SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12
Paper 12

Key messages

Candidates should keep the length of answer appropriate to the number of marks awarded. Some candidates wrote half a page for a (2) mark answer and a similar amount for a (6) mark answer.

In the longer 'explain' and essay style questions candidates should ensure that points are unpacked and developed rather than list-like or partially developed.

Candidates should focus on the wording of the question and plan their answers. On some questions candidates appeared to simply write all that they knew about an approach rather than selecting only what was relevant to the question.

When asked to 'identify' candidates should simply extract the information from the source without further description or explanation.

Candidates do not need to spend time defining key terms in the question before beginning their answers.

General comments

Overall many candidates responded well to the demands of the question paper, demonstrating appropriate knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, along with relevant application of the knowledge and understanding of the questions. There were few rubric errors and few non-responses. Many candidates were generally well prepared to discuss the strengths and limitations of methods. However, some candidates have a tendency to conflate validity and reliability in phrases such as 'quantitative data is reliable and valid' and this hinders the development of their arguments. They need to ensure that they are writing an appropriate amount for each question, dependent on the marks awarded. Candidates should aim to write in paragraphs in longer extended questions as points are sometimes conflated together.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a)   Most candidates were able to identify the methods from the source. Candidates were not awarded marks for sampling issues or stating 'qualitative' and 'quantitative' approaches.

(b)   There was a mixed response to this question, with a few candidates identifying varieties of questionnaire, despite the command to avoid the methods in Source A. Others cited types of sample or types of secondary data.

(c)   Many picked up on general issues in Source A such as problems with interviews or questionnaires, for example that the interviews may not be representative, but were less able to unpack the issue. Similarly, candidates could identify the problem of self-definition of ethnicity, but some were then unable to describe the problem. A small minority of candidates discussed problems without any reference to the source material.

(d) This question was generally answered well with many candidates able to describe two reasons for a covert approach. The Hawthorne Effect or groups that are difficult to access, especially criminal groups or gangs, featured prominently. A few candidates, however, gave the Hawthorne Effect response and then simply repeated it using different words in their second point which did not gain the expansion mark. A few candidates tried to link the use of covert methods to the source which wasn't required.

(e) Many candidates achieved full or close to full marks here. Some did not properly describe identified points and thus gained 4/5 marks. A number identified practical issues such as cost and time but then did not offer any description. A small number confused self-completion questionnaires with other methods.

(f) This proved to be a very demanding question for candidates. The majority knew what triangulation is but struggled to effectively formulate reasons why sociologists use it. Many cited the fact that triangulation improves the reliability and validity of research but often conflated these or did not go on to develop the points with reference to examples. Other common points included enabling sociologists to gather qualitative and quantitative data and/or the fact that it allowed elements of both positivism and interpretivism to feature in research. Candidates needed to make sure that points made had a clear linkage back to the question.

(g) There was a wide range of responses to this question. A few responses were very well focussed and were able to discuss a range of reasons for and against the possibility of generalisation in research, normally by reference to sampling methods and research topic. This was often framed within the positivist – interpretive debate. Some candidates did well by discussing the same issue from opposite angles, e.g. a representative sample allows for generalisation whereas an unrepresentative sample doesn't. When such arguments were presented in paragraphs and developed via examples then candidates were awarded higher marks. Other candidates tended to describe or explain reasons for the differences between quantitative and qualitative research. Some candidates wrote about all the methods they could think of and then simply described their strengths and weaknesses which did not address the question asked.

Section B

Question 2

(a) Many scored well here. Weaker answers did not specify more than just group of friends/people around you in society. Most candidates got at least one mark.

(b) Some candidates simply repeated the word 'pressure' or were vague regarding peer group strategies and instead focussed on the desire of someone to fit into a group which limited the marks available to them. The most popular correct peer pressure technique was ostracism.

(c) This question was answered well with sound conceptual knowledge and supporting examples. Many described how people are taught social conformity via the family (primary socialisation, imitation, canalisation and manipulation), also education via hidden curriculum, peer groups in terms of peer pressure and media role models.

(d) There was a mixed response to this question. Some candidates included an introduction explaining what a youth subculture is and why youths join them, which was not required. Instead candidates needed to focus in on the actual question of negative impacts on the individual. A few candidates considered the negative effects on society rather than homing in on the individual, others discussed the positive aspects. Those who scored well wrote about turning to a life of crime, social exclusion and failure to achieve at school.

