SOCIOLOGY

| Paper 2251/12 |
| Paper 12 |

Key Messages

- Candidates should avoid using time and cost as generic strengths and limitations of research methods.
- Candidates need to take care to read the questions in full and not focus on a small part of the question.
- Candidates need to clearly state sociological terms rather than make vague non-sociological references.

General Comments

Candidates showed good knowledge and understanding of key terms and few experienced difficulties in explaining what key terms meant. Many candidates would have done better not to define terms in **Section B** **Questions C** and **D**, there was no need for them to do this. Candidates would do well to clearly number their answers.

Candidates frequently relied on generic responses to questions in **Section A** which asked them to identify strengths and limitations. Candidates often made comments like "it costs money" or "it takes time". Such generic comments rarely gain candidates any credit, as such, comments are so broad they could be applied to any research method and therefore they do not address the specific question.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) (i) Candidates generally answered this question well although some candidates did not clearly develop their explanation.

(ii) Many candidates answered this well but some focused on the term interview and ignored 'structured '.

(iii) Many candidates struggled with this term. A lot of candidates failed to get two marks as they saw the sampling frame as being those included in the study as opposed to those who may be drawn from for the study. Many candidates only stated it was a 'list'.

(b) Many candidates relied on generic strengths and limitations to answer the question, especially making reference to time and cost without explanation of why this was an issue in the case of a large sample.

(c) Many candidates clearly understood the problems with official statistics often referring to the 'dark figure of crime' or political manipulation of unemployment figures. The strengths of official statistics were less well understood, although many candidates did identify the fact that they are readily available.

(d) Few candidates were able to answer this question well; some candidates were able to identify longitudinal surveys and social surveys. Many candidates confused survey with sample and talked about sampling method. Candidates appear to see the term survey as synonymous with any type of research which led to some confusion.

(e)   For the most part this was well answered with many candidates identifying the use of post/email/by hand and then explaining how this would be done.

(f)   Many candidates answered this well. However, some answers were vague because candidates failed to make clear what type of questionnaire they were referring to. i.e. ones using closed questions or open questions.

Section B

Question 2

(a)   On the whole candidates answered this question well, most candidates were able to give at least a partial definition which made reference to being made to conform. Better candidates also made reference to use of the law or various forms of social pressure that might be used to ensure social control.

(b)   Although a few candidates confused formal and informal social control most were able to give two examples. The most popular responses being the use of rewards and sanctions either by the family or by the school.

(c)   There were a lot of generic responses to this question. Better candidates were able to use their knowledge of feral children to back up their explanation for why nurture was important. Fewer candidates referred to specific processes of socialisation, like canalisation, to support their response.

(d)   Many candidates focused more on the term 'media' in this question and to a large extent ignored the terms 'agency of socialisation'. This resulted in responses which described modern media trends rather than considered the influence of media on socialisation. Better candidates compared the media's role with that of other agencies. Many concluded that the family was still more important than the media.

Question 3

(a)   Many candidates answered this well most commonly identifying sub-culture as a culture within a culture.

(b)   Many candidates found it difficult to differentiate between norms and values. A few better candidates managed giving responses like: helping others, caring for elders. On the whole, this question was not well answered.

(c)   Although candidates tended to appreciate why young people were attracted to sub-cultures they tended to express their ideas in a very common sense way. Some inferred ideas of rebellion but most answers lacked sociological reasons e.g. status frustration, sense of belonging etc.

(d)   There were some good answers to this question with some good use of sociological language. Many candidates referred to specific processes like manipulation. Where answers were less satisfactory it was because candidates had presented a one-sided response that agreed primary socialisation was the more influential.

Question 4

(a)   This was answered well. Most candidates were able to define absolute poverty.

(b)   Many candidates ignored the word 'trap' and instead described reasons for poverty, better candidates did describe ideas like cycle of deprivation, dependency culture, culture of poverty etc. Some candidates did infer these ideas but failed to articulate the term.

(c)   Most frequently candidates engaged in descriptions of reasons for poverty without naming a specific social group that might experience poverty. Many answers showed a lack of understanding as to what the term 'social groups' meant. Those who did understand the term scored well. Groups frequently identified were lone parents, women and ethnic minorities.

