SOCIOLOGY

> **Paper 9699/11**
> **11 The Family**

Key messages

1   Candidates need to understand key terminology and ensure they answer the question as set.
2   Candidates could improve the quality of their responses by organising each point made into a separate paragraph.
3   Candidates need to include sociological evidence to support their points.

General Comments

Many responses demonstrated a good use of sociological perspectives but most responses would benefit from better use of sociological concepts and more use of sociological studies to support and illustrate points made. The best responses did this with reference to more recent sociological work. A significant number of responses contained little or no significant sociology and relied on personal observation and general knowledge.

Most candidates showed good examination technique in the amount of time they spent on each question although there were some examples of long responses to **Question (b)** on scripts which then only had a few paragraphs for **Question 2** or **Question 3**. The majority of candidates answered the correct number of questions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

Some candidates copied out long passages from the data. The data is there to be used and to give context to the questions but no credit is gained for copying from the data.

(a)   Many candidates clearly understood the meaning of functional fit but a number spent a long time making the functionalist analogy with the human body which rarely added to their answers. The best responses were clear on what is meant by functional fit and usually referred to societal changes which lead to changes in institutions. A number of responses were very long; candidates should tailor the length of their answer to the number of marks it carries. This question is worth two marks. A common error was to give an example from the item rather than a definition..

(b)   The functions of the family were well understood by the majority of candidates who were then able to identify and describe two functions apart from socialisation. Excellent reference was made to Hecht's study of Brazilian street children and how their families may function. Common errors were to say that primary socialisation is an alternative to socialisation or to describe the teaching of children and such answers gained no credit. Candidates need to be secure in their understanding of key terminology.

(c)   Most candidates understood the question and explained the consequences of families failing to socialise their children and the impact of this on society, usually applying the functionalist perspective. The best responses referred to both functionalist and the New Right perspectives and used sociological terminology and evidence to support their points. There were clear signs that some candidates had not read the question accurately and therefore failed to understand its meaning. Such candidates answered a question about why functionalists think socialisation is

important rather than what happens when it fails to occur. Others related their answer just to nuclear families even though the question said families. A small number of answers explained the role of secondary socialisation in creating the collective conscience. Others outlined Marxist explanations even though the question said according to the functionalists. Candidates who had read and understood the nature of the question gave thoughtful answers about the effects of socialisation not being carried out properly which often included references to feral children and the consequences of children not being fully aware of the norms and values of society. Candidates could improve the quality of their responses to this question in two ways; first, by organising each point made into a separate paragraph to make it clear that they are making distinct points; and second, by avoiding evaluation which is not required for this question. The latter does not lose the candidates marks but time spent on that could be better spent on another questions.

(d)   Most candidates were able to outline some aspects of Marxist theory which, in the best responses, was related to capitalism. Some candidates needed to have a sounder grasp of basic Marxist theory. A common error was to relate the answer to how it influenced social mobility which was not what the question asked. It was useful to use functionalism and feminism as evaluation of Marxist theories and many candidates did this with credit but there was a great deal of misunderstanding of the warm bath theory. Some candidates supported their answers with appropriate sociological evidence such as the work of Zaretsky but it should be noted that reference to films cannot be counted as substantial sociological evidence. Less successful responses lacked appropriate evaluation, which is a requirement of this question, with many responses only including a brief evaluation. Candidates also need to develop and explain their points fully and consider reaching a conclusion on the proposition in the question. Some answers also relied too heavily on the source material, simply copying long passages which should be discouraged.

Section B

Question 3 was more popular with candidates than **Question 2** and generally the quality of question for **3** was higher than **2**. The most successful essays were able to use a range of evidence with excellent sociological evaluation. Less successful responses were assertive and we benefit from the use of sociological evidence. For example statements that there is growing diversity of family types to be found in societies could have been supported with evidence such as that of the Rapoports. **Question 3** was more popular than **Question 2**.

Question 2

This question was less popular. Responses were frequently lacking both in detail and sociological substance. A common error was to produce a one-sided descriptive answer. Many responses looked at industrialisation and functional fit but then failed to address the issue of loss of function in modern industrial societies. In order to improve, candidates need to develop and explain their points further and consider reaching a judgement. The evaluation demands of this question were overlooked by many.

Question 3

It was clear in the answers to this question that some candidates do not have a strong gasp of key sociological terms and missed that the focus of this question was upon family 'structure' and not more generally on family diversity. For example a mixed race marriage with children was cited as an example of a family structure different from the nuclear family when in fact this is a nuclear family structure. Likewise a reconstituted family was also described as an alternative family structure. The best answers were able to show how a reconstituted family can be seen as a result of a broken nuclear family and the recreation of a new one. Some candidates who understood the notion of diversity of family structure did not develop their response beyond basic descriptions. There is a need for candidates to include more studies in their answers and not to rely on general assertions or personal observations; there was also some evidence that a few candidates did not understand what was meant by a 'dominant family structure'. Some candidates need to write a more detailed essay but the majority seem to have adopted a useful approach to essay writing by ending with a conclusion. This could be improved as sometimes the conclusion was little more than a summary of what had gone before rather than an evaluation. Better responses contrasted arguments around increased family diversity with the universality of the nuclear family. Some of these used contemporary research and there was useful reference made to Stacey demonstrating good interpretation and application skills. A common error in a significant number of answers was to outline the debate on whether the nuclear family is the ideal or best type of family to have. Many based their response on the 'fit thesis' with little else included, with some candidates providing an in-depth explanation on how the extended family best suited the

pre-industrial period which showed good sociological knowledge but lacked interpretation and application as this was not relevant to this specific question.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12 **12 The Family**

Key messages

Candidates require a sound understanding of sociological terminology.
Extended answers organised in a paragraph structure with each paragraph making a substantial supported point were generally the most successful.
Many candidates would benefit from developing their evaluation skills.

