

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 0495/11

Paper 1

## Key messages

- Candidates need to be clear about the difference between a sampling frame and a sampling technique.
- When the data response **Question 1(c)** includes a table, graph or chart, candidates are encouraged to study any information above or below the graphic as they are likely to provide creditworthy points. For example, in this paper, the information above the table tells us that the source was adapted, the information came from selected countries, the information only comes from 2020, the data comes from official statistics etc. If accurately described, such points would enable candidates to gain full marks.
- It is a good idea to practice 'development' with candidates in preparation for tackling questions requiring more extended answers (**Questions 1(f)** and **1(g)**) and option **Questions (c), (d)** and **(e)**). They should also develop each point in a paragraph to fully explain the meaning. This evidence includes explanation of the point, examples and/or sociological studies, sociological theory or empirical evidence.

## General comments

Overall, candidates in this session showed good engagement with the questions, topics and the assessment objectives. Time management appears to have been good with very few candidates not finishing the paper. There were no rubric errors and only a small number of non-responses.

**Section A** 'Methodology' provided a good test of candidates' knowledge of research methodology and concepts. Most candidates were able to extract and interpret appropriate information from the source in **Questions 1(a)** and **1(c)** respectively. Most had some knowledge of the limitations of group interviews (**Question 1(d)**) and of the strengths and limitations of quantitative data (**Question 1(e)**). **Question 1(f)** was the most challenging question for candidates. As a 10 mark question, this question requires more detailed development of points. Many candidate responses made clear and confident use of methodological concepts but there is still a tendency to use the term reliability as a synonym for validity.

In the option questions, the 'Culture, identity and socialisation' option was far more popular than 'Social Inequality' and candidates tended, on average, to have more success in the former. In both option questions, most candidates showed good overall knowledge and understanding of relevant theories, concepts and arguments. Exam technique could be improved regarding the organisation of points and evidence for some candidates (see key messages) but in general candidates had a breadth of knowledge and the ability to understand and discuss sociological perspectives on real life social issues.

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A: Theory and Methods**

#### **Question 1**

(a) Almost all candidates correctly identified the two countries with the smallest difference in life expectancy as Ghana and Pakistan.

(b) This question asked candidates to identify two sampling frames. Candidates seemed to find this question challenging and very few were able to score full marks. In sociological research, a sampling frame is a list from which a sample is selected. Most candidates confused sampling frame with sampling technique or method, offering incorrect answers such as random sampling and stratified sampling.

(c) This data response question required candidates to use information from Source A. They needed to describe two problems with using the data for understanding life expectancy across the world. The question drew a variable response. A good strategy for answering the question is to identify, using quotation marks, an element from within the source as a potential problem. For example, 'the data has been "adapted"'. Then describe why that is a problem. For example, 'This means the material in the table has been changed or altered in some way, which means it may not show accurate figures on life expectancy across the world.' There were multiple different potential problems with the material in source A. Some candidates ignored the information in the descriptor and engaged in speculation about why the data might be inaccurate. Candidates who scored less well often only identified a problem from the source, but did not describe it, or answers were too vague to credit as they were unconnected to the source.

(d) Few candidates were able to describe two limitations of group interviews and score full marks. Examiners were looking for limitations of interviews done in a *group* although clearly expressed limitations of interviews *per se* were accepted. The best answers included: group interviews can be time-consuming and difficult to transcribe due to multiple voices; some people may dominate group discussions so that other views are not heard; or the interview is difficult to manage, for example due to the possibility of the discussion going off topic. Other candidates identified the Interviewer Effect as a potential problem, or the idea that respondents may give socially desirable answers due to the influence of others in the group. Whatever limitation was identified, candidates needed to make it clear exactly how or why it is a limitation of the method. The issue of such interviews being time-consuming to conduct was not creditworthy as they are unlikely to take any longer in practice than an individual unstructured or even semi-structured interview.

(e) The strengths and limitations of using quantitative in sociological research was a challenging question for many candidates. As in **Question 1(d)**, the best way to answer this question is, firstly, to identify a known strength or limitation of quantitative data. For example, strengths might include that it allows for patterns and trends to be seen, it can be converted into statistics and displayed graphically, or that it enables comparisons to be made across time or between variables. Once a strength is identified, a candidate should describe or briefly develop how or why it is a strength of using quantitative data. In the first example above – patterns and trends – one could argue this allows sociologists to see changes in data over time, on social issues such as unemployment, voting behaviour etc. Limitations that were seen by Examiners included that it lacks depth and detail, and hence cannot be used to achieve a complete understanding of social behaviours; that quantitative data in the form of official statistics can be manipulated for political purposes and hence lacks validity, such as crime statistics; that quantitative data is gained via closed or scaled questions, in which people are limited in terms of how they can answer, and thus they cannot express what they really think and feel. Many candidates made less than two strengths and limitations and/or made vague points that lacked reference to the use of quantitative data.

(f) This question required candidates to explain why interpretivists prefer a micro approach to sociological research. Unlike preceding questions, answers are marked in bands. A minimum of three well developed points are required for band 3 (8 – 10 marks). These points should be roughly a paragraph in length. Points which are shorter are likely to be classed as undeveloped or only partially developed. The best answers showed an understanding of the interpretivist perspective in their answers. For example, some candidates associated a micro approach with a preferred emphasis on individuals in order to gain a deep understanding of thoughts and feelings. Others discussed the desirability of a qualitative approach where individuals are encouraged to speak freely and in their own words to achieve an accurate view of their mindset – such methods concentrating on a 'deep dive' into a small sample. Some candidates oriented their points around particular micro methods such as covert participant observation, case studies or unstructured interviews. Most responses to this question often contained a range of points and marks were limited to band 1 or band 2 because of a lack of proper explanation or development.

(g) This essay question required candidates to focus on the extent to which it is possible to achieve validity in sociological research. Most answers scored in band 1 (1 – 4 marks) or band 2 (5 – 8 marks) with relatively few achieving band 3 (9 – 12 marks). There were no band 4 (13 – 15 marks) answers. The relatively low scores on this question were linked with the length of responses with many not stretching to a full page. Validity means accuracy of data and is associated with the interpretivist perspective in sociological research. A good strategy was for candidates to make several points on how different interpretivist methods manage to achieve high validity. The best answers focused on the ability of a researcher to establish initial rapport and to clarify misunderstandings leading to more valid responses. Others discussed the ability to probe

interviewees for greater detail or participant observers being able to achieve *Verstehen* or an insider's point of view. Similarly, on the *against* side, these points could be countered with arguments from a positivist perspective. A positivist perspective could be used to criticise attempts to gain validity, for example by pointing out the ethical failings of covert observations or by attacking the bias or lack of objectivity in methods where researchers engage in interviews or observations. A small number of responses showed no understanding of the issue in the question and hence failed to score any marks.

### **Section B: Culture, identity and socialisation**

#### **Question 2**

(a) This question asked candidates to define the term 'secondary socialisation.' It drew a good response with many candidates achieving two marks by referring to the idea of learning norms and values after primary socialisation or outside of the family. In addition, many gave examples such as school, peers or the media. Where candidates only scored one mark, it was usually due to them missing out one of the two elements needed or the answer was too vague to achieve credit.