(e) A few candidates put forward one-sided answers under the guise of arguing that peer groups have a good effect versus peer groups having a negative effect, rather than arguing that other agencies being the most important. In addition, arguments for peer group socialisation tended to be weaker than the arguments offered for other agencies. However, a good range of agencies were used by many in evaluation. The downside of this was that many answers tended to be unbalanced in terms of the quality of the arguments offered. Some answers also centred more on social control rather than socialisation and in a minority of responses socialisation was confused with group interaction. There was a good use of concepts generally however.

Section C

Question 3

(a) Most candidates were able to give clear definitions of the welfare state with some varied examples such as financial handouts, free services like education or healthcare and the redistribution of wealth and progressive taxation. Some candidates were only awarded one mark as they repeated the word 'state' in their definition.

(b) Many candidates gained full marks here with examples from housing and education to providing jobs and a minimum wage being linked to improved life chances. To gain full marks, candidates needed to link their answer back to life chances.

(c) Many candidates gave a clear and accurate description of how ethnic minorities faced inequalities in MIS with good examples. Typical responses referred to ethnocentric curriculum and labelling in schools, employment, housing and poverty and racism. Some responses had a limited list of weakly developed points whilst others did not fully understand the question and looked at class inequalities without any reference to ethnic minorities.

(d) Many candidates wrote at length here but did not always relate their answer back to the question, i.e. why some argue the welfare state has failed. Answers that achieved well referred to the culture of dependency/New Right thinkers and about the inadequate funding of the welfare state. The poverty trap, Marxist theory and the culture of poverty often featured but were sometimes not well used relative to the question.

(e) Most candidates who answered this were able to demonstrate an understanding of the debate surrounding discrimination in modern industrial societies with varying degrees of sophistication. The two-sided debate was illustrated by reference to gender and ethnicity most frequently though some made reference to ageism and social class issues. Issues that featured prominently included legislation, glass ceiling, racism, and patriarchy.

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Key messages

When asked to 'identify' something from the source in **Question 1(a)** candidates simply need to simply extract the information; some candidates write a paragraph which is unnecessary.

Some candidates need to be clearer about how, and for which questions, they are expected to utilise the source material in **Question 1**.

When asked to make a specified number of points in a question candidates should signal, for example by using 'first…', 'second…', etc. as otherwise points can appear to run together and appear to be vague.

Candidates should be aware of the difference between 'describe' and 'explain', specifically the need to unpack and develop when doing the latter.

Candidates should be clear about when a conclusion is needed. On this paper only the essay questions – so **1(g)**, **2(e)** and **3(e)** where candidates are required to express a judgement and hence write a conclusion to their arguments. Some candidates waste time and effort writing elaborate introductions and conclusions to other questions when unnecessary. This is frequently done in **2(d)** and **3(d)**.

General comments

Overall candidates found the question paper accessible and responded well to the demands of both the methodology and the optional sections. **Question 3** was a more popular choice than **Question 2**. In both sections, however, many candidates demonstrated solid exam technique in terms of addressing the question as set. It was pleasing to see so few non-responses though a small minority of candidates appeared to run out of time when it came to the final essay. Many candidates were generally well prepared to discuss aspects of research methodology though candidates could perhaps be better prepared for questions which linked directly to the source. Additionally, candidates need to be clear about how much to write for each question, dependent on the marks awarded. Candidates should aim to write in paragraphs for the longer extended questions as points are sometimes conflated together. It was very pleasing to note the conceptual and theoretical nature of many candidate answers. Some genuinely interesting and insightful responses to the more extended questions were also in evidence.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) Almost all candidates were able to identify the two methods from the source.

(b) Most candidates scored at least one mark on this question. Some candidates justified their responses by reference to the source which was not required. The interviewer effect, asking leading questions, the Hawthorne Effect and social desirability were the most common ways in which primary data were judged to be biased. Some candidates wrongly linked the idea of giving your own subjective opinion as inherently biased.

(c)   Candidates who scored higher marks on this question followed the prompt in the question and linked their points explicitly to Source A, when briefly describing possible reasons why the results of the interview were different to the survey. Some candidates did not contrast the results from both methods and this limited their marks somewhat. Popular answers referred to the idea that there could have been an interviewer effect which biased the results but did not affect the survey or that there may have been bias at the analysis stage of the interviews which would have been less likely with the type of closed questions likely to be asked in a survey. Answers that gave reasons based on the differences in the two samples also scored well. A few candidates only vaguely alluded to the source.

