SOCIOLOGY

> **Paper 2251/12**
> **Paper 1**

Key messages

* In **Questions 1(d)**, **1(e)** and **1(f)**, which require knowledge of the strengths and limitations of particular research methods and approaches, responses should avoid using generic points such as 'people may lie' as these are not specific to any particular method and are hence not creditworthy, unless contextualised. For example, if a respondent is interviewed on the subject of racial prejudice by someone from an ethnic minority, they may give a socially desirable answer, i.e. lie in order to maintain a good relationship in the interview situation. To assert 'people may lie' without this kind of context is not specific enough. Similarly, answers that assert that a research method is 'cheap' or 'expensive' are best avoided as strengths or limitations.
* Responses showed that many candidates are confusing the Hawthorne effect, which applies to observations, with the interviewer effect.
* Responses should be organised using distinct paragraphs for the extended answers to **Questions 1(f)**, **1(g)**, **2(c)**, **2(d)**, **2(e)**, **3(c)**, **3(d)** and **3(e)**. Within each paragraph the point should be developed by reference to explanation and evidence. The latter includes examples, sociological studies, sociological theory or empirical evidence such as statistics.

General comments

Overall, some good quality responses were in evidence across all sections of the paper, demonstrating a positive engagement with the questions and the three assessment objectives. There were few non-responses or timing issues and almost no rubric errors.

Section A 'Methodology' proved to be a good test of candidates' knowledge of key research concepts and methods. Responses showed a generally sound understanding of research methodology, particularly qualitative data and the consequences of the interviewer effect. Knowledge and understanding of sampling choices is an area where candidates can improve. Analysis and interpretation of the source material was generally good. Many candidate responses made clear and confident use of methodological terms.

The 'Culture, identity and socialisation' option was almost twice as popular as 'Social Inequality'. In both option questions, most candidates showed sound and, in some cases, excellent knowledge and understanding of the key theories, concepts and arguments within the topics. The full range of marks was seen by Examiners. Responses had fewer long introductions to the more extended option questions, which is an improvement from previous sessions. In terms of quality, whilst some candidates organised evidence very effectively in option **Questions (d)** and **(e)**, some responses lacked range and/or were not sufficiently sociologically engaged/conceptual. A number of the essay responses were not organised into paragraphs and tended towards description, which did not demonstrate enough analysis in their synthesis of the material. There were also a few list-like and/or one-sided answers. Nonetheless, some responses showed insight and sophistication in their grasp of the question and handling of the sociological evidence.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: 'Theory and methods'

Question 1

(a) Almost all candidates successfully identified Nigeria and Uganda as the two countries with the biggest difference in the estimated average age of marriage. The most common incorrect answers were Ghana and India.

(b) The majority of candidates were able to score full marks by identifying two primary methods used by positivist sociologists. Possible responses included questionnaires, surveys, structured interviews and experiments. Some candidates incorrectly identified interpretivist, rather than positivist, methods such as observation or unstructured interviews. Others identified sources of secondary evidence such as official statistics rather than primary methods. A few candidates also listed sampling techniques instead of primary research methods. Some responses included 'interviews' which was too vague to credit as a positivist method.

(c) The data response question drew a variety of responses. Candidates were asked to use Source A to describe two reasons why the data may not be accurate. Candidates who scored full marks clearly identified a potential problem with accuracy directly from Source A. For example, the fact that the information has been adapted, it is quantitative data, it comes from official statistics or that the data was last collected in 2020. Once a problem has been clearly identified *using the source*, the best approach is to then describe how or why it may lead to inaccuracy. So, the fact that data was last collected in 2020 means that it may be outdated in 2024 and the average age of marriage may now be different. Sometimes candidates scored 2 marks as they were able to identify two reasons for inaccuracy from the source but did not expand or develop their explanation. References to the sample of countries were not creditworthy as the question is about accuracy rather than representativeness.

(d) This question asked candidates to describe two limitations of using self-completion questionnaires in sociological research. Most candidates focused on the idea of self-completion with no researcher present but some candidates identified issues with questionnaires per se. Using the former approach, many answers described how a lack of a researcher present meant that questions could not be clarified and hence misunderstanding can occur, skewing data; or the fact that people may not complete or return the questionnaire if there is no one there to ensure completion, leading to a low response rate; or the idea that researchers can never be sure that whoever completed the questionnaire was, in fact, the person it was aimed at, posing issues for the representativeness of the data gained. Candidates who focused on the fact that it is a questionnaire often selected likelihood of only gaining quantitative data from closed questions, which lacks depth and detail. Answers which simply stated that people may lie or that researchers may be biased were too vague and non-specific to questionnaires to gain credit.

