

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12

Paper 12

Key messages

- Candidates require a sound understand of key terms to achieve greater success.
- Questions **(a)** and **(b)** in the optional questions were generally very well done, weaker candidates need to be made aware of appropriate lengths of response for the marks available.
- Discussion of arguments for and against in the 'To what extent' questions is key to better outcomes.
- Candidates need to offer more specific sociological examples to support their arguments.
- Answers to questions with high marks require a two sided response and a conclusion.

General comments

- There were some excellent responses this year but there is still evidence of rote learning generic responses, particularly regarding gender socialisation/nature nurture and using this response on any culture question. The same was true in **section A** strengths and weaknesses of methods had been learnt by rote and candidates needed to take more time to select the appropriate knowledge that is relevant to the question set. Time and cost still featured heavily as generic strengths and weaknesses of all methods although these were sometimes explained, for example, many identified time consuming as a weakness of unstructured interview, because it meant fewer participants could take part reducing the representativeness of the work.
- A proportion of candidates spent a considerable amount of time on overly long responses to **Questions (a)** and **(b)** in **sections B-D** and by defining terms in **Questions (b)** to **(d)**. These responses did not gain them marks but added to time management issues a reflection, again, of poor selection and application skills.
- The majority of candidates gave descriptive accounts in **Questions (c)** and **(d)**, these answers lacked the analysis and assessment necessary to gain high marks. A large minority of candidates did not address the specific wording of the questions, evidence again of rote learning of generic answers.
- More use of references to relevant studies as a way of illustrating key arguments, would be a good way for candidates to further develop their answers. Evaluation was mostly through juxtaposition and basic, few candidates meeting the top band in **(d)** parts because they failed to address the 'To what extent' part of the question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i)** Generally well answered, although, candidates frequently did not go beyond stating that this was data collected by the sociologist themselves, as researchers can also collect secondary data themselves. Responses needed additional clarification to achieve full marks here.

- (ii) Most candidates did not address 'pre coded' but instead described the questions with no mention of answers. Many candidates said they were closed questions rather than stating that the answers had already been predetermined for the participant to select from.
- (iii) Generally this question was not answered well. Candidates frequently confused the term with being a representative, and some responses confused representativeness with validity. Better answers made some reference to generalisation. Some candidates identified the meaning as associated with 'the typical characteristics of the population' where they should have referred to *research* population.
- (b) Overwhelmingly, candidates correctly described random and snowball sampling. A few weaker responses did not state an understanding of what sampling meant. Candidates did loose marks because they repeated the word 'random' in their explanation of random sampling this did not show understanding of how the method is carried out. Better answers stated that there was an 'equal chance' of being selected.
- (c) Mostly this question was done well but a lot of weaker candidates did not discuss interviewer bias per se but how to improve validity through unstructured interviews. Candidates often talked about interviewer effect rather than interviewer bias.
- (d) Generally well answered; candidates overwhelming identified reliability as a strength and lack of validity as a weakness.
- (e) Generally well answered but many missed marks because their responses lacked comparison or did not really discuss the two differences. Some candidates seemed to think that for example 'one is formal and the other informal' was two differences rather than just one. Other candidate responses described the differences between unstructured and structured, listing lots of different things rather than distinguishing an actual difference.
- (f) Generally this question was well answered. Stronger candidates clearly structured their answer to ensure they identified two advantages and two disadvantages. There were some excellent and very succinct answers where candidates systematically first identified the advantage or disadvantage then explained it which maximised their marks.

Section B

Question 2

Nearly all candidates answered this question and most answered it well.