(d)   There were many one sided answers to this question, mostly focusing clearly on why poverty still exists without the balance of what was being done to tackle poverty. Surprisingly few candidates engaged with the definitions of poverty. Candidates did not appear to appreciate that how much poverty exists depends on how it is defined and measured. Candidates could have usefully engaged with a discussion about absolute and relative poverty to support their answers. Candidates often did not address the 'to what extent' part of the question.

Question 5

(a)   This question was well answered with many candidates gaining maximum marks.

(b)   Most candidates answered this question well. A minority identified other types of social stratification such as the caste system so did not gain any marks.

(c)   There were some good answers to this question, although quite a few answers made no link to social class which restricted marks.

(d)   Candidates would do better to make reference to technological advancements and to demonstrate what is meant by de-skilling. Many candidates engaged in vague discussions about education and how well qualified individuals were.

Question 6

(a)   Those that attempted this question often did not understand the term suffrage, mistakenly believing it had something to do with suffering rather than having the right to vote.

(b)   Some better candidates identified greater equality as being a consequence, some legitimately engaged in discussions of more women in work and political life as a consequence of women having the vote and this resulting in negative consequences like 'dual burden' and 'triple shift'.

(c)   Few candidates got beyond vague discussions of elected representatives never doing what they say they will. Candidates could have usefully discussed Marxist and feminist theories and concepts like 'elite self-recruitment' into the political classes.

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Question 7

(a)   When this question was attempted most understood the term.

(b)   Some good answers, many talked about coercion, one ruler with all the power.

(c)   Some good answers were seen for this question with a wide range of tactics discussed most focusing on new policy promises.

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Key Messages

Reading time is built into the paper and therefore candidates would benefit from carefully reading the questions set in order to choose the option that they are able to write most successfully about – the sub-questions worth more marks should particularly be focused on when making this decision. Candidates may find it useful to make bullet point notes during this reading time to help them decide which three questions they can best answer.

The number of marks available for each question should help to guide candidates in terms of the length of their responses and this could usefully be looked at also in teacher assessments and practice questions completed under timed conditions.

Each sub-question has a specific command word associated with it (*describe, explain etc.)* and these are crucial in determining what is required in the question. Candidates would benefit from training in these terms in Centres so they are clear as to what skills they need to demonstrate in their answers in order to achieve the best mark that they can do.

Candidates need to be clear that the part **(d)** questions are discursive and therefore answers should aim to consider more than one point of view and then form a judgement at the end. A one sided answer will be unable to score highly. This is also a question where extended writing is required so a range of points should be well developed and evidenced.

Candidates need to ensure that the answers they are giving are sociological in focus rather than relying on assertion and/or common-sense. Conceptual engagement, use of evidence and application of appropriate sociological theories are all to be encouraged and are rewarded in the mark scheme.

Candidates would benefit from producing a glossary of the key terms in the specification to ensure that their knowledge is accurate and precise. This would be a very useful revision tool and would undoubtedly be of use when answering the part **(a)** questions.

General Comments

The most popular questions were **Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4** with several candidates also opting for **Questions 5** and/or **6** and the least popular questions were **Question 7 and 8** in the Media topic. The spread of questions and topics answered was therefore wide and varied which was good to see. **Question 2** was answered by the majority of candidates.

In order to gain high marks candidates need to have a secure understanding of the key concepts in each of their areas of study. Some good answers were seen for **Questions 7** and **8**. Candidates would do better to evaluate in **(d)** questions, a consideration of more than one point of view is essential here – looking at points for and against the question, for example. Class discussions and debates around the often controversial issues in the topic areas will help to promote evaluation techniques and can often be an accessible way of developing this difficult skill.

Practice on past papers supported by mark schemes, and use of the Teacher Guide and other support materials online, can help candidates to develop their examination techniques and give teachers ideas on how to consolidate and improve candidates' understanding of the areas of study. These should be integrated into class teaching as early as possible and then be set regularly as assessed pieces of work, as well as completed in timed conditions to ensure that candidates are developing both their sociological knowledge and understanding and their examination technique.

