crime' and/or government manipulation of unemployment figures. Some failed to show development, especially in demonstrating the relevance of validity to 'outdatedness' or 'not being qualitative'.

- (c) Many responses to this question suggested that candidates had good knowledge of the use of official statistics. While some answers were limited to practical advantages, most were able to cite the concepts of reliability or generalisability and link these to the usefulness of official statistics. The highest scoring responses related these points well to the theoretical approach of positivism. There was a tendency for some candidates to include some critical points in their responses even though this question has no marks for evaluation.
- (d) A number of candidates focused their attention on discussing qualitative methodology and largely omitted mention of secondary sources. Those that took this approach were confined to the lower mark band. Most candidates could point out some practical advantages of existing written sources, with some exploring *verstehen* understanding and ethical issues. Stronger answers located their responses clearly in the context of theoretical debate and/or used specific studies to illustrate their points e.g. Thomas and Znanieki. In this question there was a tendency to use reliability in a general sense rather than a sociological one. Overall, there appeared to be some deficit in developed understanding of this methodological approach

Section B

Question 2

The best answers engaged with theoretical debate on objectivity covering positivist and interpretivist approaches, the discussion of values from key thinkers such as Weber, Gouldner or Becker, and the influence of values in the specific approaches of Marxists, feminists and functionalists. However, many answers tended to drift away from the question and in particular lost focus on the 'choice of topic' aspect of the question. Many responses looked mainly at bias during the research process, while others discussed choice of research strategy with little reference to values. Each of these approaches received some credit but the lack of direct focus on the question meant that they could not be rewarded with the highest marks.

Question 3

The majority of responses discussed a number of the key ideas of the interactionist perspective. Many candidates outlined views associated with such theorists as Mead, Cooley, and Goffman, and sometimes making links to Weber or the post-modernists, and then evaluating in terms of structuralist theories. The best answers illustrated interactionist ideas by applying them to concepts like labelling via examples from areas like education or crime or the use of empirical studies. Structuration was sometimes used as a way of concluding. However, some changed the focus to a discussion of positivist v interpretivist methodology and others wrote a summary of all the perspectives they knew but often without a clear understanding of interactionism itself. 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. A small number of candidates confused interactionism with interpretivism.

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Paper 9699/32
Paper 32

Key messages

- There were some outstanding answers, full of sociological insight and sound reasoning.
- Good answers combined detailed sociological understanding with effective analysis and evaluation.
- A few answers lacked references to relevant sociological concepts and theories.
- Further marks could be gained by using evidence from sociological studies to support key arguments.
- Some answers to the **(a)** questions included evaluation that was not required.

General comments

The overall standard of the scripts was high, with many candidates demonstrating good understanding of the relevant sociological issues combined with skilful delivery of the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Many candidates also made good use of references to relevant sociological studies in developing their answers. Good answers to the **(b)** questions combined detailed sociological understanding with sustained assessment of the issues raised by the question. Lower scoring answers by contrast relied on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any related analysis and evaluation. Some answers to the **(a)** questions included evaluation alongside explanation. **Evaluation is not required for (a) questions.** Responses achieving the highest marks made good use of sociological concepts and theories. Some candidates also made effective use of case studies and examples from particular societies to support key arguments and this is to be encouraged as a way of satisfying the relevant assessment objectives.

Most candidates answered three questions in the time available though some candidates answered more than three questions. The questions on Education proved most popular, with those on Global Development less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a)** Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of how schools contribute to social order. High-scoring answers included references to relevant concepts and theories, with explanations often constructed in the context of functionalist and Marxist perspectives. There were some low scoring answers where the explanations offered were brief and covered only a narrow range of relevant points.
- (b)** There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained assessment of the view that gender is the main influence on educational achievement today. Good responses included evidence about how factors linked to gender may impact on educational performance. High quality responses also considered other factors, such as class and ethnicity, that might influence educational achievement. There were some low scoring answers that discussed educational achievement in a general way, without reference to relevant sociological concepts and theories.