- (a) Was mainly well answered although weaker candidates continue to confuse socialise and socialisation. Better answers clearly addressed the 'secondary' element. Some listed the agencies of secondary socialisation but forgot to define socialisation.
- (b) This question was not well answered with a lot of candidates describing feral children or socialisation in general. Better candidates explained that biological factors could not account for differences in social characteristics between cultures and societies. Many discussed methodology of experiments or why it was unethical to say it was nature. Some candidates answered by identify the inadequacy of work like that of Lombroso that sought to explain criminality through biological factors like physical appearance. Some also explained the negative effects for society that biology explanations can cause i.e. racism.
- (c) This question was generally very well answered there were a large proportion of answers that used specific sociological vocabulary and made clear reference to sociological research especially the work of Ann Oakley.
- (d) This question was, in the main, reasonably well answered. Many candidates focused on feral children as evidence of the influence and importance of nurture. Some candidates looked at a range of biological evidence as well as citing the importance of feral children for sociological explanations. The best candidates also looked at cross cultural and subcultural examples and linked these to the agents of socialisation or social interaction. Weaker candidates failed to present a two sided response, simply dismissing arguments that were not based on nurture without making

clear why they were inadequate. Many better candidates lost marks because they failed to address the 'To what extent' part of the question.

Question 3

Again, most candidates answered this question and it was fairly well answered.

- (a) This question was generally well answered, weaker candidates failed to make a clear definition because they defined social conformity as conforming.
- (b) Many lost marks by talking about positive sanctions rather than the ways we are made to conform.
- (c) Many candidates discussed education and family but in fairly broad and generic terms. There was a lack of detailed 'ways' and explanation.
- (d) There were some excellent answers which incorporated theory as well as a discussion of coercion, authority, sanctions and ideology. Some candidates missed the point of the question though and spent all their time discussing only subcultures or the fact it was choice as young people are rebellious with no development. There was some confusion over 'choice'; choosing to conform out of fear or because of coercion is not a choice. Candidates who argued the functionalist point that rules are a result of social consensus and obeyed by choice because they are recognised as of benefit to all made the point about choice better. Again there was a tendency to dismiss the idea of choice and ignore arguments that might support this. Answers that only argued people obey because of coercion, no matter how well they were argued, lost marks because they lacked balance. Many better candidate responses also lost marks because they failed to address the 'To what extent' part of the question.

Question 4

A large number answered this and, again, it was generally well answered.

- (a) Generally this term was well understood and there were some excellent answers with clear supporting examples and frequent reference to absolute and relative poverty.
- (b) Candidates answered this question well. The problems described ranged from: lack of life chances to lack of status. Most popular responses were related to lack of health care and poor educational opportunities.
- (c) This question was not so well answered, surprisingly few candidates picking up on the idea of relative poverty in relation to wealthy societies and many only explained poverty implicitly by saying there were lots of rich people. Many responses only cited 'the rich get richer and the poor poorer' or said it was because of tax. Others just outlined Marxism without explicitly explaining the relevance. Candidates could have usefully engaged in discussion of how poverty is defined in response to this question. Better answers included concepts like 'cycle of deprivation' and 'poverty trap'.
- (d) This question was well answered by some candidates but again there was a tendency to ignore 'to what extent'. Better answers included reference to concepts like 'meritocracy' or considered the extent in reference to the difference between open and closed stratification systems.

Question 5

- (a) Candidates general knew what social mobility was but some confused inter-generational with intra-generational mobility.
- (b) This was done well by better candidates but weaker candidates confused role, status and identity in response to this question or discussed ascribed and achieved status. Where candidates did identify an inherited status they struggled to describe it.
- (c) Generally this question was answered well. There were however a number of generic answers which listed marriage, education, luck and talent without making clear how these would change a person's status. Few candidates considered downward social mobility in response to this question.

- (d) Candidates produced some excellent answers but answers of weaker candidates often lacked analysis and evaluation and were more a list of factors. There was a lot of reference to embourgeoisement and two sided answers were rare. Candidates frequently argued that social class differences were disappearing or that they were not disappearing without reference to the other side of the argument. Better candidates discussed factors like changes to the job market that resulted from technological development and the wider availability of education.

Question 6

There were relatively fewer attempts at this question and in the main it was not well answered.

