SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- Candidates could improve their exam technique for **Question 1(f)**. A minimum of three developed and conceptual points are required for top band. Moreover no evaluation is required in this question.
- Topical and up to date examples are always good to see – a minority of candidates mentioned the global pandemic for example. It would be useful to practice linking and applying sociological ideas to news items and current/real life examples.
- Continue to encourage candidates to avoid lengthy introductions and definitions at the start of their answers.
- Encourage candidates not to conflate the meanings of 'validity' and 'reliability'. The latter concept is particularly difficult for candidates. A good strategy is to make it a rule that candidates should not use these two concepts in the same sentence, as they mean quite different things.
- In all extended questions, particularly option **Questions (d)** and **(e)** candidates need to link back to the actual question at the end of their paragraph to ensure that their material is applied correctly to the question as set.

General comments

In general, most candidates found the questions accessible and there were very few rubric errors. The different topics covered in the questions offered an opportunity for candidates to display a good knowledge and understanding of core sociological ideas, concepts and theory. In section one many candidates were well placed to answer questions linked to the key strengths and limitations of sociological approaches, methods and data. In both option sections, many candidates demonstrated a generally sound knowledge of the topics and key sociological ideas. Some candidates were able to marshal evidence and develop points in a structured and sometimes insightful way. Knowledge of theory and studies was impressive. Candidates scoring in the lower grade ranges tended to write brief responses that either did not make enough points, or did not develop points sufficiently. It was also encouraging to see fewer cases of 'no response'.

Section A

Question 1

(a) Almost all candidates achieved both marks on this question and were able to identify two aims of the Islington Crime Survey from the source.

(b) Many candidates were able to identify two correct sampling methods, apart from random sampling. A small number of candidates provided unnecessary extended responses – simply picking out the two aims is sufficient in an 'identify' question.

(c) Answers demonstrated that candidates had no difficulty in comprehending source A. This question drew a mixed response. Candidates who scored well indicated that they understood the term 'validity' and were able to apply it appropriately to the source. Popular responses were that structured interviews lead to less detail and the presence of a researcher affects respondent's answers (e.g. social desirability) or the idea that the source was outdated and hence not valid for understanding victimisation today. Only a few answers made generic points rather than relating to the source. Some candidates focused on the response rate and argued that this made the data invalid, which is incorrect. Others confused validity with representativeness or reliability. A small minority copied out extracts from the source with no attempt to describe a validity issue.

(d) This question asked candidates to describe two strengths of using historical documents. Although there were some solid responses and candidates structured their responses well, a significant number were generic, focusing on the idea that historical documents 'save time' or are 'cheap'. Better responses referenced appropriate examples of historical data, such as old statistics or photographs, and described their strengths such as being able to investigate past events or to make comparisons over time. A few candidates cited famous examples such as the diary of Anne Frank.

(e) This question asked candidates to describe two strengths and two weaknesses of random sampling. The most popular issues for discussion linked to issues of fairness, representativeness, bias, and time-efficient in comparison to other sampling types. Some were able to suggest random samples can be generated by computers and so are easy to administer. A few candidates incorrectly focused on the issue of the validity or reliability of findings. However, a number of candidates were unable to go beyond one or two correctly developed points. Some candidates failed to develop points identified.

(f) This question asked candidates to explain why sociologists might want to use covert participant observation in research. Many candidates responded well to the question and it enabled them to demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of covert participant observation. Many candidates were able to make three points and frequent responses included the idea that the method allows researchers to avoid the Hawthorne Effect, enhance validity, allow access to gangs and observe subjects in their natural surroundings. Some candidates referenced specific examples, such as James Patrick's 'A Glasgow Gang Observed'. A sizeable number of candidates wrote lengthy introductions describing what a covert observation is. Candidates should avoid this as it wastes time when they should be focusing on the 'why' part of the question. In other cases, candidates described aspects of covert observation, rather than explaining why it is used. The result was that such points were underdeveloped. A small number of responses evaluated the method, which was not creditworthy.

(g) In the essay-style question most candidates showed a sound knowledge of statistics and their strengths and weaknesses. Most candidates were able to give a two sided response. Candidates who scored best identified and developed a range of points both for and against the view, drawing on sociological concepts consistently. A few candidates achieved full marks with a thoughtful and reflective summing up. Most responses showed some knowledge of the debate with many responses showing good sociological knowledge and understanding. Popular strength included the ability to identify patterns and trends, to convert data into graphs and making comparisons. In arguments against the use of statistics candidates focused on the greater utility of other research methods. However, a number of responses also drew out the possible problems inherent in statistics such as political bias or lack of depth and detail. Quite a few candidates tried to make the point that they can be out of date – but this was seldom successfully developed. The best answers here employed examples – some good candidates referred back to the Source A. Candidates who scored less well either failed to make enough points and/or only partially developed their points and, in some cases, candidates confused the concepts of quantitative and qualitative data.