There were some excellent answers seen with some candidates using the questions set to enable them to showcase their sociological understanding and ability to apply this knowledge to the specific demands of the questions. These answers were typified by a clear focus on the question, precision and accuracy in the use of sociological terms and concepts, an ability to demonstrate understanding of the command words used and effective timing. Some candidates also used sociological theory thoughtfully and appropriately which was excellent to see. Studies/evidence were used regularly to substantiate points and ideas made by the better candidates.

Candidates should be encouraged to learn precise and accurate one sentence definitions of concepts for **(a)** questions, to write each of the two required answers in **(b)** questions in two separate paragraphs to ensure they are clearly different and distinct, to aim for three well-explained and distinct points that engage sociologically in **(c)** questions and to remember that in **(d)** questions they should make points to agree with the question but then evaluate and present alternative points of view before coming to a well-focused conclusion. They should also ensure that a range of different ideas are covered in this sub-question.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A: The Family

Question 1

(a) Many candidates did not score full marks as they wrote about how families are stable, rather than society. Many also repeated the word 'stable' without an explanation of its meaning, and so could not get the marks. A glossary of key terms from the specification may help here.

(b) Most candidates answered this well, though some wrote more about how the role of women has changed and not all considered the 'change' aspect of the question.

(c) Good answers here used sociological concepts and described the process of primary and secondary socialisation, social control, imitation, peer pressure etc. Some weaker responses were more vague and discussed norms that were followed rather than engaging with reasons behind them.

(d) Some good responses here and a chance for better candidates to display high level knowledge and evaluation. Lots of references to symmetrical and joint conjugal roles, women's rights etc. and some noteworthy references to theory particularly feminism via Oakley etc. Some answers, however, lacked depth or were not well developed.

Question 2

(a) Most candidates found this accessible though some omitted either a reference to marriage or to legal procedure.

(b) This was generally answered well with common answers being reconstituted and lone parent families. A few candidates misread the question as being about families where divorce might take place or about reasons for divorce.

(c) The majority of candidates referred to the negative aspects of divorce on children, referring to the damage to Schooling or criminality as the main focus. Aspects of stress and depression were also commonly discussed. Only a minority recognised that there could be positive consequences. There was a tendency even for good answers not to use concepts and therefore not to reach full marks.

(d) Many candidates gave sound evidence for the changing roles of men and women and the increase in divorce. The majority knew for evaluation about the law, secularisation and social attitude changes as well as the changing roles of both men and women. Also interesting references to the decline of the extended family and privatisation of the family. However, some did misunderstand the question and explained how a person's roles would change after they got divorced.

Section B: Education

Question 3

(a)   Mixed response with some candidates defining in terms of hidden curriculum whilst others talked about what is learnt in wider society rather than the institution of the school. Many candidates scored 1 rather than 2 as definitions were sometimes vague – some candidates confused formal and informal education whilst others simply copied the term 'informal' from the question.

(b)   Very interesting and wide range of responses to this question - everything listed on the mark scheme and more e.g. pre-vocational, pre-primary, compensatory etc. and even some localised responses. Public Schools were defined and credited in both ways - either as a 'posh private School' or as 'a government School'.

(c)   Several candidates integrated the debate on Marxist and functionalist theories of education well. The majority kept to the easier option of socialisation and qualifications gained for work. Where this was done well, candidates used concepts such as 'the economic function', 'social control', 'role allocation' etc. which were then discussed with some development. At the bottom end, answers relied very much on common-sense.

(d)   Some candidates presented a balanced view of the question with discussion points on both sides, especially with reference to education being free, to gender, ethnicity, labelling and teacher expectations. The majority gave one sided responses assuming that income did affect achievement, with more reference to material deprivation and how it affects a child's education. Some assumed that income and class were the same thing.

Question 4

(a)   A number of candidates did not give a clear definition of the term 'labelling', too many simply used the word 'label'. Examples are a good way for candidates to demonstrate their understanding and these were helpful for candidates when answering this question.