(e) This question on the strengths and limitations of using qualitative data drew a variety of responses. Popular strengths included the depth and detail qualitative data yields, helping researchers to understand individual meanings and motivations, and the data is also in respondents' own words and likely to offer a highly valid account of social behaviour. Common limitations identified the time needed to analyse qualitative data in comparison to quantitative, and the difficulty of drawing comparisons due to the fact that qualitative data likely emerges from open questions and a non-standardised approach. References to a lack of reliability were given credit. Candidates needed to write more than just defining reliability to get their second mark, simply stating that qualitative data is hard to replicate was not sufficient. A few candidates strayed too far into discussions of qualitative methods rather than qualitative data. Issues such as that qualitative data is expensive, people may lie or that it is cheap/costly are generic points that are too vague to credit.

(f) This question on the interviewer effect was challenging for some candidates. The interviewer effect occurs as a result of the interviewer's social characteristics or as a result of something they may do or say. The question asked why this effect can impact validity. The most successful band 3 answers (8 – 10 marks) developed three substantial points. A few candidates argued that the interviewer can have a positive effect on validity – taking time to build rapport – which was creditworthy. Popular correct points discussed different social characteristics such as an interviewer's age, race, social class or gender and often described a scenario where this would likely lead to a respondent giving socially desirable answers or withholding their true opinion.

Others focused on the tone of voice, body language or general demeanour on the interviewer. Candidates then needed to discuss why this may lead to inaccurate data being gathered to gain full credit. Some answers only gained partial credit as they argued that respondents may lie, offer socially desirable answers or may be inhibited in their response due to the interviewer, but such answers did not explain how the interviewer, or their behaviour, could cause such an impact. A few responses talked about observations rather than interviews which was not creditworthy.

(g) This question asked about the extent to which sampling choices are the most important factor in the research process. Sampling choices could refer to sampling frames, sample size, techniques and access to a sample. Most presented balanced answers providing more than one argument for each side of the debate with a conclusion at the end. Candidates seemed to find this question more challenging than either of the option essays. Many responses found it difficult to engage with issues relating to sampling, beyond describing several types of sampling technique. The strongest responses discussed in detail why particular sampling techniques are used and how they can impact research. For example, opportunity or random sampling may be chosen for ease, snowball sampling for hard to reach groups and stratified sampling for representativeness if different social groups are needed. Other common points included the idea of sampling as more time and cost efficient than sampling a whole target population; the need for samples to cohere with the main aims and hypothesis; and how macro and micro research can affect sampling choices. A few candidates described different sampling techniques but were unable to draw out their importance. Most candidates found the against side of the argument easier. Here, candidates discussed a variety of factors in the research process which are equally, if not more, important than sampling choices. Points commonly seen argued that topic, aims and hypothesis, pilot studies, research methods, funding, ethics and theoretical issues (such as positivism or interpretivism) were also crucial in a research project. A few responses were one side and/or showed little understanding of sampling choices.

Section B: 'Culture, socialisation and identity'

Question 2

(a) The definitional question on 'culture' drew an excellent response. Most answers identified culture as the way of life of a group or a whole society. Many candidates mentioned norms and values as central to culture. Others gave examples such as the language, clothing, foods, music etc. of a society.

(b) This question asked candidates to describe two ways male roles are changing in modern industrial societies. Overall, the question was answered well, with most candidates being able to identify and describe at least one change. Popular answers included the change from being sole breadwinner to also helping out in the household, with a few men switching roles completely and becoming a househusband. Others identified the fact that males are now entering what were once seen as 'feminine' occupations giving examples such as nursing or working in a hair salon. Others focused on changes in gender roles linked to masculinity from hegemonic to the 'New Man,' meterosexual masculinity. A few answers were more focused on changing female roles, mentioning males only in passing and hence could not achieve full credit.

