

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- For **Question 1(c)** candidates should make an explicit reference to the source which they can then go on to develop through description.
- In **Questions 1(a)** and **1(b)**, candidates are asked to 'identify' something, they should keep answers short as long descriptions or explanations are not required.
- In **Question (f)** candidates should concentrate on making positive points rather than engaging in negative evaluation in order to answer the question.
- Candidates need to be clear about questions which ask them to describe the 'ways' in which something is done, as in **Question 2(b)**. Candidates should describe this in terms of 'how' rather than 'what', in this case how the hidden curriculum is taught.
- In questions which refer to modern industrial societies, candidates should keep comments about the past to a minimum.
- It remains the case that candidates do not need to spend time defining key terms in the question before beginning their answers.
- More confident students should practice writing evaluative rather than summative conclusions in which they make a judgement about the 'extent' to which the claim in the question is correct.

General comments

Candidates showed a very good level of engagement with the question paper and the assessment objectives. Many candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and theory. Many were able to apply this knowledge well to the demands of the questions. In essay responses more successful candidates demonstrated their evaluation skills by examining other perspectives and going beyond comparing arguments for and against. Most candidates were able to discuss several strengths and limitations of methods. Methodological issues such as stratified sampling and concepts such as reliability proved to be more challenging. Use of the source for the relevant questions in **Question 1** was once again variable (see key messages). The option 'Culture, identity and socialisation' was more popular than 'Social Inequality', but in both candidates showed a good grasp of the key theories, ideas, concepts and arguments and many used these to good effect. There were very few rubric errors but a relatively high number of non-responses on the more extended questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify the two reasons why the researchers needed to gain the trust of the male students. A small number of candidates identified reasons not taken from the source, such as 'to get valid answers'. In addition, a few candidates wrote at too much length for a 2 mark 'identify' question.
- (b) Most candidates were able to correctly identify two methods that could be used to study students' behaviour and attitudes. A small but significant number of candidates wrote descriptions or justifications of their choices which was not required. A few candidates referred to observation which was not creditworthy as the question asked for methods 'apart from observation'.

- (c) This question drew some good quality answers focusing on the ability of longitudinal studies to achieve an in-depth understanding of the boys, to monitor changes in their situation across time or identify the factors leading to such changes. Some candidates wrote in purely generic terms about why longitudinal studies may be used, rather than basing their points on information in the source. A few candidates copied out the aim of Willis' study without further elaboration.
- (d) The most successful candidates showed a clear understanding of stratified sampling and were able to link this to its key strengths such as its representativeness and the ability to avoid the over-representation of some populations in the sample. Less successful candidates described stratified sampling but found it more challenging to describe the strengths. A significant number were able to describe one strength for example representativeness and generalisability. A few candidates appeared less secure in their knowledge of stratified sampling and some candidates confused stratified sampling with other sampling methods, such as random sampling, citing an 'equal chance to be chosen'.
- (e) Many candidates responded well to this question with most able to develop a range of strengths and weaknesses of using unstructured interviews. Less successful candidates needed to be able to accurately use the concepts of validity and reliability and qualitative and quantitative data.
- (f) The most successful answers to this question were characterised by a clear focus on several reasons why researchers use participant observation which were then developed conceptually, by reference to validity, or verstehen and empathy, or by reference to studies such as Ventakesh. Overall, many candidates found this question a challenge in terms of focusing their attention on the 'participant' aspect of observation. Some less successful candidates concentrated largely on describing overt and covert observation, often contrasting these approaches without linking to the fact that researchers are participating in the groups they are studying. Some candidates drifted into discussions around the disadvantages of participation.
- (g) Many candidates responded well to the demands of this question demonstrating a sound understanding of the debate between interpretivism and positivism or structuralism. More successful candidates made a range of points on both sides of the debate and were able to link these to sociological concepts in an impressive way. Stronger answers went beyond mere description of the approaches and clearly identified criticisms and strengths which linked back to the question. Many candidates attempted to draw a conclusion though often these summarised the arguments presented rather than evaluating them. Less successful candidates wrote list-like answers with a limited range of points with some candidates needing to be more secure in their understanding of the concepts of validity and reliability.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates were able to define the hidden curriculum and make links to the informal teaching of norms and values. Examples such as punctuality and conformity were also used. Less successful candidates referred to school subjects and learning at home.
- (b) Whilst many candidates responded well to this question, a significant number of responses focused on what is transmitted via the hidden curriculum rather than the ways in which it is taught. Good examples of ways in which the hidden curriculum is taught in schools included via teacher expectations, rules and regulations and guidance into gendered subject choices.
- (c) Many candidates were well prepared for this question on how primary socialisation affects an individual's gender identity. More successful candidates often drew on the work of Ann Oakley and developed an explanation of concepts such as canalisation, manipulation and verbal appellation. These were generally well described with examples. Less successful candidates needed to link back to masculinity or femininity to make the link between their concepts and the question more explicit. Some candidates only focused on primary socialisation and/or a lack of socialisation rather than focusing upon gender. Other responses drifted into a discussion of families socialising boys and girls into the 'opposite gender' and a small number of candidates misunderstood the question and referred to socialisation in education and by peer groups.
- (d) Many candidates found the question of how social control leads to social conformity a challenge. Many responses demonstrated some knowledge and understanding of social control and