- (a) Many were unable to define oligarchy and there was much confusion of this term with dictatorship.
- (b) This question was normally well answered although voting was listed without mention of it being free and fair, candidates need to understand that elections can be held in one-party states under coercion to vote for a given candidate.
- (c) As most candidates did not understand the term oligarchy well this limited their ability to score well on this question, most answers consisted of weak references to protests and demonstrations.
- (d) Most candidates either just described a democracy and/or an authoritarian state or did not answer the question.

Question 7

The minority of candidates answered this question and of those a few did quite well.

- (a) Candidates were able to define this term with examples.
- (b) This was usually well answered and the most popular responses being use of CCTV and phone/mobile phone tapping.
- (c) Candidates were generally able to identify ways in which governments could limit civil liberties but many of the answers were generic in nature, for example, 'changing the law'. Candidates need to consider measures like censorship limiting freedom of speech or detention without trial.
- (d) Candidates generally assumed that people do have civil liberties in democratic societies and tended to describe these rather than evaluating the proposition of the question.

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Paper 2251/13

Paper 13

Key Messages

- Candidates require a sound understand of key terms to achieve greater success.
- Questions **(a)** and **(b)** in the optional questions were generally very well done, weaker candidates need to be made aware of appropriate lengths of response for the marks available.
- Discussion of arguments for and against the proposition in the 'To what extent' questions is key to better outcomes.
- Candidates need to offer more specific sociological examples to support their arguments.
- Candidates need to avoid defining terms using words from the same root e.g. defining objectivity as being objective.

General Comments

There were many responses that showed good subject knowledge and a clear grasp of various methodological issues. It was pleasing to see many answers with a sound grasp of key terms which they were able to both define accurately and exemplify. There were however weaker answers which were characterised by poor grasp of key terms. Candidates need to take care that they do not repeat the key term as the definition (or words from the same root) as such responses do not show clear understanding, for example, defining objectivity as being objective. A weak grasp of key terms made it difficult for candidates to access the **(c)** and **(d)** questions fully.

There continues to be confusion about the difference between the terms: valid and reliable, qualitative and quantitative when discussing the strengths and limitations of various research methods.

Many candidates used their time effectively and structured their answers well. Too often candidates simply wrote all they knew rather than demonstrating the ability to select appropriate knowledge and understanding to address the questions.

The best answers on the 'To what extent' **(d)** questions showed good evaluation skill and were supported with specific knowledge and ended with a clearly defined conclusion. Many candidates, who had otherwise provided a comprehensive response, failed to draw a conclusion about 'to what extent' at the end of their answer and consequently did not benefit from all the marks available.

Generally candidates work would benefit from more use of specific factual examples taken from sociological research or their own society where appropriate. They also need to ensure they build on the knowledge they have used elsewhere. Candidate answers could be much improved by transferring their knowledge between units and questions.

There were some excellent succinct answers where candidates had shown great skill in selecting the relevant details to support their answers. Conversely other candidates wrote everything they could think of without any attempt to be selective, often as a result, writing far more than was needed for the shorter questions.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i) This question was generally well answered. Where responses failed to score well it was as a result of lack of clarity in their definition, often it was suggested that 'results could be applied to the whole population' rather than to the whole *research* population.

Most candidates understood that this term referred to a lack of bias. Few candidates developed their definition to a full extent. A small proportion of responses confused objectivity with objective i.e. aim.

- (ii) This question was generally answered well although some responses showed insufficient grasp of the differences between, structured, unstructured and semi-structured responses which resulted in answers which showed confusion.
- (b) This question was generally well answered with most candidates referring to either questions as being misunderstood by participants or answers lacking depth and detail. A few weaker responses confused reliability and validity but this was much less apparent than in some past examinations.
- (c) Again, this was generally a well answered question. The most frequent answers included fair and unbiased answers and were unlikely to be representative. Some responses confused random sampling with other sampling or research methods, others tried to argue that random sampling was both more representative as an advantage and was not representative as a disadvantage.
- (d) Generally candidates provided better responses to the disadvantages of this research method and frequently identified the difficulties in maintaining the integrity of the sample as a disadvantage. Some responses were less successful in addressing the advantages of the method, many giving answers that went little beyond 'it's more detailed'. Better answers needed to go beyond 'more detail' and explain that the method builds up a detailed picture of social life. A minority of responses demonstrated poor understanding of the key term stating that longitudinal studies were where you studied for a long time to get better qualifications.
- (e) Candidates found it difficult to distinguish between interviewer bias and interviewer effect in this question which caused some confusion.
- (f) This question was generally well answered, although, a few weaker responses confused qualitative and quantitative.