Section B

Question 2

(a) This question asked candidates to define the term 'adolescence'. Although many candidates were able to give a full definition of the term as the period of transition from child to adult, some responses were partial identifying the term with 'teenagers'.

(b) This question asked candidates to describe two ways the media socialises individuals. The best answers were specific and used concepts, e.g. role models, imitation or how groups are represented in advertising, film etc. A few candidates made impressive points linked to new media e.g. about on line bullying. Less successful answers were vague and lacking in sociological focus with reference to the fact that the media 'influence' people in different ways.

(c) This question asked candidates to explain how values ae a social construction. Higher scoring responses were able to discuss how values differ across time, or are relative to culture, social class etc. However, many candidates struggled with this question, often describing what is meant by social construction and/or values, but not engaging with 'how' values are a social construction. A

few candidates confused norms with values. As a result there were a number of low scoring responses.

(d)   In this question candidates were asked to explain why ethnicity is an important influence on social identity. Many candidates spent time on introductions in which they defined ethnicity and/or social identity before launching into explanation of reasons 'why'. A number of candidates focused on socialisation, culture, dress and language. Others focused on issues concerning discrimination, showing how this can have a negative effect on social identity, e.g. through labelling. However, points were often not well explained and many answers tended to be placed in the middle band due to lack of conceptual engagement or inadequate development of points made.

(e)   In assessing the extent to which the peer group is the most effective agent of social control many candidates illustrated a very sound conceptual knowledge and understanding. Good quality responses were able to provide a range of arguments for the view and referenced a variety of techniques used by peers such as peer pressure, ostracism, sanctions and rewards. Some sophisticated responses even went beyond the adolescent peer groups and talked about peers within occupations or older peer groups. Many candidates were able to provide more arguments against the view, referencing family, media, religion and law. Notably some candidates tried to use negative peer pressure as evaluation but if peers are pressuring individuals to engage in anti-social behaviours or crime then it is evidence for the effectiveness of such pressure as a form of control. Answers that scored less well usually made two or three arguments that were often only partially developed in terms of addressing the degree of effectiveness of the agents chosen for discussion. Conclusions, where present, often did make a judgement but this was not always well justified using the evidence from answers.

Section C

Question 3

(a)   Most candidates were able to define the term 'meritocracy' with a fair degree of clarity. Many others achieved partial responses that were somewhat vague in their definition but did manage to give a valid example such as linking it to 'equal opportunities'. One or two candidates confused the idea with 'matriarchy'.

(b)   This question had a mixed response. The question asked candidates to describe two aspects of the dependency culture. Better responses referred to dependence on the welfare state/benefits, fatalism, New Right thinking and the cycle of poverty. Some candidates were unable to give more than one aspect and a few simply talked about people using the welfare state or about children depending on parents, neither of which were creditworthy on their own.

(c)   Candidates generally had a good knowledge of how the roles of women have changed in modern industrial societies. The best responses developed three of more discrete points and including concepts in each point. At the beginning of their answer some candidates gave lengthy descriptions of women's (and men's) roles in the past, when a more concise comparison of past and present would have sufficed. Popular responses referred to feminism, changes in the law and women becoming breadwinners. A number looked at how the role of men had impacted women in general which did not answer the question of 'roles' directly.

(d)   Many candidates demonstrated a generally good level of knowledge of why racism can affect the life chances of some minority ethnic groups. Popular answers included references to stereotypes and labelling in education, discrimination in housing policies, in the workplace and the law via police targeting. Some candidates could have improved their mark by linking their points more explicitly to life chances.

(e)   The essay question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which there is social mobility between social classes. In higher quality responses candidates were able to give a full range of developed points referring to sociological ideas about social class such as functionalism, embourgeoisement, proletarianisation, intragenerational social and intergenerational mobility and structural barriers such as glass ceiling, closed societies and ascribed status. Candidates at this level also often attempted to write evaluative rather than purely summative conclusions. Many candidates, however, did not fully link social mobility back to social class, resulting in partially developed points. Lower scoring responses were due to a lack of range or development of points.

In some cases responses were limited in scope and referred to ideas such as winning the lottery or marriage or descriptive of social mobility and social class.