General comments

Overall candidate performance was generally sound in the application of knowledge. Across the paper many candidates struggled to demonstrate the higher skills of interpretation and application and evaluation. This remains an area where candidates need to develop their evaluative and analytical skills.

The performance of most candidates indicated a sound understanding of the core theories and perspectives associated with the topic of the family. There was the tendency for overreliance on generic descriptions with little development of specific theory or research. Candidates should attempt to make their points specific to the question asked.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a)   Generally a well-answered question. Many defined the loss of function through an explanation of its causes, e.g. the development of education systems means that families no longer have to perform the function of educating children.

(b)   This question was answered well by the majority of candidates though some responses described the ways in which adults, rather than children, learn the rules of society through the family. Some responses also described the same way twice, usually through different descriptions of the general process of socialisation. The most successful answers named two distinctly different ways and outlined each in a separate paragraph. It is quite acceptable to number answers in this section such as 'the first way is'…'the second way is'… Some candidates wrote a lot more than was required for the question.

(c)   This question required candidates to explain the ways in which individuals are connected to wider society. Primary socialisation was the most common starting point for many responses. Some candidates wrote extensively about functionalist views and the evaluated them from a Marxist perspective. This question does not require any evaluation and although candidates did not lose marks they gained no credit for this evaluation. Candidates who focused on how the skills transmitted through primary socialisation link the person to wider society were more successful than those who gave more generalised discussions of primary and secondary socialisation. Some responses lacked detail, giving simple descriptions. In these answers there was a tendency to make a point but not to develop it with sociological support. Some very successful responses explored how perspectives other than functionalism see the individual connected to wider society.

(d)   Many candidates produced detailed and sophisticated arguments about the role of the family in reproducing ruling class ideology, focusing on Marxism and then evaluating it using a range of

other theories, including feminism, functionalism and post-modernism. A few candidates highlighted similarities in structuralist theories which displayed good evaluation skills. It is important that candidates have a clear understanding of the key sociological terms so that they are able to focus on the terminology given in the question. This question asked about how the family reproduces ruling class ideology but a number of candidates just gave general Marxist views on the family which did not focus specifically on how the family reproduces ideology. Others interpreted ruling class ideology to mean patriarchy. This question asked about the family and not how other institutions such as religion and education contribute to the development of ruling class ideology which some candidates also included in their answer. In order to improve candidates need to include supporting sociological evidence rather than relying on general descriptions of the Marxist perspective.

Section B

Some candidates spent time outlining what they were going to say in their essay in detailed introductions, repeating the points again in the main body of their essay. Candidates would be well advised to keep detailed points just to the main body of the essay.

Question 2

The best responses demonstrated a clear understanding of what is meant by traditional female roles. Nearly all candidates interpreted the question as one relating to the way in which conjugal roles, or the roles of mother, are carried out. The best responses also discussed the roles of daughters and other females in relation to family life. Some responses lacked focus on the question, discussing why female equality may or may not have happened. When this was discussed in relation to the freedom to reject roles it was made relevant and well rewarded, but in many cases it was not. In more successful responses there was a good balance of knowledge and evaluation. Some candidates were able to examine the social changes that have resulted in changes in attitudes which have subsequently enabled some females to reject traditional family roles. Many of these outlined issues such as changes in the law, social stigma and individualisation. More detailed responses also included feminist perspectives. Some demonstrated a good understanding of the cultural factors that could also impact upon attitudes toward females and traditional family roles as well as the continued importance of family roles to many females.

Question 3

Successful responses to this question made good use made of both convergence and dominance theory. Some very sophisticated answers used the views of the New Right as evidence that there is no dominant family structure but others simply outlined New Right views that the nuclear family is the best family type, without relating their points to the specific focus of the question – whether or not there is a dominant family type. Similarly, other responses described why the nuclear family developed which is not the same as assessing whether or not it is dominant. Many responses were too descriptive, giving detailed descriptions of the transition from agricultural to industrial society or detailed descriptions of different family types.

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> **Paper 9699/13**
> **13 The Family**

Key messages

1   Making a plan for the essay questions allows candidates to focus on developing arguments and including evaluation.
2   Candidates should read the questions carefully and ensure they are responding to the specific focus of the question.
3   Candidates should spend time on each question in line with the mark that the question carries.
4   Candidates should use accurate sociological terminology in their answers.

General comments

The majority of candidates were able to offer sociological information appropriate to the question asked, displaying both the skills of knowledge and understanding and interpretation and application. Some candidates did not complete their scripts; centres can help in this by stressing the importance of time management. Some candidates could have saved time by explaining the meaning of key terms as they used them in their extended writing rather than defining all terms before stating their work. In some cases this amounted to a substantial amount of writing that added little of substance to their essay.

More sophisticated answers showed detailed evaluation of the issues raised in the question, often supported by a range of theory and empirical evidence.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a)   Many candidates had a clear grasp of the meaning of functional prerequisites but a common error was to explain how a function benefits the family rather than how it benefits society. Other candidates simply listed or described functions of the family, some in great detail, but with little focus on what is actually meant by functional prerequisites.

(b)   Many excellent examples were given identifying two ways in which the state can influence family life including accurate use of the one the child policy, education policy and health policy. A small number of candidates gave only one example and a common error was to explain why the state may *want* to influence family life rather than the way in which it may influence family life. Others described Murdock's functions of the family. This highlights a clear need for candidates to read the questions carefully. However, other answers identified a way and then did not develop it. This is a way in which candidates can improve their answers by identifying and then expanding their answers with some knowledge. Other answers were overly long and would have benefitted from writing less and saving the time for higher scoring questions.