Question 2

- (a) This question was very well answered very few responses lacked an understanding of this key term. A small minority confused socialisation with socialise
- (b) This was well answered with responses often identifying imitation in the family and hidden curriculum at School as ways through which individuals are socialised into their gender identity.
- (c) Many responses ignored the term 'formal' in this question and discussed the role of the family and other informal agencies. Answers needed to be focused clearly on formal agencies of social control to score well.
- (d) Responses tended to agree with the proposition of the question, few addressed the 'To what extent' part of the question. Better responses were able to identify other social characteristics such as gender or ethnicity as also having an impact on the experiences of young people.

Question 3

- (a) This question was generally answered well. Some responses failed to give adequate definitions because they defined 'cultural differences' as 'different cultures', which is too close to the term candidates were asked to define to show clear understanding.

- (b) Generally this was well answered with most responses discussing differences in responsibility and levels of dependency. Some responses could have been improved by describing two differences. For example an adult works and earns their own money whilst a child is dependent on their parents for money, is only one difference not two.
- (c) Generally the majority of responses were able to discuss a variety of social processes that lead to social control; weaker responses tended to focus just on socialisation and ignored other processes.
- (d) Better responses focused on the relative nature of gender roles, many providing good supporting evidence from a variety of societies. Weaker responses tended to discuss changing gender roles rather than on cultural differences.

Question 4

- (a) This question was generally well answered although some responses showed a weak grasp of the difference between ascribed and achieved status.
- (b) Again this question was generally well answered when responses showed a good understanding of the differences between achieved and ascribed. The most popular answers were through better educational qualifications or marriage. Some candidates took an equally valid approach of suggesting that status could be achieved by gaining 'honour' in society for example through good works like charity.
- (c) Generally this question was not answered very well. Responses rarely focused on 'power' with frequent use of generic terms about maintaining a privileged life style or maintaining status. Some responses did engage with Marxist ideas about control by the Bourgeoisie of state apparatus.
- (d) This question was generally well answered many with many responses highlighting both the efforts made in modern societies to achieve equality and the extent to which these efforts were successful. Poorer responses could have been improved by not focusing on modern society and including a more balanced response to the question.

Question 5

- (a) This question was generally answered well. Some responses showed a poor grasp of the key term confusing 'life chances' with life expectancy.
- (b) This question was generally answered well, although, some responses did ignore 'other than ethnic minorities' in the question.
- (c) This question was, for the most part, well answered most responses offered some examples of how ethnic minorities face discrimination, the most popular responses referred to discrimination in education and employment, some also drew on knowledge of other units to support their answer often referring to discrimination by police forces.
- (d) There were some good responses to this question. Some would have benefited from including a two sided response, simply arguing that social mobility did exist. Weaker responses showed a poor grasp of the key term and confused social mobility with transport and communications networks.

Question 6

- (a) There was very little grasp of the term authoritarian and responses frequently confused the term with totalitarian.
- (b) This question was answered very well with the most popular response being free press and free and fair elections.
- (c) Many responses had difficulty with this question and showed little grasp of the term authoritarian. Answers could be greatly improved appreciating that some types of authoritarian regime can maintain power without coercion. Responses often treated authoritarian and totalitarian as if they were synonymous.

- (d) Candidates frequently failed to fully address the question discussing if democratic systems were democratic rather than looking at democracy and comparing it to other systems.