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Paper 2251/14
Paper 14

Key messages

- Continue to encourage candidates to avoid lengthy introductions and definitions at the start of their answers.
- Think about trying to improve candidates' knowledge of laboratory experiments. One way to do this would be to use a classic experiment as a focus for teaching e.g. the Stanford prison experiment.
- Encourage candidates not to conflate the meanings of 'validity' and 'reliability'. The latter concept is particularly difficult for O Level candidates. A good strategy is to make it a rule that candidates should not use these two concepts in the same sentence, as they mean quite different things.
- In **Question 1(g)** candidates should try to avoid simply juxtaposing other methods as evaluation for the method in the question. Instead, they should to try to use competing methods to illustrate weaknesses in the method in question. Getting candidates to refer back to the method in the question at the beginning and end of their evaluation point may help them to avoid simply describing aspects of alternative methods.
- In all extended questions, particularly option **Questions (d)** and **(e)** candidates need to link back to the actual question at the end of their paragraph to ensure that their material is applied correctly to the question as set.

General comments

In general, most candidates found the questions accessible and there were very few rubric errors. The different topics covered in the questions offered an opportunity for candidates to display a good knowledge and understanding of core sociological ideas, concepts and theory. In section one many candidates were well placed to answer questions linked to the key strengths and limitations of sociological approaches, methods and data. Knowledge of laboratory experiments was an exception and more practice on answer technique for this question would be beneficial (see key messages). In both option sections, many candidates demonstrated a generally sound knowledge of the topics and key sociological ideas. Some candidates were able to marshal evidence and develop points in a structured and sometimes insightful way. Some candidates scored in the lower grade ranges; this was due to brief responses that either did not make enough points, or did not develop points sufficiently. Question two was a more popular option that question three. This year there were also fewer cases of 'no response'.

Section A

Question 1

(a) Almost all candidates achieved both marks on this question and were able to identify two problems suffered by elderly patients from the source.

(b) Many candidates were able to identify two correct research methods that gather qualitative data. Unstructured interviews and observations were the more popular correctly identified methods. Some candidate responses were vague – for example, referring to interviews rather than a specific type of interview that would gather qualitative data. Very occasionally a few candidates wrote about qualitative or quantitative data answers or interpretivism and positivism instead of identifying a research method.

(c) Candidates on the whole engaged well with the source material. Many candidates were able to draw on the material appropriately and were able to describe at least one reason why data gathered might not be accurate. Many responses referred to problems of bias or a lack of objectivity on the part of the researcher. Others discussed the possibility of the Hawthorne Effect

making data inaccurate. A smaller number focused on other possible reasons, for example 'going native'. Candidates who scored less well often selected elements of the source but then failed to describe the point in terms of the impact on accuracy. A small number of candidates referred to problems other than accuracy such as lack of reliability or lack of representativeness.

(d) This question asked candidates to describe two strengths of using interpretivist approaches in research. Many candidates answered this fairly well with many able to give examples linked to interpretivist methods. Popular answers linked interpretivism with validity, a micro approach, a focus on interaction, the ability to access the reasons behind social behaviour and the focus on achieving qualitative data. Some learners tended to simply describe aspects of interpretivism without showing how they were strengths. A minority of candidates confused interpretivism with positivism.

(e) This question asked candidates to describe two strengths and two weaknesses of laboratory experiments in research. It proved challenging for many candidates some of whom had little knowledge of the method as used in sociology. Many referred to generic strengths of a quantitative approach, and subsequently did not always meet the demands of the question. More candidates were able to describe limitations successfully – with the Hawthorne Effect, artificial setting and possible ethical issues being the more popular correctly described limitations. A significant number of responses referred to cost/time without exemplification or with vague descriptions.

(f) This question asked candidates to explain why positivists prefer to use quantitative data. Many had some knowledge of positivism but found it difficult to draw on both aspects of the question. Some responses focused on describing the positivist approach, rather than reasons for the positivist preference for quantitative data. In other cases, candidates described quantitative methods, rather than explaining why they are used by positivists. The result was that many points were underdeveloped. A small number of responses evaluated positivism, which was not creditworthy.

(g) In the essay-style question most candidates showed a sound knowledge of various types of observation and their strengths and weaknesses. Candidates who scored best identified and developed a range of points both for and against the view, drawing on sociological concepts consistently. A few candidates achieved full marks with a thoughtful and reflective summing up. Most responses showed some knowledge of the debate with many responses showing good sociological knowledge and understanding. Popular points included an engagement with observation as good for achieving validity, depth, detail and verstehen and limitations such as the Hawthorne Effect and ethical concerns. A few candidates referenced famous observations suck as Venkatesh or Humphreys. A few candidates examined other methods in evaluation but used simple juxtaposition with very little or no link back to the method in the question. A significant number of responses gave lengthy descriptions of the different types of participant observation before engaging with the debate. There was some conflation of non-participant with overt and participant with covert observation.

Section B

Question 2

(a) This question asked candidates to define the term 'ethnic minority'. Although some candidates were able to give a full definition of the term, many responses were partial. In a number of cases, candidates gave examples of minority communities or descriptions of discrimination faced by ethnic minorities rather than defining the term.