conformity – often successfully explaining rewards and sanctions. Less successful candidates needed to fully address the question of why one leads to the other. The most successful responses cited examples such as prison and then explained why this leads to conformity via a discussion of the fear of prison acting as a deterrent, or conforming in education due to the impact of positive sanctions which mean that students want to repeat 'good' actions.

- (e) Many candidates responded well and were able to engage in an interesting debate about changing gender identities, deploying appropriate knowledge and understanding. The most successful candidates produced a balanced debate with range, detail and conceptual knowledge. In favour of changing gender identities many candidates made intelligent links to feminism, equal opportunities legislation, the rise of the 'new man' and better opportunities and outcomes for women in both education and work. Arguments against changing gender identities included references to discrimination in various areas of social life, such as education, the workplace and the family, and the continuation of traditional gender socialisation. Some candidates needed to fully understand the requirements of the question and refer to modern industrial societies rather than past and/or traditional societies. In some responses only a one-sided response was offered, usually focusing on the fact that gender identities are changing. Less successful responses were also often characterised by arguments that confused gender with sexuality/sexual orientation and some candidates spent time discussing issues such as same sex marriage which was not relevant to the question.

Section C

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates were able to give a clear definition of the 'glass ceiling', often in terms of an unseen barrier preventing the upward mobility of women. Some candidates also referred to other minority groups and were rewarded appropriately.
- (b) This question drew a mixed response. More successful candidates correctly described features such as inequalities in income and wealth, education, health, housing and the workplace. Candidates who were less successful often strayed from discussing social class and instead talked about features of gender or ethnic inequality.
- (c) In this question candidates were asked to explain how feminism has challenged gender inequality. Many candidates were able to discuss changes in the role of women in society, e.g. better opportunities in education and increased social mobility in the workplace. More successful candidates were also able to apply their knowledge and understanding of feminism to the changes in the social position and status of women and how feminist campaigns, legal changes and awareness raising have challenged gender inequality. Less successful candidates needed to apply the reasons for the changes in the position of women to the impact of feminism.
- (d) Many candidates gave good responses to this question as they were able to discuss a range of reasons linked to issues with female education, traditional expectations about women's role as housewife and mother, overt discrimination, patriarchy/sexism and the glass ceiling. Less successful candidates needed to fully develop their answers by referencing high status jobs rather than concentrating on describing difficulties with women's social position.
- (e) This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which ethnicity is the most important factor in determining a person's life chances. Many candidates focused on a discussion of the types of discrimination that are faced by ethnic minorities such as education, jobs, crime, healthcare, etc. Many candidates were also able to present a two-sided response drawing upon arguments suggesting that either gender, social class and/or age are arguably more important than ethnicity in determining life chances. More successful answers fully developed their arguments in paragraphs. Less successful candidates needed a clearer understanding of ethnicity and how it compares to other factors which determine a person's life chances. Some candidates could have used knowledge that they had demonstrated elsewhere to enhance their response. The most successful candidates attempted to address the 'to what extent' aspect of the question in their conclusion.