(c)   Most candidates gave excellent descriptions of how the family meets the needs of society. Many good answers showed sound knowledge of Murdock's four functions as well as Parsons' primary socialisation and stabilisation of adult personalities. The question said 'according to the functionalists' but many candidates spent a long time describing Marxist or feminist views for which they gained no credit. Others explained how education or religion meets the needs of society rather than concentrating on the family. Many implied that the family does meet the needs of society and answers could be improved by going beyond this and explaining how they meet the needs of society. In order to improve their answers, candidates would be advised to organise their points in paragraphs, clearly signalling that they are making distinct points. They should also aim to make at least three points, with each supported by sociological evidence.

(d)   The most successful responses to this question were clear and focussed on how the family serves the interests of capitalism, specifically through the reproduction of workers. Less successful responses wrote about pre-industrial societies which are not capitalist or about capitalism generally, without focussing on the reproduction of the workforce. In other excellent and very detailed answers, good use was made of the views of Althusser, Zaretsky, Marx, Engels, and some referenced Poulantzas and Marcuse with credit. Some of these were very focused and specifically aimed at how an obedient workforce was reproduced, or not. However, some drifted off to describe different agents of socialisation or concentrated on gender socialisation, frequently ignoring the reproduction of an obedient workforce.

A great deal of detail was introduced explaining how education and religion helped to create false consciousness which was tangential to the question. A few answers were very accurate, identifying relevant Marxist studies that were compared to a variety of feminist or functionalist views of the other interests that the family serves; a number were too descriptive and would have benefitted from the development of evaluation.

A few spent more time on this question than on their essay. Candidates need to remember that this question is worth 11 marks and not 25.

Section B

Question 2

Successful responses demonstrated a sound understanding of the variety of family structures in modern industrial societies. Less successful responses confused family relationships with family structures and so lost focus on the question. There were some very detailed accounts of present day family diversity. A common error was to overlook the modern industrial aspect of the question. For instance Anderson's census based account of Preston families was often cited as evidence for the 'modern' situation. Similarly too many referenced Gough's study of the Nayar, the Onedia, former slave society in the southern states of the USA, the Ashanti of Ghana, Burmese hill tribes etc. as evidence of current diversity of family forms in modern industrial societies. Other answers began with lengthy historical descriptions of the development of nuclear families and such time would have been better used is assessing whether they were to be found in modern industrial societies.

A number of candidates provided useful sociological support for the argument that diversity is to be found, including details of the Rapaports five types of diversity and these were sometimes well focused on the question. Detailed examples of different family structures in modern industrial societies were given by many candidates, with the best responses also well supported with statistics and studies. Some responses made excellent evaluative points linking back to the question. Other excellent answers were able to evaluate the idea of diversity through an explanation of "family ideology" and Chester's view of the neo-conventional family.

Common misunderstandings of the question were to assess the strengths or weaknesses of different family types or to argue that the nuclear family is the 'best' family. Another common tendency was for some candidates to divert into debates about the desirability of various forms of family types: New Right arguments about what *should* exist presented in place of *does* exist. As a consequence, 'evaluation' was directed towards the structures themselves rather than the competing sociological interpretations.

Question 3

This was the least popular of the optional questions and some candidates struggled to take their answer beyond basic assertion.

In order to be successful at this question, candidates needed to consider three things:
1   Are families becoming more child-centred?
2   Are children no longer part of the workforce?
3   Is 1 caused by 2 or by other factors?

The majority of candidates who attempted this question produced generally competent responses but frequently society rather than family was the focus of their answer.

In trying to deal with the issue as to whether or not families are becoming more child-centred, many candidates wrote extensive and very detailed historical introductions outlining how children used to be treated, often linked to the evolution of family forms from extended, agrarian, rural based to nuclear, urbanised in modern industrial societies. These were usually given more coverage than the current child-centred situation, which was generally asserted to exist. Some responses then drew on recent work suggesting that modern media and technology is leading to a new convergence of childhood and adulthood through shared leisure activities.

The issue of whether children are now a part or not a part of the work force was considered by most candidates. Some offered detailed knowledge of the development of industrialisation leading to the need for an educated workforce as the major reason for the exclusion of children from the workplace, along with changes in legislation. Frequent reference was made to societies where children are still part of the workforce such as Indian carpet factories, along with many examples which, although not strictly a part of the work force are relevant to the position of children as forced labour and income earners for the family such as child slaves, prostitutes and child soldiers..

Useful reference was made to different cultures and different social groups. Some excellent responses were able to detail several key influences on the development and increasing child-centeredness in modern industrial societies such as the consequences of the 'One Child' policy on families in China and the development of little emperors. Some also indicated the increased power of children by such means as pester power. Other evaluative answers also pointed out the dark side of family life and the development of toxic childhood and the mistreatment of children.

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> **Paper 9699/21**
> **21 Theory and Methods**

Key messages

Good answers showed sound knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts and theories.
Many essay responses gained low marks as they were based primarily on common sense or personal opinion.
Poor understanding of the meaning of some key concepts undermined responses to some questions.
Candidates seem more comfortable with research methods questions than theoretical ones.
There is some use of empirical studies but further development is needed to improve responses.

General comments

A few excellent responses showed a very well-informed and thoughtful engagement with sociological issues. These responses achieved high marks. Answers that gained lower marks were primarily descriptive and lacked evidence of analysis and evaluation. An area for Centres to develop skills is that of application – encouraging the use of material appropriate to the question. Another common limitation in weaker responses was a lack of references to theoretical issues and empirical studies. A number of responses, especially in the essay questions, often took a common-sense approach that suggested general knowledge was all that was required. The skills required for success in some elements of **Question 1** remain lacking in many cases. There were few rubric errors or time related issues, although a number of responses were too short given the duration of the exam.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a)   Most responses were able to define the term *covert observation* accurately. There was a clear understanding of this concept across the majority of scripts. A few confused covert with overt.

(b)   A number of candidates were able to identify and describe two ethical issues, most discussed consent, privacy or involvement in crime. However, quite a lot did not know the meaning of 'ethical' and wrote about any methodological problem with participant observation – most notably issues of bias or the Hawthorne effect.