(b) This question proved challenging for some candidates who misinterpreted the question. The questions asked for two examples of cultural diversity between different societies. Whilst candidates were able to give examples of cultural diversity, they did not always give examples from different societies; instead, some responses focused on differences between cultures within a single society. However, there were some clear responses with a wide range of examples. The most popular points described food, ways of eating, clothes and religious practices.

(c) This question asked candidates to explain how multicultural society benefits its members. Many candidates engaged well with the question and in many case, responses had clear and accurate explanations, often using interesting and relevant examples from their own society. On low scoring answers, points were not developed or the question had been misunderstood. Popular answers referenced increasing peace and harmony linked to having a better understanding of different

cultures; also the possibility of being able to sample the lifestyle of other cultures in terms of food, clothing and religious festivals.

(d)   In this question candidates were asked to explain why secondary socialisation is important. Many responses demonstrated some sociological knowledge and an understanding of why secondary socialisation is important and in many cases were able to give a good range of points. Candidates often used agents of secondary socialisation to illustrate importance such as schools, the media and religion. In lower scoring responses, points tended to be underdeveloped, with a tendency and to describe agencies of secondary socialisation. A small number of responses discussed the importance of primary socialisation, which was not creditworthy. Many candidates spent time on introductions in which they defined secondary socialisation before launching into explanation.

(e)   In assessing the extent to which gender determines the roles that individuals have in society many candidates illustrated a very good knowledge and understanding. Popular concepts included gender role socialisation via Oakley's ideas on canalisation etc., the housewife/breadwinner roles, conjugal roles, expressive and instrumental roles etc. Some candidates were able to show off an impressive theoretical knowledge of feminism and functionalism. However, some responses were descriptive or focused more on gender inequality rather than roles and some focused on roles without reference to gender. Answers that scored less well usually made two or three arguments that were often only partially developed. Conclusions, where present, often did make a judgement but this was not always well justified using the evidence from answers.

Section C

Question 3

(a)   Some candidates were able to define the term 'civil rights' in textbook fashion. Many others achieved partial responses that were somewhat vague in their definition but did manage to give a valid example. A small number described the civil rights movement rather than defining civil rights.

(b)   This question proved to be very accessible and most candidates scored well in describing two ways in which disabled people may experience inequality. Many answers gained marks by developing ideas around inequalities work and education. A very small number identified correct points but then did not describe them, thus limiting themselves to half marks. A minority of candidates described inequalities linked to race or ethnicity, which were not creditworthy.

(c)   Candidates generally had a good knowledge of how some ethnic groups experience discriminated. The best responses developed three of more discrete points and including concepts in each point. There were references to specific agencies such as educational inequalities, workplace inequalities and inequalities in the criminal justice system. It was encouraging to see contemporary examples (e.g. the George Floyd case) and some impressive conceptual and theoretical knowledge (e.g. labelling theory). Answers that scored less well tended to be more common sense rather than sociological. A small minority of candidates focused their responses on class rather than ethnicity.

(d)   Many candidates demonstrated at least a basic knowledge and understanding of why some sociologists believe social class is less important today. Many responses discussed the functionalist idea that society is now meritocratic but then did not link their point back to social class. There were interesting references to concepts such as embourgeoisement and proletarianisation. Other were able to discuss the competing importance of gender, age and ethnicity. Some weaker responses did not understand the demands of the question and sometimes focused on describing social class. A few candidates focused on evaluation, i.e. arguing why class remains important which was not creditworthy.

(e)   The essay question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which societies are meritocratic. Many responses focused on providing evidence for the functionalist idea of meritocracy through education and equal opportunity legislation that have given people more opportunity to achieve status and move up the social class ladder. In their arguments against some candidates made sophisticated use of Marxist and feminist theory as well as drawing attention to prejudice and against ethnic minorities and systematic discrimination against both the young and the old. A small number of candidates did not understand the idea of meritocracy and put forward arguments based on common sense rather than sociological evidence.

SOCIOLOGY

| Paper 2251/22 |
| Paper 22 |

Report to CIE

The marking process seemed straightforward with few problems, probably helped by the marking of this paper following closely from paper 24, which all AE's bar one had marked.

The failure of RM Assessor in the final days was by far the greatest problem; fortunately with fairly small allocations it was still, just, possible to finish marking on time.

Key messages

It is essential that candidates read question wording carefully and realise the significance of terms used. This showed itself particularly with **Questions 1(e)** 'ethnicity', 2**(b)** 'patterns', 3**(b)** 'rehabilitation', 3**(d)** 'functionalists' and 4**(c)** 'use the media'.