(c) This question about how sociologists criticise the idea of a multicultural society was more challenging. Popular correct answers included that some argue it is too idealistic to expect people with diverse norms and values to co-exist with no conflict. Some argued that multicultural societies give too many rights to minorities and some prove costly to society e.g. children being educated in their native language, paying for translators in healthcare, education etc. Other candidates pointed out that multiculturalism almost encourages minority communities to stay separate and not integrate fully into mainstream society which can cause problems. Another common response was that living alongside other communities may inevitably lead to a loss of a cultural heritage as younger generations become exposed to the main culture. Some answers strayed into a discussion of globalisation and global culture which was not generally creditworthy. A few responses showed no knowledge of multicultural society and gave answers focused on gender instead.

(d) This question asked candidates to explain why research on feral children provides evidence for the importance of socialisation. Most responses scored in band 2 rather than band 3. The best responses linked points directly to case studies of feral children, for example Genie Wylie, Oxana Malaya, Rochom P'ngieng and John Ssebunya. Successful answers often broke down the discussion into the effects of inadequate primary socialisation in particular, though some used the

case of Rochom to show that socialisation needs to continue beyond the initial primary stage for it to be truly effective. Others divided points into a discussion of the effects of neglect versus being raised by animals. Most responses focused on actual skills, norms and values that such children lack and backed this up by reference to examples linked to feral children– such as not walking upright, being unable to speak, eating raw food and having animalistic mannerisms. A few responses discussed children who receive socialisation which is inadequate and such children then become uncivilised and highly deviant or criminal. General knowledge of feral children and socialisation was good. To improve, candidates should organise their points to beneficial effect. Often, one point coalesced into another such that it was difficult to see where one finished and another began.

(e)   In the essay question, most responses were two sided and had a range of points for and against the view that education is the most influential agent of socialisation. Points in favour of education were frequently focused on the effectiveness of the hidden curriculum, the formal curriculum, sanctions and rewards, teachers as role models and the pervasive peer pressure in schools. In evaluation candidates rightly turned their attention to other agencies of socialisation and their claims to be more influential than education. Many began with the family using primary socialisation to instil the building blocks of all subsequent secondary socialisation, including that in schools. Common points for the family included the teaching of basic skills such as walking and talking and the instillation of gender roles through the techniques of canalisation, manipulation etc. Many responses referred to the power of the media in the contemporary world with some responses making insightful theoretical reference to Marxism and feminism. For example, the idea that people now live in a media-saturated society where they are constantly exposed to gendered representations in tv and film (feminism), consumerist ideas propagated by advertisers and political propaganda via news broadcasts (Marxism). Discussions of new media often featured with the impact of influencers and peer pressure many people experience on social media such as TikTok and Facebook. The wider peer group outside school was also discussed in terms of the need to fit in and belong to the peer group who adopt a range of positive and negative strategies such as compliments or the threat of ostracism in order to maintain group conformity. Religion was also a common focus with the teaching of moral codes and social control through sanctions and ultimately the promise of heaven and threat of hell. Others looked at the workplace which often neglected the idea of re-socialisation into employer norms and values as most answers solely discussed social control through rewards and sanctions such as promotions and getting fired. A few candidates devoted a paragraph to the police and penal system which are not agencies of socialisation and hence were not generally creditworthy. Less successful answers offered only weak descriptions of agencies of socialisation or did not develop sufficient points in enough depth to achieve credit beyond band 2 (5 – 8 marks).

Section C: 'Social inequality'

Question 3

(a)   Most candidates identified the term 'domestic labour' correctly, referring to two elements required for a comprehensive definition, e.g. work done in the household. Some responses referred to the fact that the work was unpaid and often done by women. Examples given included cooking and cleaning. A minority of responses showed no understanding of domestic labour, referring to low wage workers or forced labour.

(b)   There was a fair response to this question asking candidates to describe two examples of how a person's status may be ascribed. Common correct answers included gender, age and ethnicity. Responses frequently developed such points by explaining how people are born into such statuses, how they are difficult to change, and some gave an indication of what such status means. For example, having the status of female in some cultures may automatically signal a lower standing than if born a male. Being born into a social class was also an acceptable answer and many responses featured descriptions of royalty as an ascribed status which confers immediate privilege. Other responses identified one's position in a caste system where it is difficult, if not impossible, to change the status into which one is born. Responses that argued that simply being rich or being in a low class were not creditworthy as it was unclear whether this was a state into which a person was born.