(d)   Most candidates scored at least half marks from this question. Only a small minority did not appear to know what a field experiment was. Not many candidates scored full marks because they often only cited one strength. Common answers included the fact that the method possesses high ecological validity due to its natural setting and that, therefore, people's behaviour would not change; also, that the researcher can blend into the environment and thus also enhance validity. A few candidates made good use of the Rosenthal and Jacobson school study.

(e)   This question about the strengths and limitations of non-official statistics drew a generally good response from candidates. The most successful answers referred to either the fact that the evidence is statistics or that it is unofficial. Either aspect was creditable. The most frequent strengths described were that it gave quantitative data which allowed patterns and trends to be identified, they are readily available and cheap to access online and that they avoid the political bias of official statistics.

In terms of limitations the most prominent answers included the idea that they could be biased depending on the sponsor, the fact that, as quantitative data, they failed to give depth, detail or reasons. A few candidates talked about non-official statistics as a primary method rather than as secondary evidence.

(f)   This question explaining why media content may not be valid inspired some good quality answers. Some candidates earned good marks by focusing on the purposes of some media content, such as entertainment whilst others discussed ethnocentrism or the stereotyping and labelling that frequently occurs across the media. Topical references to 'fake news' and distortion due to political interference was pleasing to see. Some responses went off on a tangent discussing primary methods (though answers making intelligent points about content analysis were credited). Candidates who showed strong conceptual knowledge with a range of points scored the highest marks.

(g)   This question drew an impressive response from many candidates who engaged in a conceptual debate between positivism and, invariably, interpretivism. The most effective approach to this question was evidenced when candidates developed three or more points to show that a positivist approach is a highly effective way of conducting research and then a corresponding number of points propounding either the limitations of the approach and/or the fact that the relative strengths of the interpretivist approach can be as good if not better. Candidates who scored marks in the top band fully developed their points, usually in separate paragraphs, and integrated sociological concepts into their writing. An effective and evaluative conclusion at the end was needed to reach full marks though relatively few candidates were able to do this. Popular points in favour focused on the 'macro' scientific and quantitative approach which generates reliable and often generalisible data. Points against often focussed on the importance of a 'micro' approach to generate qualitative data which will allow researchers to understand reasons and motives behind the positivist patterns and trends or argued that objectivity is an illusory goal. A few candidates argued for a triangulation of both approaches as a 'best fit' for many topics.

Section B

Question 2

(a) Of the candidates that opted for **Question 2** most were able to score both marks on this question, successfully linking a culture to lifestyle of a society and its norms, values, beliefs and traditions.

(b) This question was very accessible, and many candidates scored full marks. Some approached it by describing primary and secondary socialisation as ways in which culture can be leaned. Others focused on specific strategies such as the hidden curriculum or sanctions. Responses that did not achieve full marks often didn't fully describe the identified way.

(c) Many candidates were able to give a range of reasons why sub-cultures are formed and those who fully explained their points drew high marks. Status frustration, anomie, rebellion and socio-economic deprivation featured prominently in candidate answers. Moreover, it was pleasing to see some candidates making theoretical reference to, for example, functionalism, strain theory and Marxist views. Candidates who scored less well invariably needed to develop and unpack their answers more fully and/or integrate sociological concepts into their answer.

(d) This question was more of a challenge in terms of being able to make several well developed, conceptual points. However, some candidates earned good marks by focusing on the fact that age identities are socially or historically relative; others considered different age groups within a society and discussed how the different expectations we have of them (through role allocation and even stereotyping) illustrates that age is a social construction. Candidates who achieved fewer marks tended to leave points only partially developed in terms of the question. No conclusion is necessary on this question though some candidates did write one.

(e) This question drew a mixed response. Most candidates had a wealth of examples which they could apply to show that globalisation is creating a global culture – in food, music and entertainment, technology, clothes, etc. The best responses made a range of developed points both for and against the claim before coming to a judgement based on the evidence presented. In terms of arguments presented Westernization and McDonaldisation featured prominently, along with secularism and the global market in Western media and products. In terms of arguments against some interesting points were made regarding the attempts, on the part of some cultures, to preserve language and heritage and some references were made to entrenched values linked to religion, continued adherence to tradition and rites of passage within cultures. Candidates that performed less well on this question tended to write list-like answers with only partial development. A concise judgement based on the balance of arguments presented was more evident in top band answers.