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Paper 2251/13
Paper 13

Key messages

- For **Question 1(f)** encourage candidates to fully develop a range of points in paragraphs.
- In both option sections candidates should be encouraged to be clearer about a range of ways in which ethnicity is a source of both social identity and social inequality.
- In option questions **(c)**, **(d)** and **(e)** candidates should try to improve the skill of developing their points in distinct paragraphs. This could be making the point, explaining it and giving an example to illustrate.
- In essay-style questions encourage more confident candidates to develop at least six good quality points to enable them to access the highest mark band. These should be organised in a relatively balanced way.

General comments

Overall candidates found the question paper accessible and many responded well to each section. Many candidates were generally well prepared to discuss the strengths and limitations of both research methods and approaches. Responses linked to the source material showed improvement from last year. **Question 2** was a more popular choice than **Question 3** in the option section. In both questions, however, many candidates demonstrated solid exam technique in terms of the way responses were structured. There were relatively few non-responses and only a small minority of candidates appeared to run out of time. Moreover, conceptual and theoretical knowledge in some candidate responses was impressive. Many candidates are also able to apply their knowledge holistically and this is very good to see. Where candidates scored in the lower grade ranges this was often linked to brief responses which did not make enough points to score in the higher mark bands in the option questions.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Candidates answered this question well. Many responses scored full marks with the most popular answers identifying closed and open questions. Others listed pre-coded and multiple-choice questions. Students who failed to score on this question usually gave examples of questions asked rather than types of question.
- (b) Many candidates gained full marks here. A range of primary methods were identified. Occasionally candidates only identified one primary method or identified qualitative or quantitative data or a type of sampling as a primary method.
- (c) In general, this was a well answered question. Candidates who scored the best marks on this question drew both of their points directly from the source and then unpacked this through description. Many students successfully identified information about the sample from the source and then described why it posed a problem in terms of representativeness. Most answers linked to the sample size being too small and the proportion of goths versus punks. Some candidates did not develop the descriptions and hence only achieved a maximum of two marks. A minority misunderstood the idea of representativeness and focused instead on validity issues with the questions.

- (d) This question was answered well overall with many candidates being able to identify and describe two clear strengths of using quantitative data in research. More successful answers focused on the idea that statistics can be generated which allow for comparisons and that it allows for relatively easy analysis by conversion to graphs and charts. Answers which scored less well either only made one point or were vague in the formulation of their points, e.g. suggesting that all quantitative data is representative.
- (e) The question about the strengths and limitations of secondary data drew a generally good response from candidates. The most successful answers described strengths such as that it saves time and cost for researchers and that it is a good way to access large scale studies and statistics. Limitations included the fact that the validity of the research is often difficult to assess and that statistics can often be biased. Answers that scored relatively few marks were either vague in terms of pinpointing strengths and limitations or confused in their descriptions.
- (f) This question asked candidates to explain why qualitative data can be useful in research. Candidates who scored in the top mark band made at least three developed conceptual points. Commonly candidates linked qualitative data to interpretivism, validity and depth and detail and often referred to primary methods to illustrate points. Whilst most candidates scored marks for identifying correct points some were too brief and only partially developed. Many candidates scored in the middle bands because they tended towards description of qualitative data sources, only partially addressing the 'why' element in the question. A small minority misinterpreted the question and focused on quantitative data or spent time evaluating negative aspects of qualitative data which were not creditworthy.
- (g) In the essay-style question many candidates showed a sound knowledge of bias in sociological research. The best responses identified and developed a range of points both for and against the view, drawing on sociological language throughout. Many compared qualitative with quantitative data or interpretivist with positivist approaches and evaluated methods that are most and least susceptible to bias. An effective and evaluative conclusion at the end was needed to reach full marks though relatively few candidates achieved this. Popular points in favour of all research being biased included the inevitability of researcher values creating bias and methods such as participant observation affecting the objectivity of the researcher or interviews generating an Interviewer Effect. Points against often focused on the importance of a neutral approach linked to methods like self-completion questionnaires and surveys where no researcher may be present to influence the data gathered. A few candidates argued for a triangulation of approaches as a 'best fit' solution. Candidates who scored less well either failed to make enough points and/or only partially developed their points.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) This question was answered well with most candidates gaining both marks by describing groups of young people with distinct norms and values from the mainstream.
- (b) This question was generally well answered, and many candidates scored full marks. Some approached the issue of why males join sub-cultures by describing how some rebel and reject the norms and values of the dominant culture, whilst others described how sub-cultures act as safety valve and a source of identity. Candidates who scored less well often did not develop the description once a point had been made or failed to link the point to males.
- (c) This question about how the peer group functions as an agency of socialisation was answered best by candidates who were able to explain a range of points linked to the teaching of key norms and values, social control through peer pressure, the threat of ostracism and other negative and positive sanctions. Candidates who scored in the middle band usually made less than three developed points.
- (d) This question asked candidates to explain why socialisation is important for both individuals and society. It proved to be very accessible and drew a variety of points. Some candidates approached the question by explaining techniques used by different agencies such as the family in primary socialisation, the importance of informal and formal social control for both individuals and/or society. Many candidates included a discussion of feral children as an example of why socialisation remains important. Candidates who scored the highest marks developed at least three good quality