(c)   This question asking candidates to explain how individuals can achieve social mobility was answered well by many candidates. Popular answers explained that individuals can work hard, get educated, gain promotion, win the lottery or get married as ways of improving their social class.

Many were able to identify 2 if not 3 points though conceptual answers were less common. The strongest answers also referred to changing one's social class rather than simply achieving more status or moving up the social hierarchy. Stronger answers offered several conceptual points which included the idea of meritocracy, blue and white collar work, life chances, intra and intergenerational mobility. Examples of downward social mobility were also acceptable though less common. Example seen included losing a job or going bankrupt.

(d) This question as to why women experience inequality in the workplace was also answered well by many candidates. Most responses identified the view with a feminist perspective and proceeded to outline several conceptual examples of gender inequality in the workplace such as vertical segregation or glass ceiling, horizontal segregation, the gender pay gap and sexual harassment. Other responses focused on patriarchal expectations of women to be primarily child carers and homemakers and stereotypes of women being weaker by nature or gentle and submissive, not qualities associated with leadership in the workplace. Weaker answers presented fewer ideas and in a less sociological, more commonsense manner, referring to how women are 'seen' by men in power i.e. as unsuitable for employment in 'masculine' jobs or as bosses.

(e) This essay-style question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which Marxism is the best explanation for social inequality. Most candidates presented two-sided answers and offered several points. The differentiator tended to be the level of knowledge of Marxism and competing theories. The strongest answers were conceptual, explaining the basic division between the ruling bourgeoisie and the proletariat in terms of the former owning the means of production and the latter being their exploited 'wage slaves.' Other common points referred to how the bourgeoisie maintain their power and status via the ideological state apparatus such as education, which breeds a false class consciousness, and the repressive state apparatus such as the police and courts which stand ready to coerce the proletariat into submission (Althusser). Some evoked the idea of revolution as the only solution to the inequality of capitalism. Weaker responses outlined a more superficial account, in terms of simply describing examples of social class inequalities in different areas of social life, with little reference to Marxist ideas. In evaluation, many responses drew upon various aspects of functionalist and feminist theory. Some attempted to include Weberian arguments, referring to 'market situation' and ideas of class, status and party though, in general, these were not done as well as points linked to the other two theories. A few candidates directly criticised Marxist theory, arguing, for example, that they under-rated the successes of capitalism in improving people's life chances, they ignore the importance of the middle class(es) and predict a revolution that has not really occurred beyond a few isolated countries. The strongest responses attempted to address the 'to what extent' aspect of the question in their conclusion. Weaker responses tended to lack both range and detail, some showing only a limited understanding of Marxism.

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Key messages

- Candidates do not need to write an introductory paragraph when answering any of the questions. Responses should focus on the question from the beginning to maximise marks.
- Many candidates do not write in paragraphs, which makes it difficult for Examiners to differentiate between points and award for range. It would be beneficial for candidates to write in paragraph form, particularly in the banded **Questions (c)**, **(d)** and **(e)**.
- There was a good awareness that **Question (e)** requires a debate, with several points for and against, and a judgement at the end in the form of a conclusion. To further improve performance, candidates should include sociological evidence to substantiate each point made. This could be in the form of examples, statistics, sociological concepts, or even a sociological study. This way, answers will be better developed and explained.
- Some responses for **Questions (b)** and **(c)** are overly long. Responses here can be quite short – perhaps a couple of sentences per point. A couple of words will not meet the requirement to 'describe' in **(b)** questions or to explain in **(c)** questions. Understanding the requirements of the command words used is crucial to candidate success.
- Points in **Questions (d)** and **(e)** should be developed more fully, sociologically evidenced and always written in paragraphs. These questions are looking for depth, detail and complexity in the responses.
- Candidates' knowledge of definitions could be further improved. This would enable them to obtain full marks in **(a)** questions, understand key terminology in other questions and be more able to apply it.
- Candidates should demonstrate their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This approach allowed many candidates to achieve good marks in this examination series. Some candidates could only score lower marks as their answers tended to be based on common sense rather than Sociology.
- Candidates should spend time thinking about what the questions are asking and planning answers to those longer questions before they start to write their response – this is particularly important in the 15-mark essay questions to ensure that candidates remain focused on the specific demands of the question set rather than writing at length without answering the question set.
- Candidates should use the number of marks per question as guidance for how much should be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. At times, for example, candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question, worth 6 marks, as for a **part (e)** question, worth 15 marks. Time management skills and regular practice of timed examination questions in the classroom will really help with this.