Section C

Question 3

(a) The best responses on this question defined patriarchy in terms of the dominance of males over women and children in society. Many candidates scored full marks with some using terms like oppression and inequality. Candidates who scored one mark invariably gave a shorter often non-sociological definition.

(b) Many candidates gained full marks here by describing examples of gender discrimination such as the gender pay gap, the gendered division of labour or the glass ceiling. Where candidates only scored one or two marks it was invariably due to only providing one example.

(c) This question drew a mixed response with some candidates having a clear grasp of how governments have introduced and used laws to improve women's rights. The best candidates were able to name specific laws such as the Equality Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. Other frequent areas of discussion included laws tackling domestic violence and rights in education. A minority of candidates did less well because points made were sometimes unclear in terms of the link to legislation.

(d)   The best candidates here made several well developed and conceptual points as to why females have lower status than males in modern industrial societies. Some candidates discussed women's traditional roles within the nuclear family as a source of lower status and then moved on to discuss issues within the workplace such as the reserve army of labour, vertical segregation or the so-called 'glass ceiling' and horizontal segregation. Candidates utilised both concepts and theory well in this question with references to the new right, functionalism and Marxism. Where candidates scored less well it was usually linked to the number of points made, or development, rather than any lack of understanding of the issue.

(e)   The essay drew some interesting responses and candidates should have had plenty to discuss. A small minority of candidates appeared to run out of time and answers were cut short. However, most candidates were able to maintain a basic debate regarding whether inequalities have been reduced in modern industrial societies. Some good quality points were made regarding the development of more meritocratic systems, the welfare state, the redistribution of wealth via taxation and new laws which have improved the life chances of women and minority groups across different social areas. In evaluation many candidates considered the Marxist view that meritocracy is a myth and that basic conflict and class oppression remain a reality in many societies, that women still face barriers to equality both within the home and in employment. The elderly and the young also featured along with racism faced by ethnic minorities in the media and in education and employment. Answers in the top band showed both range and good quality development. Most candidates who had a debate wrote a conclusion though not all offered a judgement based on the arguments presented.

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| Paper 2251/22 |
| Paper 22 |

Key messages

A significant number of very strong candidate responses were seen during this June marking session, showing clear engagement with sociological issues, theory and contemporary topics and debates. Many candidates are thinking sociologically and successfully applying their classroom knowledge to the specific examination questions. Relevant, contemporary, cultural and local examples were frequently used alongside the more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify many points made. Theories and sociological concepts were very well used by some candidates. Very few rubric errors were seen in this examination session which is excellent as this allows candidates to maximise their chances of success.

● Ensure that what is written specifically addresses the issues raised in the question.
● Candidates should refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts where relevant. Using sociological terms will raise the overall quality of the answer and will allow access to the marks awarded for sociological/conceptual engagement.
● Candidates should spend time thinking about what questions are asking them and planning answers to those specific questions in their designated reading time – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that answers remain focused on the question.
● Some candidates did not use paragraphs in their longer responses, making it difficult for the Examiner to see where points began and ended.
● Introductions and definitions of key terms at the beginning of **(c), (d)** and **(e)** questions take up valuable time and do not gain marks, they are not needed at all in parts **(c)** and **(d)** and do not really add to the quality of response in part **(e)** questions. Conclusions are similarly unnecessary in part **(c)** and **(d)** questions but are recommended in the part **(e)** evaluative essay questions.
● Candidates should not describe things that the question does not ask for e.g. writing about the past.
● Some candidates did not recognise the key term in the question (e.g. symmetrical, ethnocentrism, life chances, pluralist etc.). As these key terms in the questions will be drawn directly from the specification, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these. Some candidates did not get any marks at all for some questions because of this issue.
● Candidates should 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 half a page for a part **(a)** question worth 2 marks and the same for a part **(e)** question worth 15 marks. Time needs to be better managed in order to maximise the marks awarded.
● On part **(e)** questions there should be a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. The response needs to include a range of points for each side (three points for each side of the debate) that are well developed and evidence based, with a justified conclusion. Conceptual/theoretical engagement is expected in bands 3 and 4. One sided responses cannot get beyond band 2.
● In the part **(e)** questions, very good candidates often did not include a conclusion to the debate– they discussed points for and against without attempting an overview or a judgment. A conclusion is required in this essay style question in order to reach the highest marks available and is where the candidate should ensure that they have answered the specific question set and have thus made a judgement upon it.
● For the **(c)** and **(d)** questions candidates need to be able to develop points in order to achieve the higher levels, in some instances answers were 'list like' which limits the amount of marks that can be awarded. Also a range of points is crucial here; many answers tended to be too narrowly focused, a minimum of three different points should be made and developed.
● In the part **(b)** questions the answer should be developed, the command is to describe, not just to list or state.