points, including sociological language. Candidates who achieved fewer marks tended to leave points only partially developed in terms of the question.

- (e) This question focused on the issue as to whether ethnicity is the main influence on social identity. Many candidates found it difficult to marshal arguments in favour of ethnicity being a prime source of social identity and a few candidates misunderstood the concept of ethnicity. As a result, some responses were unbalanced. Arguments in favour of ethnicity included that it was often linked to inequality and discrimination in various areas of social life. In evaluation common responses were that other social characteristics such as gender, age and social class were more important. Other sources of evaluation were status and social identity achieved through association to different peer groups and employment positions. Candidates who scored highly often drew upon theories including feminism, Marxism and functionalism. Candidates that performed less well on this question tended to write list-like answers with only partial development. Conclusions, where present, often did make a judgement but this was not usually well justified using the evidence from their essay.

Section C

Question 3

- (a) The best responses on this question defined racial prejudice terms of actions based on a person's ethnicity or race. Some candidates gave an example or repeated the term 'discrimination' in their definition which meant that they were therefore limited to one mark.
- (b) Candidates who gained full marks here described examples ways in which status can be ascribed via gender or ethnicity and sometimes royal status. Where candidates only scored one or two marks it was invariably due to only identifying one-way status is ascribed or making one valid point but then a second which was vague, for example simply linking social class status as ascribed. Candidates who specified stratification such as the caste system or apartheid were duly rewarded.
- (c) This question drew a generally good response with some candidates having a clear grasp of how ageism is experienced by individuals. The best responses focused on discrimination linked to the elderly in terms of the workplace and stereotypes about inability to use technology and youth being denied jobs and being labelled and targeted by police. Some failed to give enough range to get higher band marks and some were restricted due to lack of development. The best candidates focused on making at least 3 appropriate, developed points. A minority of candidates did less well because responses were short, only partially developed and/or irrelevant to the issue of ageism.
- (d) This question proved challenging because there were several factors to take into consideration, namely power, ethnicity and life chances. Candidates who scored the highest marks often made several insightful points about powerless minorities suffering discrimination and social exclusion across various areas of society such as education, health, housing and jobs. Candidates who scored mid-range marks often made only two points one of which was only partially developed. A few candidates used ethnicity interchangeably with social class or interpreted the whole question as to be about class.
- (e) The essay drew some sophisticated arguments from some candidates who were very well equipped to deal with a debate about the extent to which social class is the main cause of social inequality. Arguments for were well linked to Marxist theory, poverty and the lack of evidence for social mobility. Popular evaluation points included the idea of meritocracy and the importance of achieved status, often linked with functionalism, along with equal opportunities legislation and the welfare state allowing people to be better educated and hence more able to access higher paid jobs. On the whole essay technique and structure was good – the discriminating factor in the mark range was heavily linked to having enough range of developed, conceptual points for and against, ideally with a conclusion that reflected thoughtfully on the evidence presented.