General comments

In general, candidates showed a good and, in some cases, impressive knowledge of the subject matter, often integrating sociological conceptuality and, in many cases, a range of theory into their answers. **Family** and **Education** were the most popular questions, followed by **Crime, deviance and social control**. Rubric errors were minimal and most candidates appeared to manage their time well.

Many candidates used relevant contemporary, global and localised examples alongside the more traditional 'textbook' evidence in order to justify and substantiate several of the points made. This demonstrated both sociological knowledge and the ability to apply sociological concepts and theory to the real world. Very few rubric errors were seen this examination session, allowing most candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number, or incorrectly numbered, their answers. Candidates should be aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

In the **part (a)** question, candidates should look to include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a useful way of adding a second element to an answer and are to be encouraged.

Part (b) needs **two** distinctly different points with some development – candidates should separate these and label them clearly.

In **part (c)** questions, candidates should make sure there are more than two sociological points made, evidenced and developed.

For **part (d),** candidates should adopt the same approach as for **(c)** but develop ideas further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts, development, quality of response and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** question.

In terms of the 15-mark **part (e)** question, candidates should organise their answers into paragraphs and develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Clear signalling of the points and the arguments that are being used to support (i.e. for or against) is also good practice. Responses should aim to include three developed points for and three developed points against the claim in the question. There also needs to be a well-focused conclusion that makes a supported judgement on the claim in the question. Each point made should be directly focused upon what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates are choosing to answer the 15-mark questions first to make sure that they do not run out of time. This worked well for several candidates but ultimately this is the candidates' own decision to make.

It was pleasing to note that there was a better understanding of sociological perspectives on the **Media** in the answers to **Question 4** this year. Rubric errors were minimal and most candidates appeared to manage their time well.

The majority of candidates answered **Questions 1** (Family) and **2** (Education). Fewer candidates answered **Question 3** (Crime and deviance) and fewer still answered **Question 4** (Media).

Comments on specific questions

*Section A***: Family**

Question 1

(a)   Most candidates were able to achieve marks on the definition of 'monogamy'. Many defined it in terms of being married to one person at a time or one person for life. A few candidates did not understand the term and confused it with polygamy or serial monogamy. Candidates who scored one mark invariably made reference to the idea of being married but did not mention the idea of it being with just one other person.

(b)   This question asked candidates to describe two examples of child-centredness. The best answers focused on examples of putting children first either within the family or in wider society. Common correct answers included various laws enacted to protect children, the introduction of childcare and other facilities specifically designed with child welfare in mind, media specialist advertising and 'pester power', and children now having a much greater say in family decisions e.g. divorce cases. Weaker responses often focused their points on mundane expectations such as socialising, taking care of or sending children to school. Some answers suggested the candidate had spent too long on this 4 mark question, scoring full marks but wasting time that could have been more profitably spent on the higher tariff questions.

(c)   This question drew a mixed response in terms of interpreting the demands of the question. Stronger answers provided *specific* examples of families across named cultures to explain how family life is globally diverse, e.g. African-Caribbean matrifocal families, Asian extended families, Chinese DINK families and the emergence of same-sex families in some European countries. In the process, candidates discussed types of marriages, conjugal/gender roles, etc. A number of responses simply juxtaposed different universal types of family, e.g. nuclear, extended, reconstituted without providing any links to global diversity, different cultures, or parts of the world. For this reason, they could not attain marks in the higher band.

(d)   There was a confident response to this question on why sociologists argue the family is an essential institution. Common answers focused on outlining several functions of the family as given

by functionalist sociologists, such as reproduction, socialisation (including gender roles), social control and the stabilisation of adult personalities. There were often references to Parson's warm bath theory and a few responses discussed the consequences of inadequate socialisation in the form of feral children and/or through the work of Charles Murray on single parent families. Other responses included the feminist and/or Marxist perspectives well, explaining the essential nature of the family for patriarchy and for capitalism. The best responses made three well developed points, with each point explaining a different reason as to why family is essential. Weaker responses tended to describe fewer than three points or simply listed reasons with little or no explanation.