General comments

The least answered option was **Section D** (the media).

Most candidates seemed to be aware of the need to look at both sides of the argument for the 15 mark questions which helps them to access the higher marks.

There were few answers based on 'common sense' which was encouraging to see; even candidates who achieved few marks seemed to have some understanding of the sociological approach.

There were very few rubric errors this session and the overwhelming majority of candidates answered the correct number of questions. A few candidates wrongly labelled questions, it is important for candidates to take care with this.

In general there was a good range of answers, 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, e.g. 'deviance' – define the breaking of social norms and values and supplement this with an example of an act of deviance or state that deviance does not have to be criminal. Part **(b)** questions need two distinctly different points – it is good practice to separate and label these clearly. 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 part **(c)** but develop points further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory are used appropriately. In terms of the 15 mark part **(e)** questions, candidates should organise their answers into paragraphs and develop each idea fully using theory, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. The best answers include 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.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – The Family

This was the most popular question during this examination session, attempted by the vast majority of candidates.

(a)   Some excellent responses were given but many answers only received one mark, relying too heavily on copying the wording in the question. Most candidates answered the question correctly, linking patriarchy to male dominance in the family and society/man as the breadwinner/the subordination of women. Some candidates offered responses which showed understanding of the term but were too brief to gain both marks.

(b)   This was well answered in many instances with most examples focusing on employment, childcare or housework. A few answers confused joint and segregated conjugal roles, and a number gave examples of role reversal (woman goes to work, man does housework). Others talked about one partner 'helping' the other. Some answers simply stated a point rather than describing it so were unable to access the second mark.

(c)   This question generated some excellent answers that discussed issues such as reproducing the next generation of capitalist workers, false class consciousness, inability of workers to strike, females trapped as housewives etc. Other responses talked about functionalist family functions which showed little or no understanding of the Marxist view.

(d)   Overall, this question was answered well and many candidates offered a range of reasons as to why some families are symmetrical, such as a greater independence of women linked to feminism, the rise of the 'new man' or the decline in extended families linked to less influence of traditional culture. A few responses described symmetrical families and were not fully answering the question. Some responses did not demonstrate an understanding of the term 'symmetrical', instead describing families with segregated conjugal roles. Some responses were list-like and did not develop points sufficiently to score into Band 3.

(e) Most candidates interpreted the question correctly and provided valid reasons for and against marriage still being the norm in modern industrial societies. The answers focused on marriage being an important part of cultures, ethnic groups and religion as well as explaining the functionalist/New Right view of the significance of marriage. For the other side of the argument, family diversity was linked to secularisation and the acceptance of other arrangements such as cohabitation and civil partnerships, as well as a greater independence of women linked to feminism and changing norms and values. The better responses provided a balanced debate. Some, however, offered only brief, list-like answers, and were sometimes one-sided. The weaker answers were often not organised into paragraphs, offering underdeveloped or undeveloped points as well as confusing arguments. Still, many responses reached Band 3 and above, offering valid and often extremely well thought out judgements leading to conclusions.

Question 2 – Education

(a) Most candidates gained at least one mark here with references to a lack of resources. Weaker answers repeated the word 'material' from the question which was not worth a mark.

(b) Many candidates interpreted the term 'ethnocentrism' correctly and gave clear examples such as studying history from the point of view of the majority culture, issues of language and teachers stereotyping and labelling candidates from minority cultures. A few answers did not link ethnocentrism to education and provided more general examples. Some responses described general inequalities amongst pupils in school, such as stereotyping of the working class which was not answering the question.

(c) Overall, this question was answered very well and most candidates offered range, development and sociological engagement. Candidates typically emphasised the teaching of norms and values, the role of the hidden curriculum, gender expectations and the use of positive and negative sanctions. A few candidates also successfully linked their points to sociological theory/perspectives e.g. Marxism and Feminism.