SOCIOLOGY

<p>Paper 2251/22 Paper 22</p>

Key messages

More candidates this session showed understanding that **Question (e)** requires a debate – a range of for and against points with a conclusion. There were fewer one sided (**e**) answers than in the past sessions which is great to see. It would be advisable for candidates to try to counter the points on the ‘for’ side and specifically address the question asked.

A number of candidates still repeat questions in their opening paragraph or spend too long on definitions or historical context before starting to address the specific question asked. This may help candidates prepare to answer the question but is unlikely to gain any marks and can often result in timing issues across the paper.

Candidates should take care that what they write specifically addresses the issues raised in the question – several examiners commented that candidates were often failing to score additional marks because they were just describing and writing about sociology or topic areas generally rather than answering the specific question set. This will never result in a high mark being awarded and so should be avoided.

Candidates should aim to refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts where relevant; using sociological terms will raise the overall quality of the candidate’s answer and will allow access to those marks awarded for sociological/conceptual engagement if done accurately.

Candidates should spend time thinking about the question and planning answers and should use their designated 15 minutes of reading time – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidates 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 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. alternatives to the family, vocationalism, dark figure of crime, audience selection 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. Many students did not get 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. Some candidates, for example, 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 in some cases, the candidate was unable to achieve full marks even though it was evident that they possessed some relevant knowledge, unless they ‘described’ in detail and gave examples where possible.

General comments

For the November 2019 marking session, **Section A** (Family) was by far the most popular option, followed by **Section B** (Education). **Section C** (Crime) was also answered by a significant number of candidates. The least answered option was **Section D** (Media) which included a higher number of less successful responses across all sub-questions.

There were a significant number of excellent candidate responses seen by the examining team, demonstrating not only very strong sociological knowledge and understanding but also a clear awareness of the requirements and demands of the examination. This was most encouraging to see. Many candidates are thinking sociologically in terms of theory, concepts, studies and evidence and are successfully applying their classroom knowledge to the specific examination questions set. Relevant contemporary, global and localised examples were seen alongside the more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify several of the points made. These were all duly credited.

There were several 'common sense' answers seen this session which is disappointing. The sociological approach, guided by the syllabus content, needs to be carefully covered in order to allow candidates to demonstrate their abilities and knowledge.

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 available 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 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 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. Each point should be directly focused upon what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. 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) Many candidates provided the correct definition of 'matriarchy'. Those candidates who got it wrong typically described matriarchy as 'equality between the spouses' or confused it with patriarchy. Some answers were vague as to control over men/children/family and were thus classed as partial.
- (b) Many candidates across both variants did not understand what was meant by an 'alternative to the family' and gave as answers other types of family (e.g. single parent, cohabiting). The most common correct answers were communes, sharing with friends and living alone (singlehood).
- (c) Some excellent answers were seen here. Candidates understood primary socialisation and were able to explain how primary socialisation led to social conformity using well thought out examples and concepts. However, there were some candidates whose answers focused mostly on the description of primary socialisation rather than how this led to conformity.
- (d) There were a wide range of marks awarded for this question. Many answers unfortunately lacked sociological terminology and conceptual engagement and typically scored within band 2. Many candidates described the functions of family instead of the importance of marriage which can only be partially credited. The best answers matched lots of the mark scheme e.g. functionalist view, cohabitation leading to marriage, civil partnerships, changing legislation, religious importance etc.

- (e) The vast majority of candidates were able to access this question well – less successful candidates gained marks looking at the ‘for’ side, and discussing problems with the single parent family. Primary socialisation, social control and economic issues were frequently discussed. Candidates’ generally produced competent responses, making references to functionalists, feminists and the new right. Many though wasted time on introductions explaining why there were more single parents or more divorce.