Question (e) requires a debate – for and against developed points, with a conclusion. Several one-sided **(e)** answers were seen which hindered the marks awarded. It is also crucial to specifically address the question asked – in some cases a lot had been written by candidates but it was not answering the particular question set and so could not be credited.

Some candidates still repeat questions in an opening paragraph or spend too long on definitions or historical context before starting to address the question. This may help candidates prepare to answer the longer questions but is unlikely to gain any marks and may mean that they run out of time before the end of the question paper. Best advice is to get straight into the main body of the answer.

Candidates should be encouraged to show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This allowed several candidates to achieve very high marks in this series. However, some candidates could only score low 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 specific questions in their designated 15 minutes of reading time – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidate's remain focused on the specific demands of the question.

Some candidates are not using paragraphs in the longer responses, making it difficult for Examiners to see where points begin and end. The 'point per paragraph' structure is thus recommended. Candidates would benefit from centres teaching discrete essay writing skills and techniques for the 'part e' questions to try and rectify this as 'range' is one of the key factors considered by the examining team when awarding their mark.

A surprising number of candidates struggled to access questions when they did not understand the key term in the question (e.g. patterns of educational achievement, ethnicity, rehabilitation, use the media etc.). As the key terms in the questions will be drawn directly from the specification, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these in their examination preparation. Some candidates could not score any marks at all for some questions because of this issue.

Candidates should be encouraged to use the marks per question as guidance for how much is to 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. Time needs to be better managed in order to maximise the marks awarded.

Command words are crucial. In the **part (b)** questions, for example, some answers were insufficiently developed (remember that the command word is to 'describe'), so the candidate was unable to achieve full marks even though it was evident that they possessed some relevant knowledge. Similar issues were seen in questions c-e.

General comments

For the May 2021 marking session entries were fewer than normal due to the Covid-19 pandemic and thus are perhaps not typical of usual trends and performance. *Section A* (Family) was the most popular option answered, followed by *Section B* (Education) and *Section C* (Crime). The least answered option was *Section D* (Media) where the examining team saw very few responses.

It was encouraging to see that some relevant contemporary, global and localised examples were well used alongside the more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify and substantiate several of the points made. These were all duly credited with the 'LNK' annotation.

Very few rubric errors were seen in the examination session, allowing most candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number or incorrectly numbered their answers, though, and centres would be advised to ensure candidates are aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

There was a good range of answers produced, with marks awarded across the full spread of marks. In the **part (a)** question, candidates should look to include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a really useful way of adding a second element to an answer and are thus to be encouraged. **Part (b)** needs **two** distinctly different points with some development – candidates should separate these and label them clearly for the Examiner. In **part (c)** questions make sure there are more than two sociological points made, evidenced and developed. For **part (d)** adopt the same approach as for **(c)** but develop ideas further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts 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 be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Aim for three points for and three 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 about and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible (use reading time to plan this). Scoring well on the 15 mark questions obviously helps to boost the overall marks on the paper for candidates so is thus really important. 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 this session but ultimately this is the candidates' own decision to make.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Family

(a) Most candidates were able to answer this well, although a few suggested roles were shared. Good answers mainly defined the term 'traditional conjugal roles' as segregated roles, frequently specifying men as breadwinners and women as housewives/taking care of the family. Less successful candidates sometimes rehashed the terms from the question and thus could not score any marks as no sociological knowledge was demonstrated.

(b) The majority of the responses described at least one way in which families may not be symmetrical. Some of the most frequently made points were about the domestic division of labour, dual/triple burden and single parent families.

(c) There were some excellent answers focusing on the effects on women and a change from extended to nuclear families. Typical points made and developed included, smaller family sizes, an increase in DINK families, more or less child-centred families, a rise in beanpole families, a

breakdown in marriages and/or women being able to become breadwinners/have careers. Some candidates misunderstood the question and focused on reasons why birth rates are falling.

(d) A lot of sociological knowledge was displayed in this answer as the majority of candidates felt able to write about the impact of feminism; the key to success was ensuring that they linked this to the changing roles of men which more able candidates did well. Less successful candidates still accessed marks on this question as they could write generally about men doing more housework and being more emotionally open than previously. Furthermore, a few candidates described rather than explained the changes in men's roles and therefore failed to gain marks in the highest band or even Band 2.

(e) Some answers showed uncertainty about the meaning of ethnicity. There was a tendency to fall back on stereotypes and not to recognise hybridity, the multicultural nature of many societies or the positive and growing presence of inter-ethnic relationships. Despite this, many successful answers were seen where some candidates discussed ethnicity in general, while others concentrated more on specific ethnic groups, primarily the African Caribbean and/or South Asian ethnic groups. The less successful answers were not organized into paragraphs, offering undeveloped or underdeveloped points as well as common-sense arguments. The evaluation side of the question was generally handled better with discussions of, for example, gender, social class and age.