(e)   This 15-mark essay question required candidates to discuss the extent to which family life is equal for its members. The question drew responses in each mark band. The strongest responses included at least 6 well developed points in a balanced argument which finished with a focused conclusion. The best responses discussed the obvious examples of greater family equality such as the emergence of joint conjugal roles (Willmott and Young), the 'New man' identity and men as househusband, and greater equality for both women and children in decision-making. In arguments against, many candidates used the prevalence of domestic violence and child abuse as evidence, along with the continuation of segregated conjugal roles in some types of family and cultures. Other criticised as false the so-called equality between women and men in the household, arguing that women continued to have a dual burden or triple shift or else men pick and choose which tasks they do, preferring those which they enjoy rather than the mundane jobs such as cleaning and laundry. A few responses included an attempt to argue that the traditional functionalist/New Right ideas of the family were equal in the sense that roles are allotted according to natural capacity. Whilst these responses may have achieved some credit for such arguments, they were often unconvincing. Encouragingly, most responses seen were two-sided.

Section B: **Education**

Question 2

(a)   When defining 'vocationalism', many candidates were able to score both marks by referring to skills-based or practical education designed to train or prepare candidates for the workplace. Many responses included specific examples such as training to be a plumber or a cook. Several candidates seemed to not understand the meaning of the term and guessed that it meant a 'vacation' from school or a 'vocal' education. Such answers were not credited.

(b)   This 4-mark question asking candidates to describe two examples of equal opportunities in education was generally well done. Popular correct answers focused on comprehensive schools, the concept of meritocracy, the same (national) curriculum and assessment standards for girls and boys, and free state education for all. Some responses included two points that were too similar to be credited separately and hence lost marks accordingly.

(c)   This 6-mark question asked candidates to explain how rewards are used to socially control students.

Some responses included generic, but still valid, points about the use of rewards to keep children in line with school, and hence later, societal norms and values. Most responses used an example of a reward as the focus for each point and explained how it effectively socially controlled students thus ensuring less repetition in the discussion. Examples included prizes, certificates, awards, praise, positions of responsibility such as school council, treat trips etc. Providing each of the examples were explained in terms of different ideas like motivation to work hard or achieve highly or role-modelling behaviour for other students then full marks could be gained relatively easily. Some responses included different rewards but these were then explained through the same basic idea e.g. motivation which prevented them reaching the top marks in the mark scheme. A few responses argued that extra marks or even grades were given as rewards which was not creditworthy. A significant minority of responses discussed negative sanctions or punishments which was tangential to the question set and hence not creditworthy.

(d)   This 8-mark question asked candidates to explain why girls study different subjects to boys. Frequent answers included the ideas that subject choice was often linked to societal and family expectations of girls and boys and their initial socialisation into traditional gender roles. Such points were often expressed conceptually, linking to processes such as canalisation and manipulation, as well as the expressive and instrumental roles, and the work of Oakley. Many responses linked girls and boys to specific examples such as girls choosing needlework, cookery or languages whilst

boys choose business, sciences and maths. Other creditworthy points focused on the lack of role models in the STEM subjects for girls, male domination in science classrooms and the influence of gendered peer groups. Thus, role modelling and teacher expectations featured prominently in successful answers. Weaker responses tended to be descriptive, for example 'girls take home economics and boys take science' with very little reasoning as to why this was the case. A smaller number of responses discussed differences in education between boys and girls with little or no reference to subject choice and therefore scored few, if any, marks.

(e) This 15-mark essay style question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which linguistic factors have the most influence in a student's educational achievement. On the whole, many candidates answered this well. Common arguments for the view invariably discussed Bernstein's ideas about restricted and elaborate code, linking to social class, as well as the challenges faced by immigrants or students having to learn in a second language who faced associated language barriers in their learning. Some responses developed such points further by linking in teacher discrimination on the basis of student language. Here, there were some very effective references to Labov and his work on African American Vernacular English (AAVE). On the 'against' side of the argument, candidates often turned their attention to gender, social class and ethnicity as alternative explanations for differential achievement. Many discussed cultural, material and in-school factors with impressive references to Marxist ideas about material deprivation and cultural and social capital (Bordieu), as well as feminist ideas of patriarchy and socialisation (Oakley). The key to achieving marks in the higher bands was to show the link back to educational achievement. Weaker answers tended to simply be descriptive. The 'for' side of the argument was undoubtedly more challenging and consequently a few candidates produced one-sided answers as they had no understanding of what was meant by 'linguistic factors' and simply guessed whilst performing relatively well on the against side of the argument. Such responses scored in Band 2, demonstrating the importance of ensuring all areas of the specification have been fully learnt and understood.