(b) This question required candidates to describe two stereotypes of elderly people. Candidates who scored well often identified stereotypes such as that the elderly are seen as frail and helpless or cannot understand or use digital devices. Whilst most candidates clearly understood what a stereotype is, relatively few responses scored full marks. This was either due to only one stereotype being described or to a lack of description after initial identification of one or two stereotypes. In answer to the point about frailty, a creditable description could have made a link to the idea that old people are seen as becoming a burden on the family because they are perceived to need a lot of care.

(c) This question focused on how agencies of socialisation can influence gender identity. Some reference to an agency or agencies of socialisation was needed in order to achieve full credit but partial credit was given for responses which discussed particular strategies of socialisation into gender identity, without specifying an agency. The best answers made three fully developed, conceptual points. Popular answers focused on the influence of the media through gender representation in magazines, advertising and new media influencers, through the family via canalisation and manipulation and the peer group via peer pressure. Most candidates could identify one or more ways people are socialised into a gender identity the discriminator between band 1 (1 – 3 marks) and band 2 (4 – 6 marks) was the clarity of development of each point. If points are only stated, candidates cannot move beyond band 1.

(d) This question asked candidates to explain why formal social control is important in society. Candidates could approach the 'why' aspect of the question in different ways. For example, the most common route was to focus on formal agencies such as the government, police, the courts. Taking the police as an example, it would be a good idea to discuss measures that police take such as arrest, coercion or fines and then to explain why these have an impact in controlling people's behaviour e.g. due to fear of the punishments, reputational damage etc. The other way of tackling the question would be to concentrate on the idea of formal control as rules and law based sanctions and discuss examples of that, e.g. laws create a framework for everyone in society to live by and create social solidarity as people unite against lawbreakers. Few candidates scored marks in the top band. Most scored in band 2 or band 1 due to having less than three well developed points.

(e) The essay question focused on the extent to which sub-cultures cause conflict in society. Many candidates found this one of the most difficult questions on the paper. The question itself did not specify a type of sub-culture and candidates explored points linked to youth sub-cultures, anti-school sub-cultures, deviant and criminal sub-cultures such as gangs and also extremist religious subcultures. In terms of youth sub-cultures, many candidates attempted to engage in the theoretical debate between consensus theorists (functionalism) and conflict theorists (Marxism and feminism) on this issue. Marxist arguments explained how some sub-cultures express rebellion against capitalism, for example the skinheads. Feminist approaches to sub-culture often focused on the patriarchal nature of most spectacular youth sub-cultures and McRobbie's bedroom subculture as an alternative female-based grouping. Functionalists, on the other hand, were said to argue that sub-cultures can be a useful source of support for youth in the difficult transition to adulthood in many societies. Non-theoretical arguments against the view were often linked to the stylistic features and shared interests of youth subcultures, for example in a type of music, and the

way that they promote a sense of belonging for young people. Candidates who scored in band 1 and band 2 often argued from common sense. There were few one-sided answers and most were able to suggest at least one contra argument. The main challenge for candidates was formulating these as substantive evidenced points.

### **Section C: Social Inequality**

#### **Question 3**

(a) Many candidates achieved two marks in defining a reserve army of labour. Common answers featured the idea of a group of workers who are employed during economic prosperity but then fired when the economy goes into recession. A few responses showed no understanding of the term whilst others were able to identify the workforce element for one mark.

(b) In this 4 mark question, candidates were asked to describe two examples of institutional racism. Common correct answers referred to police targeting some ethnic groups, discrimination in schools, in media representations and various forms of racism in the workplace such as discrimination in recruitment and differential pay rates for ethnic minorities. Candidates needed to make some reference to an institution to gain full credit. A few candidates gave responses linked to social class and gender rather than racism.

(c) The question asked how people can experience a cycle of poverty. Candidates should aim to offer three points with simple development to score marks in the top of band 2 (5 – 6 marks). Common answers included ideas such as children are born into families already living in poverty and become trapped in it. This theme was explored in several ways. For example, that such families were materially deprived, in some cases in absolute poverty, and hence parents are preoccupied with mere survival. This, in turn, can have a negative effect on children's education and the cycle continues. People in the cycle of poverty experience fatalism which can lead to other values, such as immediate gratification, which inhibit the chance of escaping the poverty trap. Candidates who only made one point or several undeveloped points were awarded marks in band 1.

(d) This question asked candidates to explain why feminists argue that society is patriarchal. It was an accessible question with a wide range of possible answers. Common responses referred to various forms of sexism and discrimination against women in the workplace such as the glass ceiling or horizontal segregation. Other creditworthy points referred to the socialisation of children into harmful gender stereotypes and social expectations. Weaker responses scored marks in band 1 or low band 2 due to a lack of range and quality of development. For example, some answers referred to misogyny and stereotypes but often did not develop the point with an example or link to a sociological concept.

(e) The essay question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which government measures have reduced inequalities between rich and poor in society. Most candidates were able to identify government measures as laws, equal opportunities and/or various aspects of the welfare state though not all were able to discuss such measures in any depth or detail. Common answers referred to progressive taxation, food stamps, help with housing, free education or scholarships and help with educational resources at school. In evaluation, references to the Marxist criticism of the welfare state being used by the ruling class to distract and pacify the poor, creating a false consciousness and a dependency culture. Others argued that government benefits can trap the poor in poverty or that government measures rarely ease inequalities in capitalist society due to the profit motive, which makes poor people 'wage slaves' to the bourgeoisie. Whilst many good quality sociological points were advanced in a two-sided debate, responses sometimes fell short due to having only a partial explanation. As a result, many candidates scored in band 2 (5 – 8 marks) and only a few scored in band 3 (9 – 12 marks).

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Paper 0495/12

Paper 1

## Key messages

- In **Questions 1(d), 1(e) and 1(f)**, which require knowledge of the strengths and limitations of particular research methods and approaches, responses should avoid using generic points such as 'people may lie' as these are not specific to any particular method and are hence not creditworthy, unless contextualised. For example, if a respondent is interviewed on the subject of racial prejudice by someone from an ethnic minority, they may give a socially desirable answer, i.e. lie in order to maintain a good relationship in the interview situation. To assert 'people may lie' without this kind of context is not specific enough. Similarly, answers that assert that a research method is 'cheap' or 'expensive' are best avoided as strengths or limitations.
- Responses showed that many candidates are confusing the Hawthorne effect, which applies to observations, with the interviewer effect.
- Responses should be organised using distinct paragraphs for the extended answers to **Questions 1(f), 1(g), 2(c), 2(d), 2(e), 3(c), 3(d) and 3(e)**. Within each paragraph the point should be developed by reference to explanation and evidence. The latter includes examples, sociological studies, sociological theory or empirical evidence such as statistics.

## General comments

Overall, some good quality responses were in evidence across all sections of the paper, demonstrating a positive engagement with the questions and the three assessment objectives. There were few non-responses or timing issues and almost no rubric errors.

**Section A** 'Methodology' proved to be a good test of candidates' knowledge of key research concepts and methods. Responses showed a generally sound understanding of research methodology, particularly qualitative data and the consequences of the interviewer effect. Knowledge and understanding of sampling choices is an area where candidates can improve. Analysis and interpretation of the source material was generally good. Many candidate responses made clear and confident use of methodological terms.