(d) There were mixed responses to this question with a tendency towards generalisations at the lower end. Often candidates discussed the same points more than once and also explained how knowledge of healthcare could improve life chances. Candidates mainly discussed qualifications connecting them to upward social mobility. Most candidates did use key concepts, however, including meritocracy and upward social mobility to gain marks. A few responses explained how a lack of education leads to downward mobility which received no credit.

(e) Overall, the majority of the candidates provided balanced answers to the question. The better responses strengthened their points with correct reference to sociological theories such as Marxism. Arguing against material factors being the most important influence on educational achievement, the candidates principally used cultural and linguistic factors, correctly explaining cultural and social capital and the significance of Bernstein's theory. Gender, ethnicity, school, teacher and home factors were often also discussed. The weaker responses offered descriptions and did not develop points or lacked range and depth or were mainly common sense in the points and ideas raised.

Question 3 – Crime and Deviance

(a) The majority of the candidates answered this question correctly, defining deviance in terms of actions that are against the norms and values of the society. However, there was often uncertainty as to whether deviance is different from crime which sometimes led to a confused and therefore partial response.

(b) Most candidates demonstrated an understanding of official crime statistics and could offer correct examples of problems associated with them. Many mentioned that crimes go unreported, some discussed the lack of police recording, the 'dark figure' of crime, government manipulation and the impact of police targeting strategies. It was a well answered question.

(c) Most candidates highlighted the family, media, peer group and religion as agencies of informal social control accurately and discussed some relevant examples. A clear understanding of the difference between informal and formal agencies was shown by most candidates.

(d)   A substantial number of candidates wrote in very general and common sense terms about young people and crime, the subculture element of the question was not well answered. Several responses demonstrated knowledge and understanding of youth subcultures. The better answers provided a range of points such as peer pressure often linked to masculinity, Cohen's status frustration, or having an alternative set of norms and values to the mainstream culture that are frequently seen as deviant. Media stereotyping, moral panics and deviancy amplification were also explained by a few candidates, with some linking their points to appropriate theory.

(e)   While many candidates correctly interpreted the question, a large number of responses were rather general with few sociological concepts. The better answers linked arguments with theory such as the Marxist view that white-collar crimes often go unreported, or the functionalist perspective in relation to the importance of prisons. Responses typically included more reasons agreeing than disagreeing, with an assumption that prisons are soft and are breeding grounds of crime. Apart from references to rehabilitation and community service, there was a tendency to rely on general knowledge with a lack of sociological language and references to research in many answers.

Question 4 – Media

There were very few candidate answers to this question. Candidates used a lot of traditional sociology and often did not take into consideration developments in the way the media has changed in recent years. The best answers were very aware of contemporary developments and used these well (for example, using interactivity and prosumers to criticise the hypodermic syringe model).

(a)   Successful answers referred to choice and competition or to active audiences.

(b)   Generally, candidates could identify and describe two examples of how the media uses propaganda. Favourable presentations of governmental policies and advertising were most commonly used. Hitler and Disney were often cited as examples and were duly credited.

(c)   Candidates predominantly explained stereotypical representations of women, ethnic and age groups. While many responses were good, weaker responses gave descriptions of media stereotyping, not linking points to sociological criticism which therefore did not score marks in the top band. The best answers had separate paragraphs for each social group with sociological terms used, such as male gaze, tokenism and underrepresentation, to support the points made.

(d)   This question was not answered well. Answers often had a lengthy description of the model when they should have been criticizing it. There was a lot of repetition of points and few sociological terms were used. Even though a few candidates used other models, such as the cultural effects, or the uses and gratifications model to show criticism, the majority of the responses were rather general despite showing understanding of the hypodermic syringe model itself. Hence, only a few answers reached top band.

(e)   For the most part, this question was misunderstood or not well answered, with only a few responses including discussion of the patterns of media use by social class. Instead, many of the answers focused on ownership linking it to the content shown and to propaganda. Weaker responses showed limited sociological engagement and gave imprecise points with vague explanations. The better answers utilised the digital divide debate as well as consumption preferences such as entertainment vs information, tabloids vs broadsheets etc.