(c)   Most candidates were able to show some knowledge of interpretivism or participant observation in their response, but only a few made a really good link between the theoretical aims and practical advantages of participant observation. This meant that many responses were restricted to the lowest level of the mark scheme. A number of responses were over reliant on points in the stem, perhaps adding value to their response by making reference to 'qualitative data'. Some referred to the concept of 'verstehen' but overall the theory was not well applied to the method.

(d)   Most candidates managed one or two reasonable points and showed knowledge of a strength and a limitation of non-participant observation – usually highlighting reduced bias along with reduced validity. Some candidates explicitly considered the question in relation to both overt and covert approaches, while others wrote as if one or other of these could be assumed to be 'non-participant'. As with other methodological questions, candidates would have benefitted from using empirical studies to illustrate their ideas or to make evaluation points.

Section B

Question 2

There were some good responses to this question that could explain some of the economic and cultural dynamics of capitalism and then point out where consensus or action theories brought specific criticisms to the Marxist perspective. However, evaluation was invariably by juxtaposition. There were a range of uses of feminism – from being almost synonymous with Marxism to being its main omission. However, a large number demonstrated only a basic understanding of Marxism – perhaps only vaguely aware that it was a conflict perspective or was of questionable success politically. Many responses only gave a brief introduction to a couple of Marxist ideas and then quickly wrote all they knew about competing perspectives. A few mentioned Weber's developments, some briefly outlined Althusser's concepts, but not many explored the structural changes in society since Marx wrote.

Question 3

Most candidates were able to make the general point that helping disadvantaged groups was one but not the only use of sociology, varying only in the range of sociological topics or studies they referred to. Some candidates focused on how Marxist or feminist perspectives were relevant but these approaches were often undeveloped. Only the very best responses genuinely engaged with this question on the basis of the debate about values in sociology that might have been expected. Overall, candidates did not cope well with the issues raised in the question and there were many common sense answers.

SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 9699/22
22 Theory and Methods

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Key messages

Good answers showed sound knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts and
theories. In addition, many candidates were able to apply their understanding effectively to the
questions.
Many essay responses contained evaluative content that was thoughtful and well applied to the
questions. However, juxtaposed assessment continues to be the norm in **Questions 1(d)**, **2** and **3**.
Candidates continue to be more comfortable with methods based questions than theoretical ones.
A majority of candidates approached **Question 1(d)** as requiring an essay style response, but this is not
necessary to achieve the highest marks.

General comments

There was some evidence that candidates' responses to **Question 1** have improved in terms of examination
technique. This was most notable in terms of the amount of time devoted to each question which was
generally more commensurate with the marks on offer. Knowledge and understanding of core sociological
concepts was typically sound although responses to the meaning of *validity* in **1(a)** were not as fully rounded
as they needed to be to in order to achieve full marks. In terms of other skills, in **1(b)** responses often lacked
sufficient development for full marks to be awarded, and in **1(c)** a number of candidates would have
benefitted from reading the question more carefully. Many candidates treat **Question 1(d)** as an essay. A
number of candidates managed to use empirical examples across **Question 1** which invariably enhanced
their responses and the marks gained. This was most evident in **1(d)**.

Generally, candidates appear to be more comfortable with methodological based questions than theoretical
ones and this showed itself in relation to the essays. Candidates made good use of key thinkers and
empirical research, although there remains a tendency to describe different theoretical approaches rather
than applying them to the question directly. Whilst candidates often showed excellent knowledge in terms of
content they did not often evaluate explicitly, as such assessment was often by juxtaposition.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a)   In most cases, candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the concept of validity. However
many were only able to give a partial definition, usually by referring to 'accuracy' or 'truth'. In a
minority of cases there was a tendency to confuse the concept of validity with that of reliability.

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(b)   Most candidates understood the question and were able to offer a difficulty associated with accessing a study group. The most common difficulties cited were a group's refusal to be studied on the grounds of privacy or secrecy. Some responses included appropriate examples from relevant empirical studies. However, a significant number of candidates were unable to describe more than one difficulty accurately. A number of candidates did not pick up on the 'access' part of the question and instead described general problems of being in a study group.

(c)   The majority of candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of the difference between overt and covert observation. Ethical reasons were most commonly cited as an explanation for sociologists deciding to use one rather than the other. This was followed by practical reasons (usually being able to take notes contemporaneously), and the fact that overt observation reduces the possibility of sociologists 'going native'. Most candidates produced responses of a good standard, and a minority of candidates were able to refer to three or more reasons for using overt rather than covert observation.

(d)   The majority of responses demonstrated a sound understanding of what is meant by 'positivist arguments'. However, applying this to 'the use of participant observation' was sometimes done too fleetingly and sometimes not at all. In many cases the word 'assess' was disregarded and no evaluation was given. As a general rule, those candidates who engaged with both aspects of the question and then went on to offer some assessment produced responses of a high quality.

Section B

Question 2

The great majority of candidates succeeded in highlighting some of the central themes of the functionalist model of how society works, especially those which related to the interdependence of the various sub-systems. Appropriate references were often made to the contributions of Durkheim, Parsons and (to a lesser extent) Merton.

In discussions of the limitations of the functionalist model a high proportion of responses considered the criticisms made by Marxist, functionalist and social action theorists. Most candidates demonstrated a solid understanding of the central issues, but evaluative content was often by juxtaposition. The most able candidates managed not only to describe the functionalist model in clear detail, but also to evaluate within functionalism itself which was good to see. In a minority of cases incisive points were made about the impact of globalisation and the challenges to functionalist assumptions posed by post–modernist ideas.

Question 3

A high proportion of responses demonstrated a sound understanding of both the concept of 'objectivity' and the key features of positivist and scientific approaches to the study of society. Many candidates made thoughtful points about the contrast between sociologists whose central focus is on gaining an objective understanding of social structures, and those whose starting point is on the subjective interpretations through which individuals construct social reality.