The 'Culture, identity and socialisation' option was almost twice as popular as 'Social Inequality'. In both option questions, most candidates showed sound and, in some cases, excellent knowledge and understanding of the key theories, concepts and arguments within the topics. The full range of marks was seen by Examiners. Responses had fewer long introductions to the more extended option questions, which is an improvement from previous sessions. In terms of quality, whilst some candidates organised evidence very effectively in option **Questions (d) and (e)**, some responses lacked range and/or were not sufficiently sociologically engaged/conceptual. A number of the essay responses were not organised into paragraphs and tended towards description, which did not demonstrate enough analysis in their synthesis of the material. There were also a few list-like and/or one-sided answers. Nonetheless, some responses showed insight and sophistication in their grasp of the question and handling of the sociological evidence.

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A: 'Theory and methods'**

##### **Question 1**

(a) Almost all candidates successfully identified Nigeria and Uganda as the two countries with the biggest difference in the estimated average age of marriage. The most common incorrect answers were Ghana and India.

(b) The majority of candidates were able to score full marks by identifying two primary methods used by positivist sociologists. Possible responses included questionnaires, surveys, structured interviews and experiments. Some candidates incorrectly identified interpretivist, rather than positivist, methods such as observation or unstructured interviews. Others identified sources of secondary evidence such as official statistics rather than primary methods. A few candidates also listed sampling techniques instead of primary research methods. Some responses included 'interviews' which was too vague to credit as a positivist method.

(c) The data response question drew a variety of responses. Candidates were asked to use Source A to describe two reasons why the data may not be accurate. Candidates who scored full marks clearly identified a potential problem with accuracy directly from Source A. For example, the fact that the information has been adapted, it is quantitative data, it comes from official statistics or that the data was last collected in 2020. Once a problem has been clearly identified *using the source*, the best approach is to then describe how or why it may lead to inaccuracy. So, the fact that data was last collected in 2020 means that it may be outdated in 2024 and the average age of marriage may now be different. Sometimes candidates scored 2 marks as they were able to identify two reasons for inaccuracy from the source but did not expand or develop their explanation. References to the sample of countries were not creditworthy as the question is about accuracy rather than representativeness.

(d) This question asked candidates to describe two limitations of using self-completion questionnaires in sociological research. Most candidates focused on the idea of self-completion with no researcher present but some candidates identified issues with questionnaires per se. Using the former approach, many answers described how a lack of a researcher present meant that questions could not be clarified and hence misunderstanding can occur, skewing data; or the fact that people may not complete or return the questionnaire if there is no one there to ensure completion, leading to a low response rate; or the idea that researchers can never be sure that whoever completed the questionnaire was, in fact, the person it was aimed at, posing issues for the representativeness of the data gained. Candidates who focused on the fact that it is a questionnaire often selected likelihood of only gaining quantitative data from closed questions, which lacks depth and detail. Answers which simply stated that people may lie or that researchers may be biased were too vague and non-specific to questionnaires to gain credit.

(e) This question on the strengths and limitations of using qualitative data drew a variety of responses. Popular strengths included the depth and detail qualitative data yields, helping researchers to understand individual meanings and motivations, and the data is also in respondents' own words and likely to offer a highly valid account of social behaviour. Common limitations identified the time needed to analyse qualitative data in comparison to quantitative, and the difficulty of drawing comparisons due to the fact that qualitative data likely emerges from open questions and a non-standardised approach. References to a lack of reliability were given credit. Candidates needed to write more than just defining reliability to get their second mark, simply stating that qualitative data is hard to replicate was not sufficient. A few candidates strayed too far into discussions of qualitative methods rather than qualitative data. Issues such as that qualitative data is expensive, people may lie or that it is cheap/costly are generic points that are too vague to credit.

(f) This question on the interviewer effect was challenging for some candidates. The interviewer effect occurs as a result of the interviewer's social characteristics or as a result of something they may do or say. The question asked why this effect can impact validity. The most successful band 3 answers (8 – 10 marks) developed three substantial points. A few candidates argued that the interviewer can have a positive effect on validity – taking time to build rapport – which was creditworthy. Popular correct points discussed different social characteristics such as an interviewer's age, race, social class or gender and often described a scenario where this would likely lead to a respondent giving socially desirable answers or withholding their true opinion.

Others focused on the tone of voice, body language or general demeanour on the interviewer. Candidates then needed to discuss why this may lead to inaccurate data being gathered to gain full credit. Some answers only gained partial credit as they argued that respondents may lie, offer socially desirable answers or may be inhibited in their response due to the interviewer, but such answers did not explain how the interviewer, or their behaviour, could cause such an impact. A few responses talked about observations rather than interviews which was not creditworthy.

(g) This question asked about the extent to which sampling choices are the most important factor in the research process. Sampling choices could refer to sampling frames, sample size, techniques and access to a sample. Most presented balanced answers providing more than one argument for each side of the debate with a conclusion at the end. Candidates seemed to find this question more challenging than either of the option essays. Many responses found it difficult to engage with issues relating to sampling, beyond describing several types of sampling technique. The strongest responses discussed in detail why particular sampling techniques are used and how they can impact research. For example, opportunity or random sampling may be chosen for ease, snowball sampling for hard to reach groups and stratified sampling for representativeness if different social groups are needed. Other common points included the idea of sampling as more time and cost efficient than sampling a whole target population; the need for samples to cohere with the main aims and hypothesis; and how macro and micro research can affect sampling choices. A few candidates described different sampling techniques but were unable to draw out their importance. Most candidates found the against side of the argument easier. Here, candidates discussed a variety of factors in the research process which are equally, if not more, important than sampling choices. Points commonly seen argued that topic, aims and hypothesis, pilot studies, research methods, funding, ethics and theoretical issues (such as positivism or interpretivism) were also crucial in a research project. A few responses were one side and/or showed little understanding of sampling choices.

## **Section B: ‘Culture, socialisation and identity’**

### **Question 2**

(a) The definitional question on ‘culture’ drew an excellent response. Most answers identified culture as the way of life of a group or a whole society. Many candidates mentioned norms and values as central to culture. Others gave examples such as the language, clothing, foods, music etc. of a society.

(b) This question asked candidates to describe two ways male roles are changing in modern industrial societies. Overall, the question was answered well, with most candidates being able to identify and describe at least one change. Popular answers included the change from being sole breadwinner to also helping out in the household, with a few men switching roles completely and becoming a househusband. Others identified the fact that males are now entering what were once seen as ‘feminine’ occupations giving examples such as nursing or working in a hair salon. Others focused on changes in gender roles linked to masculinity from hegemonic to the ‘New Man,’ metrosexual masculinity. A few answers were more focused on changing female roles, mentioning males only in passing and hence could not achieve full credit.

(c) This question about how sociologists criticise the idea of a multicultural society was more challenging. Popular correct answers included that some argue it is too idealistic to expect people with diverse norms and values to co-exist with no conflict. Some argued that multicultural societies give too many rights to minorities and some prove costly to society e.g. children being educated in their native language, paying for translators in healthcare, education etc. Other candidates pointed out that multiculturalism almost encourages minority communities to stay separate and not integrate fully into mainstream society which can cause problems. Another common response was that living alongside other communities may inevitably lead to a loss of a cultural heritage as younger generations become exposed to the main culture. Some answers strayed into a discussion of globalisation and global culture which was not generally creditworthy. A few responses showed no knowledge of multicultural society and gave answers focused on gender instead.