Question 7

- (a) This question was generally answered well. There was some confusion about socialisation and socialise. Some responses mistakenly viewed political socialisation as an opportunity to meet their political representatives rather than learning about political attitudes and values.
- (b) This question was generally well answered the most popular response was that the family was the key influence whilst other answers related to social class alignment.
- (c) There were some strong responses to this question, many showed good awareness of the various types of interests groups and how they might promote their views. Many responses could have been improved with the addition of examples of specific interest groups and their activities.
- (d) Although largely answered well, in common with many of the (d) questions, other responses were unsuccessful by not providing two sided answers even where they had previously highlighted the importance of other influences in response to (b). Although these responses showed knowledge of other influences often these failed to use this knowledge and argued that the media did influence voting behaviour. Better responses gave some good specific examples of the media supporting individuals or parties to election success.

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Paper 2251/22

Paper 22

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 here. Candidates may find it useful to make bullet point notes during this reading time.
- 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 to aid candidates.
- 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 so they are clear as to what skills they need to demonstrate in their answers and thus are able to focus on these in their responses.
- 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.
- 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.
- Candidates would perhaps benefit from producing a glossary of the key terms in the specification to ensure that their knowledge of these is as accurate and precise as possible. This would be a very useful revision tool.

General comments

The most popular questions answered during this session were **Questions 1, 3 and 6** and the least popular questions were **Question 8** and particularly **Question 7**. Therefore the most popular topics were The Family, Education and Crime, Deviance and Social Control.

In order to gain high marks candidates need to have a secure understanding of the key concepts in each of their chosen areas of study. Some candidates still seem to be choosing to answer questions on topics, such as the media, about which they have little sociological knowledge. They are also losing marks by not evaluating 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 with candidates. Writing frames may also prove useful, along with a bank of evaluative ‘signals’ that candidates can use in their writing – however, on the other hand and from a different perspective, for example.

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 during the session 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. Candidates should be encouraged to learn precise 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. Candidates should aim for three well-explained and distinct points in **(c)** questions and to remember that in **(d)** questions they should make points to agree with the claim in the question but then evaluate and present alternative points of view as well, before coming to a well focused conclusion. It is essential to ensure that a range of different arguments are discussed in the part **(d)** questions also.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: The Family

Question 1

- (a)** This was a generally well-answered question and most candidates were able to provide a correct definition of the term.
- (b)** Mostly the question was well-answered with a range of possible answers seen that often referred to increasing divorce rates, the decline of religion and the growing independence of women. The better responses focused on the crucial term in the question – growth.
- (c)** There was a wide range seen in the quality of answers for this question. Typically candidates discussed issues such as inadequate socialisation, the poverty trap, dual burden, pressure on the welfare state and issues of poor educational achievement and juvenile delinquency.
- (d)** There was a lot of misunderstanding surrounding this question, often candidates responses could have been improved by providing alternative viewpoints, thus increasing the marks available to them. The better candidates evidenced the growth of single parent families but then countered this with a discussion of the enduring popularity of the nuclear family, often linking this to cultural and religious values. They also recognised the fact that a lot of single parents do remarry and thus reform nuclear families and so this family structure continues.

Question 2

- (a)** There was some confusion seen with this term and a lot of partial answers were therefore given. Both 'cultural' and 'diversity' needed to be considered in order to achieve maximum marks. A glossary of key terms would perhaps be a useful tool for candidates to help with these part **(a)** questions.
- (b)** Candidate responses that focused on family structure tended to do well in this question. Typical answers discussed divorce, death and marriage and described these correctly in terms of changes to family structure.
- (c)** Some candidate responses did not focus sufficiently on the family structure as asked for in the question and thus tended to talk too generically to score well. Stronger answers considered such things as family size, roles and type and were able to link this to cultural and/or class features.
- (d)** Again, success here largely depended upon whether the candidate focused on the 'structure' part of the question. A lot of candidates were able to consider a range of cultural and regional factors that affect family structure. These were a combination of general points i.e. Western culture and points specific to particular cultures and regions. The strongest candidates evaluated the question by arguing that perhaps it was not about culture or region but about changing norms and values, changes to the role of women and the increasing availability and influence of the media, for example.