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│        Paper 2251/23        │
│          Paper 23           │
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Key messages

A significant number of very strong candidate responses were seen during this June marking session, showing clear engagement with sociological issues, theory and contemporary topics and debates. Many candidates are thinking sociologically and successfully applying their classroom knowledge to the specific examination questions. Relevant, contemporary, cultural and local examples were frequently used alongside the more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify many points made. Theories and sociological concepts were very well used by some candidates. Very few rubric errors were seen in this examination session which is excellent as this allows candidates to maximise their chances of success.

● Ensure that what is written specifically addresses the issues raised in the question.
● Candidates should refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts where relevant. Using sociological terms will raise the overall quality of the answer and will allow access to the marks awarded for sociological/conceptual engagement.
● Candidates should spend time thinking about what questions are asking them and planning answers to those specific questions in their designated reading time – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that answers remain focused on the question.
● Some candidates did not use paragraphs in their longer responses, making it difficult for the Examiner to see where points began and ended.
● Introductions and definitions of key terms at the beginning of **(c), (d)** and **(e)** questions take up valuable time and do not gain marks, they are not needed at all in parts **(c)** and **(d)** and do not really add to the quality of response in part **(e)** questions. Conclusions are similarly unnecessary in part **(c)** and **(d)** questions but are recommended in the part **(e)** evaluative essay questions.
● Candidates should not describe things that the question does not ask for e.g. writing about the past.
● Some candidates did not recognise the key term in the question (e.g. segregated conjugal roles, globalisation, deviant career, elaborated code etc.). As these key terms in the questions will be drawn directly from the specification, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these. Some candidates did not get any marks at all for some questions because of this issue.
● Candidates should 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 half a page for a part **(a)** question worth 2 marks and the same for a part **(e)** question worth 15 marks. Time needs to be better managed in order to maximise the marks awarded.
● On part **(e)** questions there should be a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. The response needs to include a range of points for each side (three points for each side of the debate) that are well developed and evidence based, with a justified conclusion. Conceptual/theoretical engagement is expected in bands 3 and 4. One sided responses cannot get beyond band 2.
● In the part **(e)** questions, very good candidates often did not include a conclusion to the debate– they discussed points for and against without attempting an overview or a judgment. A conclusion is required in this essay style question in order to reach the highest marks available and is where the candidate should ensure that they have answered the specific question set and have thus made a judgement upon it.
● For the **(c)** and **(d)** questions candidates need to be able to develop points in order to achieve the higher levels, in some instances answers were 'list like' which limits the amount of marks that can be awarded. Also a range of points is crucial here; many answers tended to be too narrowly focused, a minimum of three different points should be made and developed.
● In the part **(b)** questions the answer should be developed, the command is to describe, not just to list or state.

General comments

The least answered option was *Section D* (the media).

Most candidates seemed to be aware of the need to look at both sides of the argument for the 15 mark questions which helps them to access the higher marks.

There were few answers based on 'common sense' which was encouraging to see; even candidates who achieved few marks seemed to have some understanding of the sociological approach.

There were very few rubric errors this session and the overwhelming majority of candidates answered the correct number of questions. A few candidates wrongly labelled questions, it is important for candidates to take care with this.

In general there was a good range of answers, 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, e.g. 'deviance' – define the breaking of social norms and values and supplement this with an example of an act of deviance or state that deviance does not have to be criminal. Part **(b)** questions need two distinctly different points – it is good practice to separate and label these clearly. 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 part **(c)** but develop points further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory are used appropriately. In terms of the 15 mark part **(e)** questions, candidates should organise their answers into paragraphs and develop each idea fully using theory, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. The best answers include 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.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – The Family

This was the most popular question attempted by the vast majority of candidates.

(a)   Most candidates were able to confidently define the term in the question although some did confuse it with joint conjugal roles.

(b)   This was very well answered in most instances with most candidates choosing to describe two distinct family functions, typically from functionalist theory. Most popular options were socialisation, social control and reproduction.

(c)   This question generated some excellent answers that discussed issues such as pester power, child-centeredness, changing legislation and the privatisation of the small nuclear family unit. Some candidates, however, tended towards commonsense responses that did not engage sociologically or conceptually and thus were kept in band 1.

(d)   The question was answered with different degrees of success with some candidates not demonstrating knowledge of the fertility rate nor why it was decreasing. Some of the weaker responses discussed how perhaps the rate was not decreasing and thus did not focus on answering the question set. The most successful answers linked the falling fertility rate with feminist theory, changing legislation and the changing role of women in both society and the family.