(d) This question asked candidates to explain why research on feral children provides evidence for the importance of socialisation. Most responses scored in band 2 rather than band 3. The best responses linked points directly to case studies of feral children, for example Genie Wylie, Oxana Malaya, Rochom P’ngieng and John Ssebunya. Successful answers often broke down the discussion into the effects of inadequate primary socialisation in particular, though some used the

case of Rochom to show that socialisation needs to continue beyond the initial primary stage for it to be truly effective. Others divided points into a discussion of the effects of neglect versus being raised by animals. Most responses focused on actual skills, norms and values that such children lack and backed this up by reference to examples linked to feral children— such as not walking upright, being unable to speak, eating raw food and having animalistic mannerisms. A few responses discussed children who receive socialisation which is inadequate and such children then become uncivilised and highly deviant or criminal. General knowledge of feral children and socialisation was good. To improve, candidates should organise their points to beneficial effect. Often, one point coalesced into another such that it was difficult to see where one finished and another began.

(e) In the essay question, most responses were two sided and had a range of points for and against the view that education is the most influential agent of socialisation. Points in favour of education were frequently focused on the effectiveness of the hidden curriculum, the formal curriculum, sanctions and rewards, teachers as role models and the pervasive peer pressure in schools. In evaluation candidates rightly turned their attention to other agencies of socialisation and their claims to be more influential than education. Many began with the family using primary socialisation to instil the building blocks of all subsequent secondary socialisation, including that in schools. Common points for the family included the teaching of basic skills such as walking and talking and the instillation of gender roles through the techniques of canalisation, manipulation etc. Many responses referred to the power of the media in the contemporary world with some responses making insightful theoretical reference to Marxism and feminism. For example, the idea that people now live in a media-saturated society where they are constantly exposed to gendered representations in tv and film (feminism), consumerist ideas propagated by advertisers and political propaganda via news broadcasts (Marxism). Discussions of new media often featured with the impact of influencers and peer pressure many people experience on social media such as TikTok and Facebook. The wider peer group outside school was also discussed in terms of the need to fit in and belong to the peer group who adopt a range of positive and negative strategies such as compliments or the threat of ostracism in order to maintain group conformity. Religion was also a common focus with the teaching of moral codes and social control through sanctions and ultimately the promise of heaven and threat of hell. Others looked at the workplace which often neglected the idea of re-socialisation into employer norms and values as most answers solely discussed social control through rewards and sanctions such as promotions and getting fired. A few candidates devoted a paragraph to the police and penal system which are not agencies of socialisation and hence were not generally creditworthy. Less successful answers offered only weak descriptions of agencies of socialisation or did not develop sufficient points in enough depth to achieve credit beyond band 2 (5 – 8 marks).

### **Section C: ‘Social inequality’**

#### **Question 3**

(a) Most candidates identified the term ‘domestic labour’ correctly, referring to two elements required for a comprehensive definition, e.g. work done in the household. Some responses referred to the fact that the work was unpaid and often done by women. Examples given included cooking and cleaning. A minority of responses showed no understanding of domestic labour, referring to low wage workers or forced labour.

(b) There was a fair response to this question asking candidates to describe two examples of how a person’s status may be ascribed. Common correct answers included gender, age and ethnicity. Responses frequently developed such points by explaining how people are born into such statuses, how they are difficult to change, and some gave an indication of what such status means. For example, having the status of female in some cultures may automatically signal a lower standing than if born a male. Being born into a social class was also an acceptable answer and many responses featured descriptions of royalty as an ascribed status which confers immediate privilege. Other responses identified one’s position in a caste system where it is difficult, if not impossible, to change the status into which one is born. Responses that argued that simply being rich or being in a low class were not creditworthy as it was unclear whether this was a state into which a person was born.

(c) This question asking candidates to explain how individuals can achieve social mobility was answered well by many candidates. Popular answers explained that individuals can work hard, get educated, gain promotion, win the lottery or get married as ways of improving their social class.

Many were able to identify 2 if not 3 points though conceptual answers were less common. The strongest answers also referred to changing one's social class rather than simply achieving more status or moving up the social hierarchy. Stronger answers offered several conceptual points which included the idea of meritocracy, blue and white collar work, life chances, intra and intergenerational mobility. Examples of downward social mobility were also acceptable though less common. Example seen included losing a job or going bankrupt.

(d) This question as to why women experience inequality in the workplace was also answered well by many candidates. Most responses identified the view with a feminist perspective and proceeded to outline several conceptual examples of gender inequality in the workplace such as vertical segregation or glass ceiling, horizontal segregation, the gender pay gap and sexual harassment. Other responses focused on patriarchal expectations of women to be primarily child carers and homemakers and stereotypes of women being weaker by nature or gentle and submissive, not qualities associated with leadership in the workplace. Weaker answers presented fewer ideas and in a less sociological, more commonsense manner, referring to how women are 'seen' by men in power i.e. as unsuitable for employment in 'masculine' jobs or as bosses.

(e) This essay-style question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which Marxism is the best explanation for social inequality. Most candidates presented two-sided answers and offered several points. The differentiator tended to be the level of knowledge of Marxism and competing theories. The strongest answers were conceptual, explaining the basic division between the ruling bourgeoisie and the proletariat in terms of the former owning the means of production and the latter being their exploited 'wage slaves.' Other common points referred to how the bourgeoisie maintain their power and status via the ideological state apparatus such as education, which breeds a false class consciousness, and the repressive state apparatus such as the police and courts which stand ready to coerce the proletariat into submission (Althusser). Some evoked the idea of revolution as the only solution to the inequality of capitalism. Weaker responses outlined a more superficial account, in terms of simply describing examples of social class inequalities in different areas of social life, with little reference to Marxist ideas. In evaluation, many responses drew upon various aspects of functionalist and feminist theory. Some attempted to include Weberian arguments, referring to 'market situation' and ideas of class, status and party though, in general, these were not done as well as points linked to the other two theories. A few candidates directly criticised Marxist theory, arguing, for example, that they under-rated the successes of capitalism in improving people's life chances, they ignore the importance of the middle class(es) and predict a revolution that has not really occurred beyond a few isolated countries. The strongest responses attempted to address the 'to what extent' aspect of the question in their conclusion. Weaker responses tended to lack both range and detail, some showing only a limited understanding of Marxism.

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Paper 1

## Key messages

- Knowledge of the strengths and limitations of primary research methods is stronger than that of sources of secondary evidence, such as media content (**Question 1(d)**).
- Extended responses (**Questions 1(f), 1(g)** and option **Questions 2(c), 2(d), 2(e), 3(c), 3(d)** and **3(e)**) should be written in paragraph form to prevent distinct points overlapping or coalescing into each other.
- In some responses candidates neglected the context of the question. For example, the requirement to discuss validity in **Question 1(g)** and gender identities in **Question 2(e)**.
- Examples are a form of evidence and can make a positive difference to marks awarded, particularly in extended questions.

## General comments

Overall, candidates showed a good level of engagement with the question paper and the three assessment objectives. All candidates completed the compulsory question in **Section A**. There was an almost equal split in terms of the option questions with just over half of candidates choosing to answer questions in **Section B** and just under half choosing **Section C**.