(b)   This was generally answered well, though some answers were not specifically related to ethnic minorities and were based on assumption that minorities were working class and therefore suffered from material deprivation etc. Most often seen responses focused on language and material factors, often going into detail about elaborated/restricted code etc. Others picked out discrimination in School by teachers or by an ethnocentric curriculum.

(c)   Most candidates referred to positive and negative teacher labelling; very few gave any other reason that may affect a candidate's performance which meant there was often a lack of range seen. Some did write about the self-fulfilling prophecy and setting and streaming was referred to in some of the best answers alongside points regarding class and ethnicity.

(d)   Quite a few one sided answers on this question - some candidates thought they were giving a balanced answer when they gave arguments for girls doing better in some ways and boys the other, but it was all really arguing that gender remained very important. The best responses brought in teacher labelling, class/deprivation and ethnicity as counterpoints.

Section C: Crime, Deviance and Social Control

Question 5

(a)   This was generally answered well although a few candidates confused corporate crime with any crime that is not reported e.g. rape or 'co-operative' crime. There was also some confusion with white-collar crime resulting in a lot of partial answers.

(b)   Many candidates answered this question well, with a clear understanding of the reasons for unreported crime. The most popular choices were trivial nature of the offence, embarrassment and fear of the consequences.

(c)   Some candidates answered this well using terms such as moral panic, folk devils and scapegoating to elaborate their points. Some talked about copying/imitating. A number did not use any sociological concepts and produced more limited, descriptive answers.

(d) This proved difficult even for more able candidates to answer in a balanced way. Many answers were strong on reasons for crime being unreported and unrecorded as ways of questioning official statistics, but avoided or were less clear on the other side of the argument. Some confusion also seen regarding the use of victim surveys and self-report studies. Candidates must remember the importance of discussing both sides of the debate in these part **(d)** questions.

Question 6

(a) Candidates generally found this term hard to accurately define, only dealing with one aspect - many latched on to the word 'deprivation' and gave an answer in terms of this alone, for example. The best answers were able to suggest that not only is it a lack but a lack of things that others in that society generally had access to.

(b) This question was answered well by the majority of the candidates with common accepted answers including opportunities provided by shops and business, more police to detect/record crimes, relative anonymity and unemployment/poverty.

(c) Some described crimes that could be committed with the peer group rather than engaging with how peer pressure works. Others answered this well discussing acceptance in the group, fitting in, initiation and status. A lot of answers failed to engage sociologically here.

(d) The majority of candidates gave a clear sociological understanding to the question, many with a balanced viewpoint. Popular answers mentioned unemployment, anomie and lack of opportunities compared to police targeting and white collar crimes. Some very good use of sociological theory was seen within this question. Again, however, too many candidates did not engage in a debate, presenting instead a one sided argument.

Section D: Media

Question 7

(a) This was not answered by many candidates and of those who did answer it, many did not get both marks. Some even referred to gate keepers being security guards, illustrating a lack of sociological understanding.

(b) There was some uncertainty about what was meant by censorship. There were few good answers seen.

(c) Some candidates did not know what was meant by agenda setting. Better answers usually focused on moral panics.

(d) The answers to this question were generally not well developed. Candidates seemed to find it difficult to explain how censorship can prevent challenges.

Question 8

(a) Most answers relied on examples, which gained some credit, as candidates had difficulty providing a complete definition. Many answers repeated the word 'representation' in their answers and thus did not show a good enough understanding to get the marks.

(b) Most candidates who answered this question were able to give some valid answers. Popular answers referred to grumpiness and declining mental or physical health.

(c) Candidates tended to have some relevant ideas but these were often not presented in sociological terms. Better answers often referred to effects models such as the hypodermic syringe, moral panics and topics such as fashion. A lack of range tended to typify answers to this question.

(d) Answers were often generic and usually based on common sense, lacking depth and detail. Only very few candidates wrote well balanced two sided arguments with an adequate conclusion. Some candidates listed aspects of traditional gender roles rather than challenges to them and the range of points and examples used tended to be narrow.

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(a)   A number of candidates did not give a clear definition of the term 'labelling', too many simply used the word 'label'. Examples are a good way for candidates to demonstrate their understanding and these were helpful for candidates when answering this question.