Section C: **Crime, deviance and social control.**

Question 3

(a) There was a mixed response to this definitional question on self-report studies. The strongest responses included two aspects– for example, referring to the idea of a survey or questionnaire in which people admitted to crimes they had committed. Some responses included additional detail such as that it is used as a way to measure crime, particularly the hidden figure. It seemed that a few candidates did not understand the term at all, since some responses talked about people handing themselves in to the police or confused it with victim studies.

(b) This question asked candidates to describe two ways law enforcement agencies make people conform. Candidates approached the question in various ways, for example some focused on law enforcement agencies such as police or prisons whilst others focused on the methods used by such agencies such as punishment or deterrence, perhaps without mentioning the agencies themselves by name. Responses of the latter approach discussed the fear of arrest and coercion, jail sentences, fines and community service as ways of making individuals conform or as a deterrent to others who saw people incurring such penalties. A few responses were written in more general terms of fear of the consequences of deviant actions and ensuing sanctions. A significant minority of responses were focused on the government which could not be credited as this is not a law enforcement agency.

(c) This question asked for explanations of how deviancy amplification can occur. It drew a mixed response from candidates. There were some impressive answers demonstrating that deviancy amplification involves not just initial acts of deviance but further repeated acts, sometimes caused by the actions of law enforcement and the associated agencies. Many responses included labelling theory and the ideas of master status and self-fulfilling prophecy to good effect here often applying them to different contexts such as anti-school subcultures and peer pressure, gangs and others negatively labelled e.g. drug users who find themselves adopting a deviant career. Others discussed police targeting of ethnic minorities through stop and search, liable to create unrest and disillusionment and hence individuals turning to crime. Some responses included effective points using sociological studies of moral panics such as the mods and rockers (Cohen), drug users (Young) or 'hoodies' (Fawbert). Weaker responses often discussed explanations for crime such as status frustration or strain theory but with no attempt to address the 'amplification' of deviance beyond the initial actions. Some candidates seemed unfamiliar with the central concept of deviancy amplification. Weaker responses were often not split into 3 distinct points and frequently used

labelling theory, master status, self-fulfilling prophecy and deviant career all within one overly long point. Such responses were able to draw only partial credit and responses confined to such points were likely to be awarded marks in Band 1 (1 – 3 marks) rather than Band 2 (4 – 6 marks).

(d) The question as to why sociologists criticise the accuracy of official crime statistics was accessible for most candidates. Responses included various aspects of the dark figure of crime such as reasons for unreported crimes and the issue of police unrecorded crimes, including white-collar. A few responses discussed the police practices of 'coughing and cuffing' to good effect whilst government manipulation of the figures was also mentioned. Whilst many responses included multiple points, these were often only partially developed or narrowly focused, for example explaining three reasons why people may not report particular crimes which could only achieve Band 2 (4 – 6 marks). The key for reaching the higher bands is to explain why the identified factors make the crime statistics inaccurate. Some responses also included self-report studies/victim surveys to good effect, showing how these question the accuracy of the official crime statistics. Weaker responses often described the unreported crime but did not explain why this meant the official statistics were not accurate. Sociological language and concepts proved to be challenging here, but candidates were able to access the highest mark band by linking to Marxist and/or feminist theory, ideas about validity in research and the Interpretivist view of the socially constructed nature of statistics.