In terms of evaluation the word 'should' in the question was generally overlooked often leading to evaluation by juxtaposition. The most successful responses directly engaged with the question of whether a purely objective study of society is possible, or whether this is an ethically desirable stance for sociologists to adopt.

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Paper 9699/23
23 Theory and Methods
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Key messages

Most responses showed sound knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological concepts and theories. In addition, many candidates were able to apply their understanding effectively to the questions.
Many essay responses contained evaluative content that was thoughtful and well applied to the question. However, for **Questions 1(d)**, **2** and **3**, much evaluation is based around a juxtaposition of different views, rather than explicit and direct evaluation.
Candidates were more comfortable with methods based questions than theoretical ones.
A majority of candidates approached **Question 1(d)** as requiring an essay style response, but this is not necessary to achieve the highest marks.

General comments

Most candidates demonstrated good examination technique in relation to **Question 1,** with the amount of time devoted to each question generally in line with the marks available. Knowledge and understanding of core sociological concepts was typically sound. In terms of other skills, in **Questions 1(b)** and **1(c)** some candidates did not read the question carefully enough, and the focus of their responses was sometimes misplaced. Many candidates treat **Question 1(d)** as a full essay, which is not the case. A number of candidates managed to use empirical examples across **Question 1** which invariably enhanced their responses and the marks gained. This was most evident in **1(c)**.

This session the essay questions produced many sound responses and a number of very good ones.

Generally, candidates appear to be more comfortable with methodological based questions than theoretical ones and this showed itself to some extent in relation to the essays. Candidates made good use of key thinkers and empirical research although there remains a tendency to describe different theoretical approaches rather than applying them to the question directly. Whilst candidates often showed excellent knowledge in terms of content they did not often evaluate explicitly, as such assessment was often by juxtaposition.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) Most responses were able to define the term overt observation accurately. There was a clear understanding of the concept across the majority of scripts. A few confused overt with covert.

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(b)   Most candidates understood the question and were able to identify a practical problem associated with observation. The most common problems cited were in gaining access to a group and in making a record of events. A number of responses included appropriate examples from relevant empirical studies. However, some candidates wrote about ethical issues which was not the focus of the question

(c)   Most candidates were able to offer some sound reasons why observing people in their own environment was advantageous. Mostly commonly candidates outlined how this would lead to research that contained a greater depth of understanding; many responses cited 'ecological validity' as a concept. A number of responses made theoretical links to interpretivism but these were not always developed effectively. Candidates could have improved their answers to this question by making better use of empirical studies to support their points or perhaps by showing a greater understanding of observational techniques. The range of reasons in most scripts was quite limited; often only two well-made points were outlined which meant that accessing the higher reaches of the mark band was difficult.

(d)   Most candidates showed a fairly good understanding of the meaning of ethical issues but did not always develop this by describing the range of ethical problems that a sociologist might encounter. Most candidates were also able to identify several countervailing points that highlighted other problems that a researcher faces but typically this was done without reference to the question. In other words, many responses simply listed problems with observational research. Those that directly engaged with the idea that ethical issues are the 'main problem' in using covert observation and then went on to offer some assessment produced response of high quality. However, these were in the minority.

Section B

Question 2

There were some very good responses to this question and most candidates were able to successfully provide a reasonably good overview of the classical Marxist perspective. Those that directly addressed the issue of whether or Marxist theory exaggerates the level of conflict in society often produced high quality responses. Those that did either cited empirical examples that disputed the proposition or showed how a range of perspectives rejected the view on theoretical grounds. There was some good use of neo-Marxist thinking in a number or responses. However, a broader range of responses tended to simply contrast Marxism with other theories (typically functionalism) often with little, and in a few cases no, focus on the central issue of the level of conflict in society. With these sorts of response, evaluation was invariably by juxtaposition.

Question 3

Many candidates were able to make the general point that finding the solution to society's problems was one but not the only use of sociology, varying only in the range of sociological topics or studies they could refer to. As such, the majority of candidates were able to access the debate to a reasonable standard. A number of candidates focused on how Marxist or feminist perspectives were relevant and those that did often produced some good responses but not many were able to develop these that effectively. There were some but not that many references to contemporary social problems and social policies that might have been usefully applied to the question. The best responses engaged with this question on the basis of the usual debates about values in sociology that might have been expected, although fewer candidates took this approach than might have been expected.

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Key messages

Some good scripts combining detailed sociological understanding with effective analysis and evaluation.
A lot of answers were too short and demonstrated little sociological knowledge.
Further marks could be gained by referring to relevant sociological studies.
More use could be made of sociological concepts and theories as a basis for analysis and evaluation.
High quality answers to the **(b)** questions included a sustained assessment.

General comments

Good answers combined detailed sociological knowledge with sustained analysis and evaluation. At the other extreme, there were answers that relied on general knowledge and personal opinion. Links to relevant sociological material were absent in this type of response and there was little evidence that the candidates concerned had studied the recommended textbooks. Answers were often short, sometimes no more than one or two sentences. The most successful responses demonstrated good use of sociological concepts and theories. Some candidates were also able to provide a sustained assessment in response to the **(b)** questions and thereby gained high marks. Other candidates offered largely descriptive responses and so achieved only low marks for analysis and evaluation (AO3 skills).

Most candidates answered three questions in the time available and there were few rubric errors, 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 knowledge of the functionalist theory of education. Some answers also featured references to the concept of meritocracy that can be linked with functionalist ideas about the role of education. There were some lower scoring answers that failed to make clear links between education and social mobility.

(b)   There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained assessment of the view that cultural deprivation is the main cause of educational underachievement. Good responses identified several ways in which educational performance may be affected by cultural factors. Some candidates achieved high marks for assessment by questioning the concept of cultural deprivation and the focus it places on the supposed failings of pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds. Low scoring answers lacked examples of what is meant by cultural deprivation and often relied on assertion rather than using relevant sociological material to support key points.