(b)   This was generally answered well, though some answers were not specifically related to ethnic minorities and were based on assumption that minorities were working class and therefore suffered from material deprivation etc. Most often seen responses focused on language and material factors, often going into detail about elaborated/restricted code etc. Others picked out discrimination in School by teachers or by an ethnocentric curriculum.

(c)   Most candidates referred to positive and negative teacher labelling; very few gave any other reason that may affect a candidate's performance which meant there was often a lack of range seen. Some did write about the self-fulfilling prophecy and setting and streaming was referred to in some of the best answers alongside points regarding class and ethnicity.

(d)   Quite a few one sided answers on this question - some candidates thought they were giving a balanced answer when they gave arguments for girls doing better in some ways and boys the other, but it was all really arguing that gender remained very important. The best responses brought in teacher labelling, class/deprivation and ethnicity as counterpoints.

Section C: Crime, Deviance and Social Control

Question 5

(a)   This was generally answered well although a few candidates confused corporate crime with any crime that is not reported e.g. rape or 'co-operative' crime. There was also some confusion with white-collar crime resulting in a lot of partial answers.

(b)   Many candidates answered this question well, with a clear understanding of the reasons for unreported crime. The most popular choices were trivial nature of the offence, embarrassment and fear of the consequences.

(c)   Some candidates answered this well using terms such as moral panic, folk devils and scapegoating to elaborate their points. Some talked about copying/imitating. A number did not use any sociological concepts and produced more limited, descriptive answers.

(d) This proved difficult even for more able candidates to answer in a balanced way. Many answers were strong on reasons for crime being unreported and unrecorded as ways of questioning official statistics, but avoided or were less clear on the other side of the argument. Some confusion also seen regarding the use of victim surveys and self-report studies. Candidates must remember the importance of discussing both sides of the debate in these part **(d)** questions.

Question 6

(a) Candidates generally found this term hard to accurately define, only dealing with one aspect - many latched on to the word 'deprivation' and gave an answer in terms of this alone, for example. The best answers were able to suggest that not only is it a lack but a lack of things that others in that society generally had access to.

(b) This question was answered well by the majority of the candidates with common accepted answers including opportunities provided by shops and business, more police to detect/record crimes, relative anonymity and unemployment/poverty.

(c) Some described crimes that could be committed with the peer group rather than engaging with how peer pressure works. Others answered this well discussing acceptance in the group, fitting in, initiation and status. A lot of answers failed to engage sociologically here.

(d) The majority of candidates gave a clear sociological understanding to the question, many with a balanced viewpoint. Popular answers mentioned unemployment, anomie and lack of opportunities compared to police targeting and white collar crimes. Some very good use of sociological theory was seen within this question. Again, however, too many candidates did not engage in a debate, presenting instead a one sided argument.

Section D: Media

Question 7

(a) This was not answered by many candidates and of those who did answer it, many did not get both marks. Some even referred to gate keepers being security guards, illustrating a lack of sociological understanding.

(b) There was some uncertainty about what was meant by censorship. There were few good answers seen.

(c) Some candidates did not know what was meant by agenda setting. Better answers usually focused on moral panics.

(d) The answers to this question were generally not well developed. Candidates seemed to find it difficult to explain how censorship can prevent challenges.

Question 8

(a) Most answers relied on examples, which gained some credit, as candidates had difficulty providing a complete definition. Many answers repeated the word 'representation' in their answers and thus did not show a good enough understanding to get the marks.

(b) Most candidates who answered this question were able to give some valid answers. Popular answers referred to grumpiness and declining mental or physical health.

(c) Candidates tended to have some relevant ideas but these were often not presented in sociological terms. Better answers often referred to effects models such as the hypodermic syringe, moral panics and topics such as fashion. A lack of range tended to typify answers to this question.

(d) Answers were often generic and usually based on common sense, lacking depth and detail. Only very few candidates wrote well balanced two sided arguments with an adequate conclusion. Some candidates listed aspects of traditional gender roles rather than challenges to them and the range of points and examples used tended to be narrow.