The level of knowledge and understanding of basic sociological ideas was good with a wide range of concepts, and theory being displayed in many responses. The application of knowledge and marshalling of evidence in more extended questions could be improved. These are more difficult skills to master but would lead to improved outcomes for many candidates. In essay responses, analysis and evaluation skills evidenced by the strongest responses were impressive, and most candidates were able to offer a two-sided response.

Candidates appeared to have been well prepared in general, evidenced by the fact that time management appears to have been good, with few candidates not finishing the paper. There were very few rubric errors and relatively few non-responses, the largest number being for the question on structuralism (**Question 1(f)**).

## Comments on specific questions

### **Section A: Theory and Methods**

#### **Question 1**

(a) This 2-mark source-based question drew many excellent responses. Almost all responses were able to achieve full marks by correctly identifying Sweden and Germany as the two countries with the biggest increase in the number of paid days off between 1980 and 2000. Occasionally, Denmark was given as a response which was incorrect.

(b) There was a similarly strong response to this question which asked candidates to identify two primary methods that could be used to investigate people's experiences of work. A range of correct answers were given including questionnaires and surveys, interviews of different types, observations and experiments. Answers that were seen but not creditworthy included pilot studies, diary and quantitative/quantitative data. Citing postal and telephone questionnaires only achieved 1 mark as these are simply different ways of administering the same method rather than two separate methods.

(c) There was a varied response to this source analysis question. Candidates were asked to use the source to describe two problems with using the data in Source A on paid days off work. Popular correct responses began by clearly identifying two possible problems directly from the source, for example the data was last recorded in 2000 or the data is drawn from official statistics. These were then developed by briefly showing how or why this may be a problem. So, data from 2000 is likely to be outdated and may not be helpful in understanding the number of paid days off in those countries in 2024. Other popular points identified the fact that only selected European countries featured in the table, which is unrepresentative of other regions in the world, or that the data has been adapted which means that the original data may have been changed in some way and hence may not be entirely accurate. Some responses were confined to 2 marks because they identified correct points but did not develop them to describe the nature of the problem with the data. Responses which simply asserted invalidity, for example from the fact that the data in the table was quantitative, could not achieve the second mark as more detail is needed.

(d) This question asked candidates to describe two limitations of using media content in sociological research. It proved a challenging question. Very few responses featured examples of media content such as documentaries, news programmes, social media posts etc. This could have been helpful in enabling candidates to focus on possible problems. For example, pointing out that anyone can post on social media platforms such as Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) could then lead to the idea that information cannot be taken at face value and is sometimes difficult to verify. The strongest responses identified possible limitations such as that media context was often biased, used for propaganda, and sometimes completely fake, which then transfers inaccuracies into the researcher's own work; or that certain social groups are stereotyped or under-represented in the mainstream media which means generalisations cannot be made about a whole society based on such misrepresentations. Other answers seen included the fact that media content is secondary data which was not created for the researcher's purpose and hence may not be entirely useful for their topic. Some responses identified one good point – for example media bias – but then were unable to identify a second creditworthy point. A few responses assumed that media content is entirely quantitative which is incorrect. Other responses were too vague to credit, often asserting that media content is 'invalid' without further explanation.

(e) This question asked for a description of two strengths and two limitations of using group interviews in sociological research. Stronger responses often focused on the same points, namely the time-saving element of interviewing multiple respondents rather than one to one, the idea that conversations between group members may facilitate new insights and that some people feel more comfortable in a group interview and hence may be more open, enhancing validity. Popular limitations included that some people may dominate which may mean not all views are heard, respondents may give socially desirable answers in the presence of others or that group interviews can be hard to manage and keep on track due to different personalities and possible disagreements. The idea of time-consuming was creditworthy but a second mark could only be achieved if linked to the analysis and evaluation of the resulting data rather than the time-consuming nature of a group interview per se which may not take any longer than a typical unstructured interview. Points made about a group interview enhancing representativeness were not creditworthy. A lack of reliability was given credit as a limitation, but responses had to go beyond merely defining reliability to be awarded the second mark. Weaker responses often did not make the requisite number of points or made vague generic allusions to group members lying (with no further explanation) or that researchers may be unable to maintain objectivity.

(f) Candidates appeared to find this extended 10-mark question challenging. Candidates were asked to explain why some sociologists use a structuralist approach to investigate society. The strongest answers honed in on the main features in the positivist approach. Responses in Band 3 (8 – 10 marks) made three or more well developed points. Popular points included the need for a macro or large-scale approach when investigating society to understand the 'bigger picture,' suggesting a large sample which is both representative and generalisable. A quantitative approach also featured allowing sociologists to measure patterns and trends in social attitudes and behaviours across time and to make comparisons between different populations or variables. Durkheim's study of suicide featured prominently. Other creditworthy points seen included that to understand society, sociologists need to understand how social institutions influence groups of people as people are effectively the puppets of larger social forces. Other responses linked structuralism with positivism and the need to adopt a scientific approach which is objective and value-free. A small number focused on consensus (functionalist) and conflict (Marxist and feminist) views of society though these often did not move beyond description. Many responses identified several creditworthy points but these were then only partially developed or undeveloped, limiting marks to Bands 1 (1 – 3

marks) and 2 (4 – 7 marks). Most marks were clustered within these two bands. A small number of responses showed no understanding of structuralism.

(g) This essay question focused on evaluating the extent to which observation is the most effective method for gathering valid data. Whilst many responses made a good range of points, very few showed good quality development in terms of what the question was asking for. Some responses neglected the requirement to link points to validity and instead gave a general evaluation of different types of observation, thus achieving only partial credit. The strongest responses made links to specific types of observation – covert/overt and participant/non-participant – and oriented points to validity or accuracy of data. Common correct points for the view included participant observation allowing an insider's point of view or *verstehen*, covert observation negates the Hawthorne Effect and ensures genuine behaviours, non-participant observation allowing researchers not to intrude on the groups thereby preserving objectivity and avoiding the bias that can accompany forming relationships within a group. A few responses cited the qualitative nature of the data gathered in observations as liable to produce an accurate picture in contrast to merely quantitative approaches. Studies such as Venkatesh featured and were used effectively. In evaluation, the inevitability of the Hawthorne Effect in overt observations was frequently mentioned along with the lack of rapport in non-participant studies. Some responses turned to other research methods, arguing that they were far more effective in achieving validity for various reasons, including unstructured interviews, longitudinal studies and/or a triangulated approach. The discriminators in this question were the quality of development and level of conceptuality in points. Some responses were too short as essay responses, often moving from one point to another in one long section rather than separating points into discrete paragraphs. Other weaker responses did not distinguish types of observation or made confused points with minimal or no reference to validity.

### **Section B: Culture, identity and socialisation**

#### **Question 2**

(a) This two-mark definitional question asked candidates to describe what is meant by the term 'status.' Most responses were able to score at least one if not both marks. The strongest responses defined status in terms of the respect or prestige that comes with social position although most described it in terms of the social position one has within the social hierarchy. Examples included males having a higher position in traditional societies or people with ascribed status as royalty being born with high status. A few responses confused status with roles.

(b) This question required candidates to describe two norms which have changed over time. Correct responses alluded to both past and present and a diverse range of norms were credited. For example, the norm for children to work to help support the family has now changed so that this may now be illegal as it is the norm for children to attend school. Weaker responses often stopped after identifying one or two norms and did not develop points in terms of a change.