Question 2

(a) Good answers provided a clear account of several reasons why some minority ethnic groups have low levels of educational achievement. Material and cultural factors were considered and evidence from studies was often used to support key points. Lower scoring answers were confined to listing just one or two reasons why some minority ethnic groups have low levels of educational achievement.

(b) High scoring answers considered a range of evidence and arguments relating to the debate about the role of powerful groups in shaping the school curriculum. Effective use of concepts such as social construction of knowledge, ethnocentric curriculum, habitus, gendered curriculum, elites, correspondence theory, and ideology was a feature of answers that reached the top mark band. High quality responses often distinguished between specific elite groups and mentioned other factors that may influence the school curriculum, such as the role of teachers, public opinion, and political parties. Lower scoring answers often relied on a few assertions about power and control in society, with little reference to the school curriculum specifically.

Section B

Question 3

(a) Answers that merited high marks provided a developed account of several strengths and limitations of using economic indicators to measure development. Contrasts between economic and non-economic indicators were often drawn in the better answers. There were some low scoring responses that covered only one or two poorly developed strengths and/or limitations of using economic indicators to measure development.

(b) High scoring answers used relevant examples and sociological arguments to assess the view that all societies pass through the same stages of development. Good responses often used modernisation theory as an example of the evolutionary perspective behind the view expressed in the question. Marx's typology of different societies was also used by some candidates to illustrate the evolutionary perspective. Lower scoring answers often relied on a simple line of argument rather than considering different perspectives and angles on the questions.

Question 4

(a) There were a few good answers that identified several social consequences of rapid urban migration. Some answers lower in the mark range lacked detail and were confined to articulating just one or two relevant points. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little or no understanding of the term 'urban migration'.

(b) High quality answers showed a clear understanding of how aid agencies may seek to promote global development. Good responses also included a sustained assessment of the effectiveness of aid in supporting development. Some answers used case studies to distinguish between specific types of aid and to illustrate the strengths and limitations of each approach. Answers that gained marks in the middle of the range often relied on a simple juxtaposition of different theories of development, with links to aid agencies sometimes left implicit. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the sociological debates about the effectiveness of aid agencies in supporting development.

Section C

Question 5

(a) Good answers provided a developed account of how the media may contribute to deviance amplification. Examples of folk devils and moral panics were often used in high scoring answers to illustrate the process of deviance amplification. Some responses showed only a limited or inaccurate understanding of the concept of deviance amplification.

(b)   High scoring answers provided a sustained account of the role of the media in shaping the way people think. Marxist and pluralist theories of the media were often used to provide an analytical framework for addressing the issues raised by the question. In some answers, the concept of mass society was used effectively to examine the power of the media. Lower in the mark range, less use was made of relevant concepts and theories. Some answers included a lot of tangential material, including discussion of different models of media effects (the hypodermic-syringe model, for example).

Question 6

(a)   Higher in the mark range, answers provided several examples of how the media may shape the identities of young people. Good answers often distinguished between the influence of the new media and the traditional media. Low scoring answers lacked detail and often covered only one or two ways in which the media may shape the identities of young people.

(b)   High quality answers examined several ways in which the growth of the new media may have changed society. Good responses also reflected on how far the impact has gone and whether society has really been radically altered by the growth of the new media. 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 the impact of the new media. A few candidates made intelligent use of the concepts such as hyper-reality, digital optimism/pessimism, citizen journalism. There were some low scoring answers that discussed the growth of the new media without directly relating this to the impact on society.

Section D

Question 7

(a)   Good answers provided a developed account of the postmodernist idea of religious consumerism. High quality responses often used concepts such as postmodernity, individualism, globalisation, privatised worship, and remoralisation of self and society. There were some low scoring answers that lacked understanding of what is meant by 'spiritual shopping'.

(b)   Answers that reached the top of the mark range demonstrated a good understanding of different explanations for the growth of fundamentalist religions. Good responses also offered a detailed assessment of the arguments for and against the view expressed in the question. Case studies were used in some answers to support key lines of argument. Some high-quality answers distinguished between the decline of some established religions and the possible growth in religious fundamentalism. Answers that merited the middle of the mark range were often confined to discussing just one or two explanations for the growth of fundamentalism There were a few low scoring answers that made assertions about the reasons for the growth of fundamentalist religions, but offered little supporting evidence and analysis from the relevant sociological literature.

Question 8

(a)   High scoring answers provided several developed points about the role of religion in promoting social solidarity. Functionalists such as Durkheim and Malinowski featured in good responses. Lower scoring answers lacked references to relevant concepts and thinkers.

(b)   Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of evidence and arguments about religiosity in modern industrial societies today. High quality responses also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. The assessment often took the form of a juxtaposition of different views about secularisation and purported decline in religious belief. Some of the best answers considered diverse ways of expressing spirituality and debated whether some are more authentic than others. 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 endorse the view expressed in the question, with little critical analysis or reflection on other possible viewpoints. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little knowledge of the relevant sociological material about religiosity/spirituality today.

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Key messages

Some outstanding answers, full of sociological insight and mature analysis.
Good answers combined detailed sociological understanding with sustained assessment.
A few answers lacked references to relevant sociological material.
Further marks could be gained by using evidence from sociological studies to support key points.
Overall, more use could be made of sociological concepts and theories as a basis for analysis and evaluation.
Some answers to the **(b)** questions were too descriptive.

General comments

There were some outstanding scripts this session, with answers that combined detailed sociological knowledge with thoughtful and well-informed analysis and evaluation. The best answers were tightly constructed in a way that demonstrated maturity of thought and careful attention to the wording of the question.