Section B: Education

Question 3

- (a) This question was generally answered well with a lot of candidates scoring full marks. To do so, candidates needed to focus on both the terms 'gender' and 'inequalities' in the question.
- (b) A lot of strong answers were seen here allowing candidates to achieve high marks in this question. Typically, factors such as the increasing freedom of women, teacher expectations and the introduction of coursework were discussed.
- (c) This question was also typically well answered and candidates were credited whether they said girls were treated more positively or negatively than boys as long as examples were given. It was a good opportunity for candidates to focus on their own cultural experiences of education here and thus a range of interesting answers were seen by the examination teams.
- (d) Answers were strong for this question on the whole too. A lot of candidates were able to introduce relevant sociological concepts such as labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy, setting and private education which were all used to support the claim. Home/community factors were also used well in terms of evaluation.

Question 4

- (a) This question was answered with mixed success. Candidates needed to look at both the terms 'ethnic' and 'minorities' in order to provide a full definition.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify ways that School factors influenced educational performance but several then failed to link these to ethnic minorities which limited the available marks.
- (c) A similar trend to part (b) was seen in this sub-question with too many candidates failing to link their points specifically with ethnic minorities. A lot of answers, for example, focused solely on class rather than ethnicity and thus could not access the higher marks.
- (d) There was a lot of variability in the quality of the answers seen here. Some candidate responses were very general displaying limited knowledge of educational policies. Others responses introduced and discussed policies but did not link these to ethnicity. At the top end, excellent sociological knowledge and understanding was seen through the discussion of explicit and specific policies that directly linked to the educational success of ethnic minority candidates i.e. removal of the ethnocentric curriculum, anti-racism/discrimination legislation and compensatory education.

Section C: Crime, Deviance and Social Control

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates gained some credit in this question, often through the use of examples, but not all candidates linked their response to the topic of crime prevention/control sufficiently.
- (b) A wide range of answers were credited here and thus most candidates were able to score highly in this question. Some chose to discuss agents of social control whilst others looked at methods. Some took a more general approach and focused on sanctions and rewards.
- (c) This question was not typically well answered, with a lot of candidates ignoring the reference to 'traditional' societies and just talking generally instead. Answers such as these did not score highly. The better answers focused on ideas such as religion, family, elders and community in their responses.
- (d) A large proportion of answers to this question relied on a common sense understanding and did not consider the specific role that the media can play in determining rates of recorded crime in society. Some candidates missed opportunities to engage conceptually by not making use of ideas such as scapegoating, stereotyping, moral panics, folk devils and deviancy amplification, for example.

Question 6

- (a) Candidates that had a clear and precise knowledge of the term answered this question really well, referring to both the class/status of the offender and the nature of the crime being linked to the workplace.
- (b) Most candidates answered this question well. Typically candidates recognised that petty crimes, sexual crimes and domestic crimes were likely to be under-represented, for example.
- (c) As long as the candidate understood the term 'white-collar crime' this question was generally answered well. Some answers, however, focused on policing practices rather than detection and thus were only partial.
- (d) Most candidates were able to offer a range of reasons as to why the official crime statistics were not a reliable indicator of crime levels i.e. to evaluate the claim in the question. Issues of non-reporting by the public, non-recording by the police, political bias and the dark figure of crime were all frequently discussed. However, too many candidates failed to provide evidence to show that crime statistics can be reliable and thus only produced a one sided response. It is essential that alternative points of view or a two sided response are offered in a part (d) question in order to score highly.

Section D: Media

Question 7

- (a) Very few candidates answered this question but those that did were generally able to offer a clear and accurate definition of agenda setting.
- (b) A well-answered question on the whole, with candidates describing factors such as reporting styles, selection and bias.
- (c) This question was generally answered well with candidates discussing news values, owner influence, the need to appeal to the audience and the legal position/censorship.
- (d) The question produced some very strong answers indeed that allowed candidates at the top end to 'show off' their sociological understanding effectively. Most used media effects theories to make their arguments, exemplifying these with a range of relevant examples. In evaluation, candidates often considered the power of the audience and also the fact that many media effects models are too deterministic – particularly in the postmodern age of new media.