(c) There was a good response to this question on how education is an agency of socialisation. Most responses identified at least two, if not more, points. Common points included the teaching of norms and values via the hidden curriculum, the use of sanctions and rewards by both teachers and peers to socially control candidates, the continued socialisation of children into gender roles and the teaching of skills and knowledge required for the workplace. In development, examples were commonly used to good effect. Few responses made theoretical links though these would have been appropriate. Weaker responses usually only made one or two points.

(d) This question on why some sociologists think that cultural diversity is positive for society proved more challenging than any other in **Section B**. Whilst many candidates were able to put forward creditworthy points, very few were able to fully develop them with examples, concepts or other evidence. Hence, even stronger responses tended to score in Band 2 (4 – 6 marks). Common responses included that people can become more open-minded and tolerant of different cultures as their lifestyles become normalised, thus lowering discrimination and racism against minority ethnic groups. Others discussed various examples of cultural exchange through fashion, foods and music and more identified economic benefits to having communities with roots in other countries – notably through tourism and the trade in goods consumed by these communities. Most responses focused on ethnic diversity though other forms of diversity were acceptable such as the range of sexual and gender identities that are now part of many societies. Responses which scored in Band 1 (1 – 3

marks) only made one developed point or several that were undeveloped, perhaps with one partially developed.

(e) This 15-mark essay question focused on the extent to which the media influences gender identities. There was a variable response, with very few Band 4 (13 – 15 marks) responses. The strongest responses tended to score in the top half of Band 3 (9 – 12 marks). Some responses presented a decent range of points in a two-sided debate, but often did not consistently develop their points in terms of the evidence presented in support of arguments. Other responses made only a passing link to gender identity or made no link at all. In support of the view, many struggled to give three arguments. Popular creditworthy points that were seen included the idea of media role models or influencers encouraging imitation by followers although few gave examples. Similarly, in arguments about the representation of males and females on TV (in programmes, news and advertising) and in film, there were references to the male gaze (Mulvey) and to stereotypes/the New Man but few examples to illustrate these points. Many responses put forward better arguments in evaluation, citing primary socialisation through canalisation and manipulation (Oakley), peer group pressure to conform to gender norms and the hidden curriculum and the gendered subject choices and teacher expectations. A few responses discussed workplace socialisation in gender identity by reference to the expectations of employers and sexism the employment practices. Several responses scored Band 1 (1 – 4 marks) due to being of paragraph length, though this often mirrored the quality of the essay in **Question 1(g)** in the same scripts.

### **Section C: Social Inequality**

#### **Question 3**

(a) The definitional question on the 'elite' was not answered as well as the corresponding question on 'status' in **Section B**. Responses that achieved both marks tended to refer to the elite as the upper or highest class in society, in other words those who hold the most wealth, power and status in the social hierarchy. Some included the phrase 'bourgeoisie'. Answers which only scored one mark lacked one of the two definitional elements required. A few responses showed no understanding of the term.

(b) There was a variable response to this question asking for a description of two ways disability can affect a person's life chances. The latter phrase was crucial to success and the strongest responses gave sociologically focused examples linked to various forms of social exclusion. Popular points included negative stereotyping in the media and discrimination or lack of access in areas such as education, employment, housing and transport etc. Others discussed the debilitating effects of the treatment of people with disability on mental health and life expectancy.

(c) This question asked candidates to explain how racial prejudice exists in education. Many candidates wrote knowledgeably about different teacher expectations and treatment of some ethnic groups, selection bias in some institutions, the impact of the hidden curriculum, bullying by peers, and the presence of the ethnocentric curriculum. A minimum of three developed, conceptual points are needed for Band 2 (5 – 6 marks). Only a few responses were able to attain this either due to insufficient points or less than three points being developed. The strongest responses drew on Becker's labelling theory and associated concepts such as stereotypes and the self-fulfilling prophecy. A few responses showed little understanding of racial prejudice, making points about gender rather than race or ethnicity.

(d) This extended question on why sociologists argue the underclass experience inequalities drew a mixed response. Examiners saw a wide range of points. Those who scored in Band 3 (6 – 8 marks) were able to make at least three well developed and conceptual points. Some responses used sociological theory to beneficial effect. For example, some argued the underclass are kept in a precarious social position due to capitalist exploitation, keeping the underclass on subsistence wages or else welfare dependent. Some responses used New Right ideas about the underclass experiencing fatalism and the desire for immediate gratification which become barriers to social mobility. Others argued that whilst functionalists believe in a meritocracy, the underclass face structural barriers such as a lack of education, poor health and living conditions which hinder their ability to find decent employment. Other popular points included the fact that the underclass is socially excluded, suffer material deprivation and sometimes struggle to cover basic necessities like food and shelter. Being caught in the poverty trap and the generational nature of the poverty cycle also featured in some responses. In summary, the knowledge on show was impressive in many responses. Weaker responses often needed to be unpacked with more detail and evidence.

(e) This essay question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which men's roles are changing in modern industrial societies. This was the most challenging question in **Section C**. Once again, a wide range of points were seen. In support of the view, some noted the change in employment from manufacturing to a service-based economy which lessens the requirement for hegemonic masculine traits such as physical strength and toughness and encouraging males to be more flexible, communicative and expressive in their new work roles. Due to the emergence of dual earner families, men's roles in the family are changing from being the sole breadwinner to having joint conjugal roles with their female partner, including helping with household chores and childcare. There were frequent references to the 'New Man' with some men even taking on a role reversal and becoming househusbands whilst the women become the main breadwinner. A few responses spent too long on how the role of women has changed – in the workplace for example – with the roles of men explained only briefly at the end of the point. In evaluation, many responses focused on the fact that little has changed in terms of male dominance in positions of power in the workplace and society in general. This was often explained via sexist practices designed to keep women out such as the glass ceiling or the 'old boys' network'. The pervasiveness of traditional stereotypes of male and female roles in some cultures and traditional societies also featured prominently. Other responses pointed to the coming of 'Retributive Man' (Rutherford) as a backlash to gains made by females and the loss of male power. Such masculinity is characterised by the use of threats and physical or sexual violence against women in the family and society more widely. Overall, this question was answered marginally better than the essay question in **Section B**. The strongest responses developed arguments of paragraph length giving evidence in support. This unpacking often involved concepts, examples and/or a study or theory reference. Responses which scored in Band 3 (9 – 12 marks) had a mixture of developed and partially developed points; in Band 2 (5 – 8 marks) fewer points were made and usually development was partial. Responses which scored in Band 1 for this essay were few but gave list-like answers with little supporting evidence or development.