Question 2

- (a) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the concept of pupil sub-cultures. High-scoring answers provided several examples to show how pupil sub-cultures may influence educational achievement. There were some low scoring answers that discussed social class influences on educational achievement rather than focusing on pupil sub-cultures specifically.
- (b) High scoring answers considered a range of evidence and arguments about whether the main role of education is to promote social equality. Answers that reached the top mark band made effective use of concepts such as cultural and material deprivation, meritocracy, social mobility, cultural capital, hidden curriculum, labelling, and habitus. Lower scoring answers lacked references to relevant concepts and theories and relied on assertion and generalisation rather than appropriate links to sociological arguments and evidence.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) Answers that merited high marks offered a well-developed discussion of several difficulties in measuring development. The problem of defining what is meant by development and the difficulties in agreeing appropriate economic indicators of development were noted in many of the answers. There were some low scoring responses that covered only one or two underdeveloped points about the difficulties in measuring development.
- (b) Good answers identified a range of points for and against the view that international labour migration benefits developed countries more than developing countries. High scoring responses included relevant references to different perspectives on development, including world systems theory and modernisation theory. Lower scoring answers often relied on a simple line of argument rather than considering contrasting explanations and theories.

Question 4

- (a) There were a few good answers that made several well-developed points about how cultural theories of poverty differ from structural theories. The 'culture of poverty' thesis advanced by Lewis featured in many of the high scoring answers. Some responses lower in the mark range lacked detail and made just one or two relevant points. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little or no understanding of the role of culture in explanations of poverty.
- (b) Good answers offered a sustained assessment of whether all forms of aid are unhelpful for development. High scoring responses often distinguished between different types of aid, examining whether some types are more helpful than others in promoting development. Some candidates also made good use of case studies to reflect on the impact of aid programmes. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the sociological debates about the role of aid in promoting development.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) Good answers identified several factors that influence the presentation of news. High scoring responses often included references to relevant studies and identified groups who may play a key role in news presentation, including editors, journalists and media owners. Some responses showed only a limited or inaccurate understanding of the social processes behind the presentation of news.
- (b) High scoring answers provided a sustained analysis of the view that the media are instruments of ideological control. Good responses discussed the Marxist contribution to the debate about the relationship between the media and the forces of ideological control. Some candidates made good use of the distinction between the traditional media and the new media in developing their analysis. Lower in the mark range, little use was made of relevant concepts and theories. Some answers discussed models of media effects (the hypodermic-syringe model, for example) without clarifying the relevance of this material in answering the question.

Question 6

- (a) Higher in the mark range, answers identified several relevant features of the pluralist theory of the media. Some well-formed answers focused on the role of different interest groups in influencing the content of the media, as noted in the pluralist theory. Low scoring answers lacked detail and some demonstrated only the most limited understanding of the pluralist perspective.
- (b) High quality answers demonstrated a good understanding of the theories and arguments supporting the view that the media directly influence the way people behave. Responses at this level also provided a sustained assessment of that view. Theories of the media (Marxist, pluralist, postmodernist) were often used to develop the assessment and some answers included useful references to relevant sociological studies of media influence, such as Bandura and Gerbner. Some candidates made effective use of different models of media influence, such as the hypodermic-syringe and uses and gratifications models. There were some low scoring answers that discussed issues of media influence without reference to appropriate sociological concepts and theories.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) Good answers offered several well-developed points about how religion contributes to social solidarity. Concepts such as collective conscience, rituals, social order, ideological control, and value consensus were widely used in high scoring responses. There were some low scoring answers that offered a few points about the role of religion without making strong links to the concept of social solidarity.
- (b) Answers that reached the top of the mark range offered a detailed assessment of the claim that women have greater power within religious organisations today. Evidence from studies was often used to consider where power lies in religious organisations. Some high-quality answers distinguished between the situation in specific religions, noting that women today have more power in some religions than in others. Answers that merited the middle of the mark range often relied on a largely uncritical summary of feminist theories of religion. There were a few low scoring answers that made assertions about who exercises power in religious organisations but offered little supporting evidence from the relevant sociological literature.

Question 8

- (a) High scoring answers provided a well-developed account of several factors behind the growth in privatised forms of religion. Concepts that were used in good responses included privatised worship, spiritual shopping, religious diversity, new religious movements, civil religion, re-moralisation of self, televangelism, and religious re-engagement. Lower scoring answers were often confined to making just one or two undeveloped points.
- (b) Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to examine themes from the secularisation thesis. Good answers identified a range of social functions attributed to religion and considered how far these functions are being performed by religious organisations today. The assessment often took the form of a comparison of different responses to the secularisation thesis. The best answers usually distinguished between specific religions and recognised that the extent to which religious influence has declined varies from country to country and between religions. Postmodernist reflections on the position of religion in contemporary society were often discussed in high scoring responses. Answers in the middle of the mark range tended to support the view expressed in the question, with little critical analysis or reflection on other possible perspectives. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little knowledge of the debates surrounding the secularisation thesis.