Section B

Question 2

Education

(a) There was some repetition of terms in the question seen, which failed to gain marks – conformity. Most candidates, however, were able to use appropriate synonyms and thus demonstrate relevant understanding.

(b) This was, perhaps surprisingly, poorly answered by many. Candidates did not understand that 'patterns' was directing them to make points about achievement by, for example, social class, gender or ethnicity.

(c) More able candidates could easily identify aspects of the culture of masculinity and apply them to the question appropriately. Less successful candidates were often very general and simply listed the differences between males and females in education without picking up of aspects of the culture of masculinity at all.

(d) Many candidates provided a range of valid reasons to explain why there are different types of schools. In general, candidates discussed the reasons for specific types of schools such as state, private, faith, single-sex schools, etc. Some responses also included special schools and/or primary and secondary levels of schooling. The better answers used theory well in support of their points, Marxism in particular. Less successful candidates tended merely to describe different types of schools.

(e) This question proved accessible to all with both sides of the question often covered well, with good use of theories to support points made by the better candidates. Functionalism, Marxism and feminism were all well applied. Most candidates could comfortably discuss the fact that free education is available in most places around the world on the one hand and in evaluation they could identify that class/gender/ethnicity were barriers to fairness.

Section C

Question 3

Crime, deviance and social control

(a) Some candidates answered this question correctly, defining 'stigma' as a negative label linked to the person's self-image. However, a number of candidates provided more partial answers e.g., 'a label' or sometimes misunderstood the term and so were unable to score any marks.

(b) Most candidates had at least one example that they could describe, such as community service or treatment for drug addiction. Prison as punishment or deterrent was the most common incorrect answer. The better answers focused on treatment and training programs, victim-offender meetings, community service and work/education schemes.

(c) This was an accessible question for most candidates which produced some answers lacking in concepts but also some strong answers referring to, for example, Cohen's status frustration, Marx, Merton's strain theory, relative deprivation and the pressures of consumer society. Less successful candidates could identify that being without money/resources led some people to commit crimes but then repeated this idea in different words in their other points which limited the marks awarded.

(d) Some candidates explained functionalist views of crime in impressive detail; Durkheim, Merton and the New Right were frequently covered. Most candidates related it to socialisation and social control. The better answers linked the functionalist view with value consensus, social change, job creation, and the idea that a certain amount of crime is necessary in the society. Some, however, were not clear as to what constituted functionalist explanations and thus simply described general reasons such as poverty which could not be credited.

(e) The question was accessible to most candidates and thus many good answers were seen. Many answers were stronger on the evaluation side, able to suggest a range of reasons for underreporting and under recording of crime but struggled to explain in what ways the official crime statistics can be accurate. Candidates that integrated their knowledge from research methods, however, used conceptual terms such as validity and representativeness well. There was also some uncertainty about the statistics, how they are produced and the role of the police, with some answers confusing the statistics with victimisation or self-report studies and with survey or interview research.

Section D

Question 4

Media

Note: few Examiners marked more than a few scripts answering this question, so these generalisations are perhaps a little questionable.

(a) Several candidates did not seem clear what was meant by the term, others described it in rather general and unspecific terms. It was not well answered with few candidates getting two different elements to their answer.

(b) Candidates were typically able to identify and describe at least one way globalisation has affected the media, the most common idea being that of communication across the world.

(c) This produced some 'common sense' answers with candidates finding it difficult to make points about specific ethnic groups and their media usage. Some candidates did not talk about media use at all and instead focused on representations of ethnicity which could not be credited.

(d) This was an accessible question but there were few high-level answers seen, with a lack of relevant concepts being commonplace. Un/under-developed points were typical and the effects of gender representations were rarely fully considered e.g. impact upon careers, status, body image, inequality, sexualisation etc.

(e) While some candidates presented a few valid reasons to support or refute the argument, including references to the hypodermic syringe or other media effects models, most answers were rather vague and confused with undeveloped and/or underdeveloped points and often failed to reach higher than Band 2. Disappointingly few pertinent examples were seen in these responses.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/24
Paper 24

Key messages

It is essential that candidates read question wording carefully and realise the significance of terms used. This showed itself particularly with **Questions 1(c)** 'polygamy', **1(d)** 'ethnicity', **2(a)** 'post-compulsory', **2(d)** 'setting and streaming' and **3(b)** 'victim surveys'.

Question (e) requires a debate – for and against developed points, with a conclusion. Several one-sided **(e)** answers were seen which hindered the marks awarded. It is also crucial to specifically address the question asked – in some cases a lot had been written by candidates but it was not answering the particular question set and so could not be credited.