Section B

Question 2

Education

- (a) The vast majority of candidates who answered to this question provided a partial definition of the ‘culture of masculinity’. Candidates found it difficult to give a complete definition. Some repeated parts of the question – culture or masculinity – and few made it to male characteristics/behaviour. Many thus gained only one mark here.
- (b) A large proportion of candidates did not understand ‘gratification’ and wrote for example about labelling and streaming instead, particularly in the 2251 variant. Those who did understand provided very good, accurate definitions and were duly rewarded.
- (c) Many candidates managed to identify and describe different functions of education. However, some candidates failed to relate the functions to the good functioning of society, as per the question. This was a question providing a range of possible answers; the main ones seen in answers were: social control, hidden curriculum and gaining qualifications for a job. Some of the best candidates understood ‘sifting and sorting’ (seeing employment from a societal rather than an individual view) and value consensus through e.g. national flag and anthem.
- (d) This was a very mixed question. There were some top-quality answers seen but many others did not know what the term meant and confused it with vacations or voice training. Some of the better answers showed good knowledge of vocational education in their own country through well-chosen examples (usually Mauritian centres).
- (e) The question was explicitly focused on gender and thus where candidates talked generally about social class, ethnicity etc. they could not be rewarded. The importance of reading the question carefully and using reading time to plan and prepare answers really is essential as this question demonstrated. A general awareness of the issues were shown by many candidates, but a significant minority wanted this to be a question about gender discrimination in the workplace and hardly or never mentioned the actual education system which limited the marks awarded. Most successful ‘for’ answers related the subject choice favoured by boys to high paying jobs, attitude of teachers, including deference to boys, high positions in schools as role models being mainly male; on the ‘against’ side changes towards equality, positive discrimination, female role models and high achievement and the positive attitude of girls compared to low achievement and poor attitude of boys were discussed.

Section C

Question 3

Crime, deviance and social control

- (a) There was some confusion about this term, with many partial answers being seen with some links to ‘doing crime’. The better answers defined it in terms of the breakdown of social bonds and shared values; a state of normlessness and chaos.
- (b) This question was well answered by those candidates who understood the term ‘dark figure of crime’ but unfortunately a number of candidates did not. The most common correct answers were crime not being reported or recorded - not reported because of embarrassment or fear of reprisals and not recorded because of the trivial nature of the offence. A few candidates wrote about the police being bribed or covering up crimes as well.

- (c) This question was well answered, with most answers showing good sociological knowledge of new internet crimes. This was a question that allowed some candidates who had considerable knowledge of internet crimes (which some even examiners might not have been aware of) to do well. There was a tendency to list rather than explain though, which should be avoided.
- (d) This was a generally well answered question, not just with common sense arguments but also through discussion of things like rehabilitation, punishment, public safety and deterrence. There was also some interesting use of sociological theory here, particularly functionalism and the reinforcing of moral boundaries, by the better candidates.
- (e) Most candidates were able to correctly interpret the term 'deprivation' – this could be economically, culturally or socially. This (e) question produced the most references to theorists (Merton, Cohen, Marxism etc.) and sociological terms (deviancy amplification, status frustration, strain, capitalist inequalities etc.). Some answers were better on the 'against' side, showing good knowledge of a range of alternative explanations for crime e.g. patriarchy, masculinity, postmodernism etc. Deprivation was stretched as a term to include lacking in almost anything, but better answers used sociological knowledge of material, cultural and relative deprivation very well indeed.

Section D

Question 4

Media

- (a) This question was well understood with most of the few candidates attempting this section getting both marks. Key points typically focused on media affects upon the audience being direct and immediate. Examples were also used.
- (b) This was not answered well with most candidates not knowing what was meant by the term 'audience selection'. Some candidates explained how the media influenced the audience instead of explaining how the audience were actively selecting media content.
- (c) This was a question on which most candidates had some knowledge but struggled to find enough to say. The best answers considered gender contrast in types of magazines/newspapers or the way television was watched/used. There was surprisingly little reference to video games and social media use in terms of gender differences.
- (d) Social media, citizen journalism and the instant availability of global news were the main ways of control outlined with surprisingly few mentions of interactivity seen. The majority of the candidates presented a few common-sense points with little sociological engagement or concepts used. A few of the answers additionally discussed traditional media but those points could not be credited.
- (e) This was a very accessible question which generated both common-sense and very sociological responses from the few candidates who selected the 'Media' option. There was some knowledge of the hypodermic syringe model put to good use but little use of other models of media effects. Some well-chosen examples were seen e.g. video nasties and gratuitous violence in film/TV.