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Paper 2

## Key messages

- Candidates do not need to write an introductory paragraph when answering any of the questions. Responses should focus on the question from the beginning to maximise marks.
- Many candidates do not write in paragraphs which makes it difficult for Examiners to differentiate between points and award for range. It would be beneficial for candidates to write in paragraph form, particularly in banded **Questions (c), (d) and (e)**.
- There was a good awareness that **Question (e)** requires a debate, with several points for and against, and a judgement at the end in the form of a conclusion. To further improve performance, candidates should include sociological evidence to substantiate each point made. This could be in the form of examples, statistics, sociological concepts, theory or even a sociological study. This way, answers will be better developed and explained.
- Some responses for **Questions (b) and (c)** are overly long. Responses here can be quite short – perhaps a couple of sentences per point. A couple of words will not meet the requirement to 'describe' in **(b)** questions or to explain in **(c)** questions. Understanding the requirements of the command words used is crucial to candidate success.
- Points in **Questions (d) and (e)** should be developed more fully, sociologically evidenced and always written in paragraphs. These questions are looking for depth, detail and complexity in the responses.
- Candidates' knowledge of definitions could be further improved. This would enable them to obtain full marks in **(a)** questions and help them to understand key terminology in other questions as well and be more able to apply it.
- Candidates should demonstrate their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This approach allowed many candidates to achieve good marks in this examination series. Some candidates could only score lower marks as their answers tended to be based on common sense rather than Sociology.
- Candidates should spend time thinking about what the questions are asking and planning answers to those longer questions before they start to write their response. This is particularly important in the 15-mark essay questions to ensure that candidates remain focused on the specific demands of the question set rather than writing at length but without answering the question.
- Candidates should use the number of marks per question as guidance for how much should be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. At times, for example, candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question, worth 6 marks, as for a **part (e)** question, worth 15 marks. Time management skills and regular practice of timed examination questions in the classroom will really help with this.

## General comments

In general, candidates showed a good and, in some cases, impressive knowledge of the subject matter, often integrating sociological conceptuality and, in many cases, a range of theory into their answers. **Family** and **Education** were the most popular questions followed by **Crime, deviance and social control**. Rubric errors were minimal and most candidates appeared to manage their time well.

Many candidates used relevant contemporary, global and localised examples alongside the more traditional 'textbook' evidence in order to justify and substantiate several of the points made. This demonstrated both sociological knowledge and the ability to apply sociological concepts and theory to the real world. Very few rubric errors were seen this examination session, allowing most candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number, or incorrectly numbered, their answers. Candidates should be aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

In the **part (a)** question, candidates should look to include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a really useful way of adding a second element to an answer and are encouraged.

**Part (b)** needs **two** distinctly different points with some development – candidates should separate these and label them clearly.

In **part (c)** questions, candidates should make sure there are more than two sociological points made, evidenced and developed.

For **part (d)**, candidates should adopt the same approach as for **(c)** but develop ideas further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts, development, quality of response and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** question.

In terms of the 15-mark **part (e)** question, candidates should organise their answers into paragraphs and develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Clear signalling of the points and the arguments that are being used to support (i.e. for or against) is also good practice. Responses should aim to include three developed points for and three developed points against the claim in the question. There also needs to be a well-focused conclusion that makes a supported judgement on the claim in the question. Each point made should be directly focused upon what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates are choosing to answer the 15-mark questions first to make sure that they do not run out of time. This worked well for several candidates but ultimately this is the candidates' own decision to make.

### Comments on specific questions

#### Question 1

##### Family

- (a)** Most candidates achieved at least one mark on the definition of 'child centredness'. Many candidates referred to priority and focus on the child within smaller families, exemplifying these ideas through decision making, specialist consumer markets etc.
- (b)** Whilst largely well answered, a minority of candidates did not provide answers that focused on a role, and instead listed norms/chores in the household which neither pointed to the role nor the conjugal nature of that role. The majority of candidates showed knowledge and understanding of conjugal roles, typically referring to joint/segregated/expressive/instrumental.
- (c)** Some candidates' knowledge of Marxist theory was commendable. Those who scored well in this question gave three developed Marxist views of the family. Some candidates used studies such as Feeley, Ansley and Benston to support their points. Areas of focus typically centred around the family's role in maintaining capitalism through the need to work, the breadwinner-housewife split roles, the family as consumer, and the ability of the family to act as a 'safety valve' in soaking up male frustrations from the workplace.
- (d)** Whilst candidates largely knew what a 'cereal packet family' was, some did not manage to signal three distinct ideas about why they are on the decline. The most successful responses considered core sociological ideas such as family diversity, secularisation, feminism, and changing norms and values.
- (e)** Candidates engaged well with this question. The most successful responses used clearly distinct ideas to show a range of reasons why families are still necessary, and a range of reasons why they are not. Theory was often used, such as Marxism and Feminism, to ensure a sociological debate was put forward. The changing role of families and the rise of non-traditional family households such as singlehood and friends as family were similarly well used. Some candidates would benefit from developing their skills of writing conclusions to really engage with the issues raised in the question.

#### Question 2

##### Education

- (a) On occasion, candidates confused deferred with immediate gratification. The most successful answers gave a clear indication of both the wait for rewards and the long-term goals. University was used as a good example.
- (b) Some responses did not recognise the core elements of formal education with few responses going beyond examples of one feature, i.e. the type of school offering the formal education. Candidates need to understand the distinct features of formal education, such as the syllabus, the assessment, the role of the teacher etc.
- (c) A clear split was seen between those candidates who knew what a comprehensive school was and those who wrote about schools in a generic and vague way. Strong answers were clearly able to discuss features of comprehensive schools such as equal opportunities, free admissions, cultural mixing and the lack of cost.
- (d) On the whole, candidates engaged well with the question, but a minority did not seem to know what an IQ test was. Strong responses explained that IQ tests could be criticised for their focus on one type of intelligence, the part that nerves can play, the middle class bias through pre-test tuition and their inability to recognise the fluid nature of intelligence over time.
- (e) This question was well engaged with by candidates. The strongest responses gave three clear home factors that affect educational achievement and picked distinct ideas such as material and cultural factors and developed them with clear examples and sociological references. Evaluation was also distinct and developed, often focussing on the role of teachers and schools in the academic achievement of candidates. Some strong answers did not achieve the top level of marks due to not including sociological concepts/evidence. These responses engaged well with the debate but did not take their answers to the top level.

### Question 3

#### Crime

- (a) Candidates largely engaged well with this question. Responses which did not score full marks often were too vague in their second element, needing perhaps an example of a cybercrime to fully demonstrate knowledge and understanding.
- (b) Many candidates clearly knew what the dark figure of crime was and were able to give features of it. Responses which scored full marks often included an example of a feature to succinctly develop their ideas, e.g. elaborating unreported crime with victims fear of reprisals.
- (c) Whilst many candidates were able to engage well with this question, some were confused about the methodology of victim surveys, not realising that they are nothing to do with the police. This limited the marks that could be awarded as clarity of understanding is essential. The strongest answers showed a range of distinct reasons victim surveys may not be accurate, such as a lack of representativeness, memory affecting validity, lack of validation, and the unofficial nature of the reports.
- (d) Generally, candidates understood what inadequate socialisation was and could discuss a range of ways that it could lead to crime. The most effective answers, that avoided repetition, discussed a variety of agents of socialisation such as the family, peer group and media. So, for example, inadequate socialisation through the media was linked to children watching violent media content and then imitating this in society through acts of crime.
- (e) Many candidates produced strong arguments for the claim but seemed to find evaluation points more challenging. Contemporary examples such as BLM and allegations of police racial bias were well used, as was labelling theory and chivalry thesis. Theories such as Marxism and feminism worked well on the 'for' side. On the 'against' side, candidates would be advised to consider what the functionalist argument would say in terms of equality. Similarly, arguing that the patterns and trends in the official statistics are correct and explaining why, would have allowed candidates to demonstrate that the police are simply targeting those social groups who are most likely to be criminal.

### Question 4

## Media

This option question was answered by very few candidates.