Question 8

- (a) Too many common sense answers were seen here but most candidates who chose this sub-question were able to gain some credit. Again, glossaries may help candidates to become more precise in their definitions.
- (b) There seemed to be several candidates choosing this question who had not studied the media as a topic and thus answers here lacked a sociological focus at times. Some responses were also repetitive and so were not double credited. Better answers used ideas such as role models, imitation, celebrity endorsement, consumer culture and norm referencing and did so well.
- (c) This was a very open question and thus a wide range of possible answers were available and, indeed, seen. Candidates could focus on other aspects of the media apart from advertising that influence lifestyle choices or, alternatively, look at other agents instead – the peer group and family, for example.
- (d) This question was not particularly well-answered, except by a few well-informed candidates. The better responses typically discussed the use of the Internet and social media creating instant access to up to date media content across the world. Postmodern theory was put to good use by some candidates here. Examples such as fashion, film and music were used to exemplify points made. In evaluation, the Americanised/Western nature of this alleged global culture was raised as well as factors such as the digital divide and the attempts made by some social groups/cultures to preserve their heritage, norms and values.

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Paper 2251/23

Paper 23

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. Candidates may find it useful to make bullet point notes during this reading time.
- 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 so they are clear as to what skills they need to demonstrate in their answers so as to achieve the best mark possible.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

General comments

The most popular questions were **Questions 2, 3, 4, 5** and **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.

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 candidates still seem to be choosing to answer questions on topics, such as the media, about which they have little sociological knowledge. They are also losing marks by not evaluating 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 during the session 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. Candidates should be encouraged to learn precise 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 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) This was generally well-answered, but a clear and precise definition of the term 'function' was required for full marks. A glossary of key terms may help here.
- (b) A well-answered question here with most candidates being able to successfully describe two functions performed by the family for children – socialisation, emotional and financial support were the most common answers seen here.
- (c) Most candidates were able to discuss how the family acts as an agent of social control, but those that were most successful demonstrated range and sociological understanding in their answers. They focused on negative and positive sanctions, gender roles and expectations and examples of family social control to exemplify points made.
- (d) Responses to this question were mixed and the quality of the answer largely depended upon whether the candidate understood the meaning of 'cross-cultural variations' or not. Those that did often referred to modern and traditional societies, tribal culture, the role of religious values and attitudes to women in their answers.

Question 2

- (a) This question was typically well-answered with candidates being able to provide a clear definition of the term.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify joint and segregated conjugal roles and to describe what these terms meant successfully.
- (c) The quality of answers seen for this question were variable with some candidates not focussing on the key term 'why' and describing 'how' conjugal roles have changed instead. The importance of focussing answers on the specific demands of the question set needs to be stressed here.
- (d) Some candidates spent too long describing what happened in the past in relation to gender equality which was not what the question was asking about. However, a good range of answers were seen here with the best quality answers engaging with theories such as Feminism, concepts such as patriarchy, symmetry and dual burden and studies such as Willmott and Young and Oakley. The strongest responses recognised that whilst clear steps forward had been made in relation to gender equality in the family, this was not true for all women and perhaps was also dependant on such factors as class, religion and age.

Section B: Education

Question 3

- (a) A lot of good answers were seen to this question with most candidates linking the definition to a person's social class position and recognising that any movement could be either upward or downward.
- (b) Most candidates focused on School factors such as *streaming, setting, teacher labelling, independent schools and money* and the question was therefore answered well on the whole.
- (c) There was again a lot of good answers seen to this question with most candidates being able to offer a response. The quality of answers, however, typically depended on whether candidates talked in common sense or sociological terms.