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Paper 2251/23
Paper 23

Key messages

More candidates this session showed understanding that **Question (e)** requires a debate – a range of for and against points with a conclusion. There were fewer one sided (**e**) answers than in the past sessions which is great to see. There is a tendency, however, for more successful candidates to try on the ‘against’ side to go through every possible alternative to the theory or view given in the question. They would usually be better advised to try to counter the points on the ‘for’ side and specifically address the question asked.

A number of candidates still repeat questions in their opening paragraph or spend too long on definitions or historical context before starting to address the specific question asked. This may help candidates prepare to answer the question but is unlikely to gain any marks and can often result in timing issues across the paper.

Candidates should take care that what they write specifically addresses the issues raised in the question – several examiners commented that candidates were often failing to score additional marks because they were just describing and writing about sociology or topic areas generally rather than answering the specific question set. This will never result in a high mark being awarded and so should be avoided.

Candidates should aim to refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts where relevant; using sociological terms will raise the overall quality of the candidate’s answer and will allow access to those marks awarded for sociological/conceptual engagement if done accurately.

Candidates should spend time thinking about what questions are asking about 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 candidates 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 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. family diversity, selective education, moral panics, mass communication, 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. Many students did not get 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. Some candidates, for example, were writing as much for a part (**c**) question worth 6 marks as for a part (**e**) question worth 15 marks. 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.

General comments

For the November 2019 marking session, **Section A (Family)** was the most popular option, followed by **Section B (Education)** and **Section C (Crime)**. The least answered option was **Section D (Media)**.

There were a significant number of excellent candidate responses seen by the examining team, demonstrating not only very strong sociological knowledge and understanding but also a clear awareness of the requirements and demands of the examination. This was most encouraging to see. Many candidates are thinking sociologically in terms of theory, concepts, studies and evidence and are successfully applying their classroom knowledge to the specific examination questions set. Relevant contemporary, global and localised examples were seen alongside the more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify several of the points made. These were all duly credited.

There were also some 'common sense' answers seen which was a little disappointing. The sociological approach, guided by the specification content, needs to be carefully covered in order to allow candidates to best demonstrate their abilities and knowledge.

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 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 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. Each point should be directly focused upon what the question is asking about and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. 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 provided the correct definition of 'child-centeredness'. The main ideas covered referred to economic issues, decision making and family/societal focus.
- (b) Most candidates were able to demonstrate family diversity through the description of two different types of family. The best candidates explicitly referred to distinct features such as family form, family roles, etc.
- (c) Some excellent answers were seen here. Candidates understood the influence of feminism upon the family and were able to consider positive influences such as awareness raising, decline of domestic violence, single parent families, etc. Some candidates were also able to consider the negative influences of feminism such as the triple shift, for example.
- (d) Candidates recognised that urbanisation was about the movement of individuals and families to the city. Some were able to confidently discuss how this caused families to change, talking about family size, family roles and family structure for the most part. Weaker candidates were unable to pinpoint specific changes to the family and tended to talk in vague terms instead.
- (e) The vast majority of candidates were able to access this question well with two sided answers being the norm. On the 'for' side key ideas such as Willmott and Young, feminism and the decline of patriarchy were discussed whilst on the 'against' side there was talk of the triple shift/dual burden, issues involving single parent families and social class differences. Marks were typically differentiated on the range and use of theory/sociological concepts to substantiate the points made.