Some candidates still repeat questions in an opening paragraph or spend too long on definitions or historical context before starting to address the question. This may help candidates prepare to answer the longer questions but is unlikely to gain any marks and may mean that they run out of time before the end of the question paper. Best advice is to get straight into the main body of the answer.

Candidates should be encouraged to show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. There was a tendency in this series at times for ideas to be expressed without explicitly doing this.

Candidates should spend time thinking about what the questions are asking and planning answers to those specific questions in their suggested 15 minutes of reading time – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidate's remain focused on the specific demands of the question.

Some candidates are not using paragraphs in the longer responses, making it difficult for Examiners to see where points begin and end. The 'point per paragraph' structure is thus recommended. Candidates would benefit from centres teaching discrete essay writing skills and techniques for the '**part (e)**' questions to try and rectify this as 'range' is one of the key factors considered by the examining team when awarding their mark.

A surprising number of candidates struggled to access questions when they did not understand the key term in the question (e.g. polygamy, ethnicity, post-compulsory education, setting and streaming, victim surveys). As the key terms in the questions will be drawn directly from the specification, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these in their examination preparation. Some candidates could not score any marks at all for some questions because of this issue.

Candidates should be encouraged to use the marks per question as guidance for how much is to 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. Time needs to be better managed in order to maximise the marks awarded.

Command words are crucial. In the **part (b)** questions, for example, some answers were insufficiently developed (remember that the command word is to 'describe'), so the candidate was unable to achieve full marks even though it was evident that they possessed some relevant knowledge. Similar issues were seen in **Questions (c) – (e)**.

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General comments

For the May 2021 marking session entries solely from Mauritius, a one-off paper due to the ongoing global pandemic. **Section A** (Family) was the most popular option by far, followed by **Section B** (Education) and **Section C** (Crime). The least answered option was **Section D** (Media) where the examining team saw virtually no responses.

It was encouraging to see that some relevant contemporary, global and localised examples were well used alongside the more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify and substantiate several of the points made. These were all duly credited with the 'LNK' annotation.

Very few rubric errors were seen in the examination session, allowing most candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number or incorrectly numbered their answers, though, and centres would be advised to ensure candidates are aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

There was a good range of answers produced, with marks awarded across the full spread of marks. In the **part (a)** question, candidates should look to include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a really useful way of adding a second element to an answer and are thus to be encouraged. **Part (b)** needs **two** distinctly different points – candidates should separate these and label them clearly for the Examiner. In **part (c)** questions make sure there are more than two sociological points made, evidenced and developed. For **part (d)** adopt the same approach as for **(c)** but develop ideas further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts 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 be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Aim for three points for and three 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 about and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible (use reading time to plan this). Scoring well on the 15 mark questions obviously helps to boost the overall marks on the paper for candidates so is thus really important. 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 this session but ultimately this is the candidates' own decision to make.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Family

(a)   Most candidates answered the question correctly, linking the term 'family functions' to roles the family plays, also providing examples such as (primary) socialisation or reproduction. A number of responses, however, repeated the word 'functions' and/or gave vague definitions and/or more general and/or descriptive examples, such as 'the mother performing the expressive role' or 'taking care of children.'

(b)   Most candidates were able to identify two points, often relating ideas to extended and nuclear families in their description. Often candidates wrote about finance, privacy and emotional support/conflict as well as childcare and support. Those who did not score marks had often not commented on family size – crucial to the question.

(c)   Less successful answers assumed there would be abuse and/or divorce in polygamous relationships. More successful answers discussed issues in relationships, wealth, negotiation of roles and childcare and the possibility of conflict/jealousy. Polygyny and polyandry were frequently referred to, and links to the Nayar, Tibet or Islamic countries were made by a number of candidates. Many candidates were not aware that these are the acceptable family structures is some areas and can have advantages. Some misunderstood the question as being about extramarital affairs or serial monogamy and thus could not gain credit.

(d)   There were many answers that were unaware of what is meant by 'ethnicity' or were unable to relate ethnicity to family diversity. There were also a higher than usual proportion of 'no responses'. There were, however, some excellent answers seen, mainly using examples such as Afro-Caribbean or South Asian families in the UK and focused on the differences in their families/family structures and roles. Answers referring to the candidates' own country were also well used and will always be rewarded.

(e)   Many answers spent time discussing what happened in the past (usually pre-industrial) and did not always follow this up to answer the question by considering <u>changes</u> in the role of children. This resulted in the examining team seeing several one sided responses arguing that children's roles had changed but not considering the counter argument – that they have not changed. Answers also often discussed children in general terms (for example, lack of respect for adults) rather than focusing on their roles. There were also some digressions into the role of adult children, and into changes to parental roles. Better answers used concepts such as social construction, mini-adults and child-centredness well. Issues such as power, child abuse, necessity for children to work in some societies were used well in order to argue against the idea of changing children's roles.