Some responses to the **(b)** questions are too descriptive, relying on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any related analysis and evaluation. More practice in formulating evaluative answers would be helpful for these candidates. A small minority of candidates appeared unprepared for the exam, relying on assertion and general knowledge to answer the questions rather than drawing on relevant sociological materials and argumentation. Marks for this type of answer are inevitably low and fall beneath the A Level standard. More use of postmodernist concepts and ideas would help candidates gain higher marks. Answers would also be enhanced by using evidence from sociological studies to support key points.

Most candidates answered three questions in the time available and there were few rubric errors, though some candidates answered more than three required 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 included a clear summary of the correspondence theory advanced by Bowles and Gintis. Some answers also featured references to the ideas of Louis Althusser and Paul Willis. There were some lower scoring answers that relied primarily on a functionalist view of the relationship between schools and the workplace.

(b) There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained assessment of the view that schools contribute to the inequality between males and females. Good responses detailed several ways in which schools/teachers may treat male and female pupils differently. Some candidates achieved high marks for assessment by questioning whether schools contribute to gender inequality or merely reflect gender inequality in the wider society. Low scoring answers lacked examples of how schools may contribute to gender inequality and often relied on assertion rather than using relevant sociological material.

Question 2

(a)   Good answers provided a clear account of several limitations in using IQ tests to measure intelligence. Limitations relating to social, cultural and psychological factors were considered. Lower scoring answers were confined to discussing just one or two limitations. A few responses demonstrated little understanding of what IQ tests involve.

(b)   High scoring answers considered a range of evidence and arguments relating to the debate about whether educational underachievement in some minority ethnic groups is better explained in terms of social class factors than ethnicity. Effective use of concepts such as cultural and material deprivation, ethnocentric curriculum, and habitus was a feature of answers that reached the top mark band. Lower scoring answers were often unbalanced; for example, considering social class factors but with little coverage of ethnicity. Conclusions were unsupported by reference to relevant studies and sociological arguments.

Section B

Question 3

(a)   Answers that merited high marks offered a well-developed discussion of several reasons why many cities in developing countries have a high rate of population growth. Some less meritorious answers lacked focus on cities and discussed factors affecting population growth in general. There were some low scoring answers that covered only one or two poorly developed reasons why many cities have a high rate of population growth.

(b)   High scoring answers used relevant examples and sociological arguments to assess the view that international aid is a barrier to economic growth in developing countries. Good responses often distinguished between diverse types of aid, noting that some may be more effective than others in promoting economic growth. Lower scoring answers often relied on a simple line of argument rather than considering different perspectives and angles on the questions.

Question 4

(a)   There were a few good answers that made several well-developed points about why democratic government may be important for economic development. Liberal and pluralist perspectives on development were often cited in high scoring answers. Some answers lower in the mark range lacked detail and were confined to articulating just one or two relevant points. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little or no understanding of the term 'democratic government'.

(b)   High scoring answers showed a clear understanding of what is meant by western models of economic growth. They also included a sustained assessment of whether such models are appropriate for developing countries, often drawing on insights from dependency theory and the world systems perspective. Some good responses used case studies to illustrate the effects of following western models of economic growth in developing countries. Answers that gained marks in the middle of the range often relied on a simple juxtaposition of different theories of development, with only implicit links to a discussion of western models of economic growth. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the sociological debates about the conditions for development.

Section C

Question 5

(a)   Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the concept of hegemony in the context sociological studies of the media. Examples of how the concept has been used in sociological studies of the media were a feature of high scoring answers. Some responses showed only a limited or inaccurate understanding of the concept.

(b) High scoring answers provided a sustained account of the role of the media in shaping the culture of society. Marxist and pluralist theories of the media were often used to provide an analytical framework for addressing the issues raised by the question. The distinction between mass culture and high culture featured in some answers. Lower in the mark range, less use was made of relevant concepts and theories. Some answers included a lot of tangential material, including discussion of different models of media effects (the hypodermic-syringe model, for example).

Question 6

(a) Higher in the mark range, answers provided several well-developed points about how the media may be used to challenge government power. Examples from specific countries were often used to support key points. Good answers also often distinguished between the power of the new media and the traditional media. Low scoring answers lacked detail and often covered only one or two ways in which the media may be used to challenge government power.

(b) High quality answers examined several ways in which the growth of the new media may have weakened the power of large media corporations. Good responses also considered whether large media corporations play any part in the ownership and control of the new media. 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 the impact of the new media. A few candidates made intelligent use of the concepts of digital optimism/pessimism. There were some low scoring answers that discussed the growth of the new media without directly relating this to the effects on large media corporations.

Section D

Question 7

(a) Good answers offered several well-developed points about why there has been a growth in support for fundamentalist religious movements in recent decades. Concepts such as postmodernity, cultural defence, globalisation, and remoralisation of self and society, often featured in high scoring responses. There were some low scoring answers that lacked understanding of what is meant by fundamentalist religious movements.

(b) Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to discuss the secularisation thesis. Answers that reached the top of the mark range offered a detailed assessment of the arguments for and against the view expressed in the question. Evidence from studies was often used to gauge whether the power of religion has declined. Some high-quality answers distinguished between the decline of some established religions and the possible growth in religiosity through the emergence of new religious movements and privatised forms of worship. Answers that merited the middle of the mark range often relied on a largely uncritical account of the secularisation thesis. There were a few low scoring answers that made assertions about the power of religion today, but offered little supporting evidence from the relevant sociological literature.

Question 8

(a) High scoring answers provided several well-developed points about how sects differ from churches. Examples were often used to illustrate the distinctive features of sects. Specific types of sects were also mentioned in many of the best answers. Lower scoring answers often identified one or two features of sects, but failed to make clear distinctions with churches.

(b) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the possible links between disenchantment and the growth of new religious movements. They also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. The assessment often took the form of a juxtaposition of different explanations for the growth of new religious movements. The best answers usually distinguished between specific types of new religious movements and explained the sociological origins of the concept of disenchantment. 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 endorse the view expressed in the question, with little critical analysis or reflection on other possible explanations for the growth of new religious movements. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little knowledge of the concept of disenchantment.