Section B

Question 2 – Education

- (a) This was a mixed question – some candidates clearly did not know what was meant by ‘cultural capital’, others recognised it was to do with knowledge but ignored the ‘capital’ part of the term, producing a partial answer. The best candidates added that it gave those with it a clear advantage in education.
- (b) Answers were quite vague here with some candidates struggling to make two distinct points. The most commonly seen answers referred to points such as the national curriculum, comprehensive education and the functionalist idea of hard work leading to good educational achievement and results.
- (c) Many candidates managed to think about how a student’s peer group affected educational achievement. Positively and negatively re attitudes to school were the most frequent responses seen. Many candidates struggled to make their answers sociological or to get the required range but those that did considered social factors such as class, gender and ethnicity as important and were thus able to engage successfully in a sociological argument.
- (d) This was a very mixed question. The weaker candidates did not really understand what was meant by ‘cultural factors’. Several answers considered home life, attitudes, linguistic features and ethnicity in response. The best candidates used these as vehicles to introduce theory and relevant sociological concepts such as restricted/elaborated code and case studies of specific ethnic groups.
- (e) The question was largely a Marxist versus functionalist debate, although some candidates did refer to gender in a relevant way too. Private and comprehensive education were often discussed as were setting and streaming within schools. Marxist notions of hierarchy and social control were considered alongside functionalist ideas of meritocracy. The question seemed to differentiate well.

Section C

Question 3 – Crime, deviance and social control

- (a) This question was well answered by most candidates who typically referred to stereotyping, self-fulfilling prophecy and stigma in their answers.
- (b) This question was answered very poorly indeed with a significant number of candidates seeming to have no understanding at all of the concept of a moral panic. Those that did answer correctly often used examples e.g. mods and rockers, knife crime, or described relevant features of moral panics such as exaggeration and a call for action.
- (c) This question was well answered on the whole, with most answers showing good sociological knowledge of the difference between crime and deviance. Some candidates did not have enough range in their answer. Most commonly seen points referred to the law versus norms and values, the type of acts committed and the severity of punishment/social reaction.
- (d) This was a generally well answered question, although unfortunately some candidates wrote generally about why people commit crime rather than focusing specifically on young people. Little credit could thus be given here. Those candidates that did focus on youth crime, however, were able to engage with relevant theories such as functionalism and the transition stage, postmodernism and thrills and excitement, Marxism and youth deprivation and sub-cultural ideas such as status frustration. They scored well.
- (e) There were very mixed answers to this question. Some candidates clearly did not know what functionalists said about why there was crime and deviance in society and thus, at best, scored a couple of evaluation marks for any points made about other reasons for crime. Many were able to describe a few functionalist points e.g. the safety valve and the reminder of societal values, but not debate them in terms of being a valid explanation for crime. ‘Against’ points were typically better done, although too often candidates just described every other explanation for crime that they knew rather than applying their knowledge specifically to the question set.

Section D

Question 4 – Media

- (a) This question was generally answered quite well by the small number of candidates who chose the Media option. The key ideas of large, mainstream audiences receiving information/entertainment through the media came across well.
- (b) This was well answered by most candidates with a lot of the mark scheme points being covered – perhaps most popular was ideas about shock tactics, exaggeration, tragedy and personal interest.
- (c) Surprisingly, this question wasn't particularly well answered. Candidates could have accessed the marks available through ideas about class, location, money, age and access. Too frequently, however, points made were rather general and did not really link to the idea of how individual's use of the media may be linked to the digital divide. Those candidates that did score highly here tended to use examples to back up their points e.g. traditional versus new media, platforms and devices used and passive consumption versus interactivity/social media.
- (d) This question was not well answered on the whole with too many candidates just describing where advertising features in the media and how it's different on different platforms. The role of advertising in terms of media content, media funding and consumption was often not fully considered.
- (e) Those candidates who knew what was meant by the pluralist view of the media (proliferation of choice and competition) answered the question well and were able to debate that viewpoint successfully with Marxist ideas about the concentration of ownership. The best candidates recognised that new media added further weight to the pluralist argument and were able to use examples successfully to back up the points made. In evaluation, Marxism was the most frequently discussed alternative, but feminism was also well used by some candidates.