- (d) Answers to this question were again typically very good with candidates often being able to discuss a range of factors linked to social class and educational success. These included such things as material deprivation, private education, cultural capital, teacher labelling and home environment. When discussing the 'against' points, some candidates recognised that perhaps gender and/or ethnicity were equally as influential.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates were able to define this term correctly.
- (b) A range of answers of varying quality were seen to this question, with some candidates clearly not knowing what 'vocational education' comprised and thus not being able to achieve the two marks.
- (c) Most candidates were able to successfully discuss several ways that Schools act as an agency of social control. Negative and positive sanctions were often referred to here. The better candidates introduced Marxist theory into their responses and some excellent sociology was therefore seen.
- (d) Responses to this question were very mixed. At the bottom end, answers focused on common sense factors such as learning and communication whereas the top end were able to integrate ideas about the hidden curriculum, Functionalist and Marxist theory. A minority of candidates ignored the '...for work' part of the question and thus did not score highly.

Section C: *Crime, Deviance and Social Control*

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates gained some credit but a number did not provide a clear or accurate enough definition to score full marks. A glossary of key terms may help here.
- (b) Candidates that knew what 'formal agencies' were, scored highly here. Those that described informal agencies or gave examples of control did less well.
- (c) As in part (b), those candidates that understood and focused on the specific term in the question, 'informal social control', did well. A lot considered the family but successful responses were also seen that discussed education, the media and the peer group, for example.
- (d) A number of candidates clearly did not know what was meant by the term 'relative' and thus misunderstood what the question was assessing. Instead, they perhaps talked about time of day or city centre and thus answers were at best tangential. The better answers considered historical, situational and cross-cultural deviance and gave examples to exemplify their points. Culture and religion were also frequently considered and resulted in some good answers being seen.

Question 6

- (a) This question highlighted the need for candidates to ensure that they have learnt clear and precise definitions for the key terms in the specification and that they read the question carefully before answering. Here, for example, a number ignored the term 'juvenile' in the question and so only provided a partial answer.
- (b) The quality of responses seen here were mixed. Some candidates ignored the requirement not to talk about relative deprivation, others failed to focus on the term 'urban areas'. Those that scored highly typically talked about such things as more opportunities in the city and the pressure of constant temptation from consumer items, advertising and shops.
- (c) There was generally a good range of answers seen here considering such factors as symmetrical roles, single parent families, Feminism, the greater independence of women and the lessening of social control resulting in more freedom and choice.
- (d) Not all candidates understood what was meant by the term 'relative deprivation' and thus failed to focus specifically enough upon the demands of the question. Alternative explanations for crime (such as peer pressure, boredom, status frustration etc) were used well on the whole in evaluation.

Section D: *Media*

Question 7

- (a) There was often only partial understanding shown of the term 'dominant values' and thus a lot of candidates failed to score full marks here. Clear and precise glossaries produced by candidates for revision should help to amend this.
- (b) A well-answered question with a range of correct answers seen, including *sex objects*, *domestic workers*, *weak* and *emotional*. A wide range of accurate and creditable answers were seen here.
- (c) This question was not particularly well answered with candidates often failing to discuss specific ways that the media encouraged social conformity. The few that did this well typically talked about norms and values, role models and stereotyping.
- (d) Candidates who had clearly studied the media as a topic and were sure about what the 'uses and gratifications' model claimed, answered this question well. They talked about such factors as selective exposure, the active audience, user generated content etc. As alternative viewpoints, candidates typically discussed alternative models of media effects such as the hypodermic syringe and the two step flow model. Good examples were also seen here to back up points made.

Question 8

- (a) Most answers relied on examples, which gained some credit, as candidates had difficulty providing a complete definition. An answer stating only 'the Internet' was not enough to gain maximum marks.
- (b) This question was not answered well on the whole and most candidates were unable to describe two distinct features of popular culture. To score the maximum marks available answers needed to include specific sociological points such as its mass appeal, its links with American/global culture and/or it being typically mainstream in nature.
- (c) A number of common sense answers were seen for this question were was not highly credited. . To score the maximum marks available answers needed to include, terms such as on demand, convergence, interactivity and immediate access.
- (d) A range of answers were seen here. The strongest answers looked at the power and influence of the audience, particularly with the advent of new media and technology in a postmodern society. The alternative viewpoints then often considered competing explanations such as owners, media professionals and advertising all influencing content.