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Key messages

Good answers combined detailed sociological understanding with effective analysis and evaluation.
A few answers lacked references to relevant sociological material.
Further marks could be gained by using evidence from sociological studies to support key arguments.
Overall, more use could be made of sociological concepts and theories as a basis for analysis and evaluation.
Some answers to the **(a)** questions included evaluation that was not required.

General comments

The best responses are demonstrating the higher order skills of analysis and evaluation. Some responses to the **(b)** questions are too descriptive, however, relying on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any related analysis and evaluation. Good answers to the **(b)** questions combined detailed sociological understanding with sustained assessment of the issues raised by the question. The least successful responses rely on assertion and general knowledge to answer the questions. As their answers lack references to appropriate sociological material, the marks awarded are inevitably low. The most successful responses use sociological concepts and theories to develop their answers. Some candidates also made effective use of evidence from sociological studies to support key arguments and this is encouraged as a way of demonstrating AO2 and AO3 skills.

Most candidates answered three questions in the time available and there were few rubric errors, though some candidates answered more than the required 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 the concept of pupil subcultures. High-scoring answers provided several examples to show how pupil subcultures may influence educational performance. There were some low scoring answers that demonstrated little understanding of the concept of pupil subcultures.

(b) There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained assessment of the view that feminisation of the curriculum is the main reason why girls are outperforming boys in many education systems today. Good responses explained the concept of 'feminisation of the curriculum' and showed how it might be linked to an improvement in the educational performance of girls. High quality responses also considered other factors that might explain the changes in attainment levels between girls and boys. There were some low scoring answers that demonstrated ignored the reference to 'feminisation of the curriculum' and discussed other reasons why girls might be outperforming boys.

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Question 2

(a)   Good answers provided a clear account of several reasons why cultural deprivation might harm a child's chances of educational success. Examples from relevant studies often featured in high scoring responses. Lower scoring answers were confined to discussing just one or two links between cultural deprivation and educational attainment levels. A few responses confused cultural deprivation with material deprivation.

(b)   High scoring answers considered a range of evidence and arguments relating to the debate about the impact of education on life chances. Answers that reached the top mark band made effective use of concepts such as cultural and material deprivation, meritocracy, social inequality, social mobility, cultural capital, hidden curriculum, labelling, and habitus. Lower scoring answers lacked references to relevant concepts and theories and they 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 ways in which poor health care may affect rates of population growth in developing countries. Some less meritorious answers lacked focus on developing countries and discussed factors affecting population growth in general. There were some low scoring answers that covered only one or two poorly developed ways in which poor health care may affect population growth.

(b)   Good answers used dependency theory to analyse the key issues raised by the question. High scoring responses contrasted dependency theory with other perspectives on development, including world systems theory and modernisation theory. Lower scoring answers often relied on a simple line of argument rather than considering different perspectives and angles on the questions.

Question 4

(a)   There were a few good answers that made several well-developed points about how poverty may be caused by cultural factors. 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 were confined to articulating just one or two relevant points. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little or no understanding of the term 'cultural factors'.

(b)   High scoring answers showed a clear understanding of what is meant by models of development. Good responses also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. Some good responses used case studies to discuss whether a single model of development can be applied to all countries. Answers that gained marks in the middle of the range often relied on a simple juxtaposition of different theories of development, with little or no explicit analysis of whether a single model or theory can be applied universally. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the sociological debates about models of development.

Section C

Question 5

(a)   Good answers provided several examples of how media content may be shaped by the process known as gate-keeping. High scoring responses often included references to relevant studies and identified groups who may play the gate-keeping role, including editors, journalists and media owners. Some responses showed only a limited or inaccurate understanding of the concept of gate-keeping.

(b)   High scoring answers provided a sustained account of the relationship between the traditional media and the processes that shape social identity. Good responses questioned how powerful the traditional media were in the past in terms of shaping social identities. Some candidates also considered whether the new media have taken power away from the traditional media in terms of influencing social identity. Lower in the mark range, little use was made of relevant concepts and

theories. Some answers included a lot of tangential material, including discussion of different models of media effects (the hypodermic-syringe model, for example).

Question 6

(a)   Higher in the mark range, answers provided several well-developed points about the limitations of the hypodermic-syringe model. Some well-formed answers made use of references to relevant studies of media effects, such as those by Bandura and Belson. Low scoring answers lacked detail and often covered only one or two limitations.

(b)   High quality answers examined several ways in which it might be claimed that the media are controlled by the ruling class. Good responses also provided a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. 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 control, such as the contributions of Hall and Gerbner. Some candidates made effective use of the distinction between the traditional media and the new media. There were some low scoring answers that discussed issues of media control without reference to appropriate sociological concepts and theories.

Section D

Question 7

(a)   Good answers offered several well-developed points about why it might be thought that scientific thinking has weakened the power of religion. Concepts such as rationalisation, disenchantment, demystification, ideology, desacrilisation, and secularisation often featured in high scoring responses. There were some low scoring answers that discussed the declining power of religion without clear links to the growth of science.

(b)   Answers that reached the top of the mark range offered a detailed assessment of the claim that power within religious organisations is held mainly by men from privileged backgrounds. Both the gender and the social class issues raised by the question were addressed in good responses. Evidence from studies was often used to consider how far men from privileged backgrounds monopolise power in religious organisations. Some high-quality answers distinguished between the situation in specific religions, noting less evidence of stratification in the distribution of 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 several well-developed points about why falling church attendance figures might not indicate a decline in religiosity. Concepts that were used in good responses included privatised worship, spiritual shopping, religious diversity, new religious movements, civil religion, remoralisation of self. Lower scoring answers were often confined to making just one or two relevant points in an undeveloped way.

(b)   Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to examine themes from the secularisation thesis. Good answers identified a range of 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 juxtaposition 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 endorse 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.