Section B

Question 2

Education

(a)   There was some repetition of terms in the question seen, which failed to gain marks. The word 'compulsory' was better understood than 'post' on the whole. An example, such as university, helped many gain some credit.

(b)   While some candidates accurately identified and described two features of formal education, referring to factors such as an official curriculum, a syllabus that is taught by teachers, formal assessment/examinations, a classroom and/or school setting, the less successful responses described features of informal learning, stressing aspects of the hidden curriculum and secondary socialisation in general, thus failing to receive full if any marks.

(c)   Candidates understood the question, but some struggled to move beyond common sense and to apply sociological ideas and concepts. There were some unsuccessful answers to this question seen, with many candidates defining socialisation and then discussing it in family life. For those that did discuss education and the hidden curriculum it was often in relation to control through punishments. Better answers discussed ideas such as gender roles, respect and preparation for the workplace through accepting hierarchy.

(d)   This was not generally well-answered. Some candidates did not understand the terms setting and streaming and thus were unable to score highly. Better candidates however were able to discuss the issues in relation to labelling, low teacher expectations, self-fulfilling prophecy and anti-school subcultures, often bringing in points about social class and/or ethnicity as well.

(e)   This question, perhaps, contained some of the stronger responses across the question range. A vast majority of candidates demonstrated valid knowledge of the different types of schools that could influence an individual's experience of education and used some well chosen and specific examples to substantiate points made. Links to experiences of education were typically less successful, however. Some candidates provided balanced answers, offering a range of valid sociological arguments for both sides of the debate. Candidates who looked at other factors evaluated successfully by explaining, for example, material deprivation, gender role reproduction and teacher labelling well with some good use of concepts and studies. There were, however, a number of one-sided answers that could then, not go above Band 2. The less successful answers failed to identify the different types of schools, generally categorising them in broad, unspecified terms (such as better and worse ones).

Section C

Question 3

Crime, deviance and social control

(a) Successful answers usually referred to organisations or companies, giving an example of a possible corporate crime committed such as fraud. Some candidates did not define corporate crimes instead they were defining white-collar crimes where the crime committed benefited the individual rather than the company.

(b) Most candidates were able to identify at least one problem with using victim surveys to measure crime. Issues with validity and reliability of data, relying on memories of the respondents and the unwillingness to discuss particular crimes (e.g. sexual) were referred to most frequently. Nevertheless, there were a number of vague and/or confused responses that discussed the reporting of crime in more general terms and suggested that candidates were actually talking about the crime statistics. These could not be credited.

(c) Most candidates were able to identify which agencies or institutions were formal and informal. Many candidates then compared techniques used by the agencies as well as punishments and sanctions given. Not all directly compared the two terms, lading to some juxtaposition – typically scoring in band 1. Comments on formal control tended to be stronger and better developed of the two.

(d) Candidates generally answered this question well, discussing for example poverty, status frustration, labelling/targeting by police/stereotypes and socialisation as reasons for criminals coming from the working class. Concepts and studies were often were well used to substantiate points made. A small number of candidates mistook the term 'working class' for upper or middle class meaning answers were not generally creditable.

(e) Some answers misunderstood the question and tried to evaluate by considering positive and negative ways that the media can affect crime – this is a one sided answer as it is only arguing the crime and deviance are affected by the media not that they are not. Better answers to the question often applied models of media effects (such as the hypodermic syringe) to crime and used concepts such as stereotyping, moral panics, self-fulfilling prophecy etc. to exemplify their points. They also discussed different media or a range of media (for example, social/new media as well as traditional news media). Some candidates presented confused and undeveloped points that could not be highly credited.

Section D

Question 4

Media

These comments should be treated with caution as so few media scripts were seen by the examining team during this session.

(a) There was a tendency to vagueness in the creditable answers seen with few candidates getting two different elements to their answer.

(b) This question was answered quite well, with candidates identifying and sometimes describing two stereotypical representations of young people in the media, focusing on how they are frequently portrayed in a negative light.

(c) Some candidates demonstrated understanding of the differences between public service broadcasting and privately owned media. Others, however, offered descriptions which were juxtaposed with no explicit differences shown or clearly did not understand the terms or their significance.

(d)   The majority of the candidates who answered this question were able to provide one or more reasons to explain why new media is extremely popular, referring to interactivity, two-way process, globalisation, portability etc. Whereas the more successful responses offered some sociological engagement, the less successful ones were largely common sense.

(e)   While some candidates presented a few valid reasons to support or refute the argument, including references to the hypodermic syringe or other media effects models as well as different sociological perspectives, most answers were rather vague and confused with undeveloped and/or underdeveloped points and failed to reach higher than Band 2.