(e) This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which ethnicity is a factor in explaining why some people commit crime. Most candidates were able to produce several points on each side of the debate and balance arguments successfully. There were very good opportunities for candidates to show off a wide and detailed knowledge of explanations for crime, including the corresponding theory links, concepts and sociological studies. On the 'for' side of the debate, commonly seen points included racial discrimination and labelling or scapegoating, provoking deviant responses from persecuted ethnic groups. Many referred to the relative deprivation and marginalisation experienced by some ethnic minorities leading to the creation of deviant subcultures/gangs and used recent examples of BLM and alleged police brutality. Some responses included theories such as Cohen's status frustration and Merton's strain theory, applying them successfully to ethnic minority experience. Other responses drew upon the latter theories as well as Cloward and Ohlin in arguments against the view in the question. Examiners marked accordingly to how the candidates used the theories, allowing for a wide variety of answers to be seen. Aside from arguments about ethnicity, discussions of the extent to which social class, age and gender explain why some people commit crime also featured prominently on the 'against' side of the debate and were done quite well. At times, some responses lost focus on the question and included extensive amounts about, say, social class and crime without bringing attention back to ethnicity – the crux of the question. Linking back explicitly to the question is the key to achieving high marks. An impressive array of concepts and theory were on show here and a good number of responses were able to reach Band 3 (9 – 12 marks) and Band 4 (13 – 15). Weaker responses made fewer points with either no development or only partial development. A lack of sociological evidence also characterised weaker responses.

Section D: Media

Question 4

(a) This definitional question asked candidates to describe what is meant by the term propaganda. On the whole, this question was answered well with a good number of responses scoring full marks. The best answers alluded to ideas that it was often a biased or distorted view which aimed to influence people's attitudes and behaviour. Some responses included Nazi propaganda against Jewish people as an example. A few candidates seemed not to understand the term but these were few and far between. Using examples to support the core definition helped candidates achieve full marks in this question.

(b) This question asked candidates to describe two examples of interactivity in new media. Some candidates seemed to find the idea of interactivity challenging and relied on a common sense and often inaccurate notion, giving examples of texts and emails going back and forth between two people. Such ideas gained minimal or no credit (depending on the context). To answer this question successfully, an understanding of how people interact with wider groups or the public through digital technology and the two-way communication facilitated by new media was needed. Common correct examples included posting onto social media platforms and chatrooms/forums,

blogging and vlogging (e.g. TikTok), citizen journalism, user generated content, and gaming with others from across the globe.

(c) Many answers to this question on how moral panics distort reality predictably focused on aspects of labelling theory. Responses discussed aspects of moral panics in different points. For example, pointing out exaggeration of a story beyond the original facts, the sensationalism that can affect the way stories are written and edited and the creation of folk devils, scapegoats and stereotypes. Classic examples featured in the strongest answers such as Cohen's mods and rockers, Fawbert on hoodies, Young's drug-takers and Becker's labelling theory. Modern examples were also successfully included, such as knife crime and moral panics associated with race (and its tragic consequences) such as the death of George Floyd and others in the US. Some responses used labelling theory to develop points linked to deviance amplification as individuals choose a deviant career in response to labelling and persecution by agents of social control – such amplification being in itself a distortion of original misdemeanours. Weaker responses often described elements of a moral panic but struggled to fully explain the distortion they create.

(d) The question on why the media can influence behaviour was an accessible question and produced some very good responses. There were a variety of ways that candidates could choose to answer the question. Some discussed media effects theories such as the hypodermic syringe or cultural effects theory, with relevant examples e.g. the Bandura case study or children and violence. Others explained how the media functions as an agent of socialisation, particularly new media with its influencers and popular apps such as TikTok which may draw copycat behaviours and participation in trends. Other responses discussed advertising and propaganda and its effects on the audience, often with pertinent examples. Weaker responses often made fewer developed points or relied on common-sense rather than sociological evidence.

(e) This essay style question focused on the extent to which media representations of gender are changing. All candidates were able to access this question, with responses ranging from common sense to highly developed and engaging sociological essays. Many responses included contemporary examples in both sides of their response with reference to films, television programmes and new media. A few responses did not focus on gender, including reference to ethnicity, age and social class which were not creditable. The strongest responses made a wide range of points in a two-sided, balanced argument. Stronger sociological responses offered examples of changing gender representations from TV, new media and film in terms of how both males and females are shown in their social role and positions, character traits and importance in plot lines. Some responses included long descriptions of past representations without explicit focus on the question. In arguments 'against', popular points included feminist ideas of the 'male gaze' and continued male dominance over the film-making industry which affects the representation of gender: examples being the continuation of sexual objectification of females and the persistence of hegemonic stereotypes for males. Many responses had a lack of full development. To improve, including chosen examples and sociological concepts would make a real difference to marks.