(e)   Culture was correctly interpreted in a variety of different ways. Most commonly, it was linked with ethnicity and religion which worked well and allowed candidates to demonstrate specific sociological knowledge whilst also being able to refer to their own cultural experiences. In evaluation material factors were commonly discussed as well as gender, age and social class. Weaker responses did not engage with the concept and were thus very generic and did not really focus on the question.

Question 2 – Education

(a) Most candidates gained at least one mark, most scoring two, here with references to formal language, the language of assessment and often linking it with the higher classes. It was a well answered question.

(b) Answers typically focused on factors such as teachers (e.g. labelling, setting), meritocracy and improved life chances and the peer group. Negative and positive reasons were given which were both correct. It was an accessible question that candidates accessed with success.

(c) Overall, the question was answered very well and most candidates offered range, development and sociological engagement in their answers. Some answers relied on commonsense but could still be credited towards the bottom of band 1, others used relevant studies (e.g. Willis) and theory (typically Marxism) to produce very impressive responses.

(d) Mixed responses were seen for this question with a tendency towards generalisations and commonsense answers at the lower end. Often candidates repeated the same points and did not consider the range of home factors that could have been discussed – family, community, peer group, culture etc. Better sociological/conceptual responses referred to both material and cultural factors.

(e) Overall, the majority of candidates provided balanced answers to this question although the quality of the answers seen were variable. Most responses included better 'for' arguments than 'against'. Arguments for the claim were ideas such as the hidden curriculum, the functions of education, Marxist ideas about brainwashing and control and the promotion of traditional gender roles. The best evaluations discussed factors such as anti-school subcultures, resistance, meritocracy, female empowerment and the self-negating prophecy.

Question 3 – Crime and Deviance

(a) Many candidates answered this question well and often used examples such as drug dealing or organised crime to strengthen their definition and gain full marks. Answers that were vague or unprecise or only gave an example instead of a definition as an answer were classed as partial responses and only received one mark.

(b) Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of what is meant by an informal agency of social control. Most commonly referred to were the family, peer group and media. Some candidates described formal agents instead and so could not be credited.

(c) This question produced very mixed responses with it being apparent that some candidates did not know what was meant by the term 'relative'. The best responses considered how definitions depend on such factors as culture, era, society, role and situation and used well chosen examples – often from the candidates own local context – to substantiate the points made.

(d) This was a challenging question with several responses discussing many explanations and not demonstrating any real knowledge of functionalism. The better responses referred to traditional functionalist factors such as the deterrent function, the safety valve and the transition period from youth to adulthood. Some responses used variants on functionalist theory such as the New Right, Merton's strain theory and Cohen's status frustration.

(e) While most responses demonstrated understanding of what was meant by police stereotypes, some did not then link it to relevant theory e.g. labelling, and instead talked generally about the police and stereotyping. Many discussed the links to police targeting and stop and search rates with good results as well as then linking in with media representations and considering moral panics and the creation of folk devils. In evaluation, a wide range of alternative explanations for police actions were discussed e.g. it's affected by government policy, it's affected by representations in the media etc. The better answers showed range, depth and the engagement with sociological concepts.

Question 4 – Media

There were very few candidate answers to this question.

(a)   The best answers had learnt a textbook definition and defined the term accurately with many using the internet as a pertinent example.

(b)   Candidates generally answered this question well and described two ways the media can be said to be biased. The open nature of the question meant they could discuss control, ownership, gatekeepers and/or market pressures in their answers.

(c)   There were a lot of generalised and commonsense responses to this question that discussed how the media tried to persuade people to vote a certain way. These could only be credited in band 1. Not many responses referred to topical issues such as the American election. The better responses often used Marxist theory, and to a lesser degree feminism, and their associated ideas in their points.

(d)   This question was very variably answered; some responses were not linked to the question to new and/or social media which would have opened up a wide range of possible points to discuss. The better answers showed extensive and perceptive knowledge of the role of social and new media today and how this can result in more choice and control for the audience through, for example, citizen journalism and prosumption. The global nature of social and new media was also discussed well by some candidates who also made links to Pluralist theory.

(e)   Candidates that knew and understood the idea of agenda setting were able to discuss how it affected how people think and behave with some well chosen examples. News values were often discussed well, alongside notions of bias and the role of gatekeepers. Moral panics – and associated links with labelling theory – were also successfully used by some candidates. Less successful answers did not demonstrate understanding of agenda setting and were not really engaged sociologically or conceptually.