- (a) Many responses did not show understanding of the notion of the active audience in terms of interactivity.
- (b) Candidates had some idea of controller bias (e.g. propaganda) but did not consider other forms of media bias, such as that created through the journalists, directors and governments.
- (c) Many seemed not to understand the cultural effects model and thus were unable to demonstrate its cumulative effects upon the audience.
- (d) Responses discussed some simple ideas of why new media gives freedom to audiences, but these were largely around access to instant and large audiences and less about the actual reason it gives freedom such as its global nature or the instant nature of new media. Similarly, the user-generated content that is facilitated through new media and gives so much freedom to audiences was rarely discussed.
- (e) Candidates showed only minimal understanding of media owners' control over traditional media content. Points were simplistic and undeveloped and did not produce balanced debates. On the against side, candidates could have evaluated through the role of professionals and the audience, for example.

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Paper 2

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It was pleasing to note that there was a better understanding of sociological perspectives on the **Media** in the answers to **Question 4** this year. Rubric errors were minimal and most candidates appeared to manage their time well.

The majority of candidates answered **Questions 1** (Family) and **2** (Education). Fewer candidates answered **Question 3** (Crime and deviance) and fewer still answered **Question 4** (Media).

### **Comments on specific questions**

#### **Section A: Family**

##### **Question 1**

**(a)** Most candidates were able to achieve marks on the definition of 'monogamy'. Many defined it in terms of being married to one person at a time or one person for life. A few candidates did not understand the term and confused it with polygamy or serial monogamy. Candidates who scored one mark invariably made reference to the idea of being married but did not mention the idea of it being with just one other person.

**(b)** This question asked candidates to describe two examples of child-centredness. The best answers focused on examples of putting children first either within the family or in wider society. Common correct answers included various laws enacted to protect children, the introduction of childcare and other facilities specifically designed with child welfare in mind, media specialist advertising and 'pester power', and children now having a much greater say in family decisions e.g. divorce cases. Weaker responses often focused their points on mundane expectations such as socialising, taking care of or sending children to school. Some answers suggested the candidate had spent too long on this 4 mark question, scoring full marks but wasting time that could have been more profitably spent on the higher tariff questions.

**(c)** This question drew a mixed response in terms of interpreting the demands of the question. Stronger answers provided *specific* examples of families across named cultures to explain how family life is globally diverse, e.g. African-Caribbean matrifocal families, Asian extended families, Chinese DINK families and the emergence of same-sex families in some European countries. In the process, candidates discussed types of marriages, conjugal/gender roles, etc. A number of responses simply juxtaposed different universal types of family, e.g. nuclear, extended, reconstituted without providing any links to global diversity, different cultures, or parts of the world. For this reason, they could not attain marks in the higher band.

**(d)** There was a confident response to this question on why sociologists argue the family is an essential institution. Common answers focused on outlining several functions of the family as given

by functionalist sociologists, such as reproduction, socialisation (including gender roles), social control and the stabilisation of adult personalities. There were often references to Parson's warm bath theory and a few responses discussed the consequences of inadequate socialisation in the form of feral children and/or through the work of Charles Murray on single parent families. Other responses included the feminist and/or Marxist perspectives well, explaining the essential nature of the family for patriarchy and for capitalism. The best responses made three well developed points, with each point explaining a different reason as to why family is essential. Weaker responses tended to describe fewer than three points or simply listed reasons with little or no explanation.

**(e)** This 15-mark essay question required candidates to discuss the extent to which family life is equal for its members. The question drew responses in each mark band. The strongest responses included at least 6 well developed points in a balanced argument which finished with a focused conclusion. The best responses discussed the obvious examples of greater family equality such as the emergence of joint conjugal roles (Willmott and Young), the 'New man' identity and men as househusband, and greater equality for both women and children in decision-making. In arguments against, many candidates used the prevalence of domestic violence and child abuse as evidence, along with the continuation of segregated conjugal roles in some types of family and cultures. Other criticised as false the so-called equality between women and men in the household, arguing that women continued to have a dual burden or triple shift or else men pick and choose which tasks they do, preferring those which they enjoy rather than the mundane jobs such as cleaning and laundry. A few responses included an attempt to argue that the traditional functionalist/New Right ideas of the family were equal in the sense that roles are allotted according to natural capacity. Whilst these responses may have achieved some credit for such arguments, they were often unconvincing. Encouragingly, most responses seen were two-sided.

## Section B: Education

### Question 2

**(a)** When defining 'vocationalism', many candidates were able to score both marks by referring to skills-based or practical education designed to train or prepare candidates for the workplace. Many responses included specific examples such as training to be a plumber or a cook. Several candidates seemed to not understand the meaning of the term and guessed that it meant a 'vacation' from school or a 'vocal' education. Such answers were not credited.

**(b)** This 4-mark question asking candidates to describe two examples of equal opportunities in education was generally well done. Popular correct answers focused on comprehensive schools, the concept of meritocracy, the same (national) curriculum and assessment standards for girls and boys, and free state education for all. Some responses included two points that were too similar to be credited separately and hence lost marks accordingly.

**(c)** This 6-mark question asked candidates to explain how rewards are used to socially control students.

Some responses included generic, but still valid, points about the use of rewards to keep children in line with school, and hence later, societal norms and values. Most responses used an example of a reward as the focus for each point and explained how it effectively socially controlled students thus ensuring less repetition in the discussion. Examples included prizes, certificates, awards, praise, positions of responsibility such as school council, treat trips etc. Providing each of the examples were explained in terms of different ideas like motivation to work hard or achieve highly or role-modelling behaviour for other students then full marks could be gained relatively easily. Some responses included different rewards but these were then explained through the same basic idea e.g. motivation which prevented them reaching the top marks in the mark scheme. A few responses argued that extra marks or even grades were given as rewards which was not creditworthy. A significant minority of responses discussed negative sanctions or punishments which was tangential to the question set and hence not creditworthy.

**(d)** This 8-mark question asked candidates to explain why girls study different subjects to boys. Frequent answers included the ideas that subject choice was often linked to societal and family expectations of girls and boys and their initial socialisation into traditional gender roles. Such points were often expressed conceptually, linking to processes such as canalisation and manipulation, as well as the expressive and instrumental roles, and the work of Oakley. Many responses linked girls and boys to specific examples such as girls choosing needlework, cookery or languages whilst

boys choose business, sciences and maths. Other creditworthy points focused on the lack of role models in the STEM subjects for girls, male domination in science classrooms and the influence of gendered peer groups. Thus, role modelling and teacher expectations featured prominently in successful answers. Weaker responses tended to be descriptive, for example 'girls take home economics and boys take science' with very little reasoning as to why this was the case. A smaller number of responses discussed differences in education between boys and girls with little or no reference to subject choice and therefore scored few, if any, marks.

(e) This 15-mark essay style question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which linguistic factors have the most influence in a student's educational achievement. On the whole, many candidates answered this well. Common arguments for the view invariably discussed Bernstein's ideas about restricted and elaborate code, linking to social class, as well as the challenges faced by immigrants or students having to learn in a second language who faced associated language barriers in their learning. Some responses developed such points further by linking in teacher discrimination on the basis of student language. Here, there were some very effective references to Labov and his work on African American Vernacular English (AAVE). On the 'against' side of the argument, candidates often turned their attention to gender, social class and ethnicity as alternative explanations for differential achievement. Many discussed cultural, material and in-school factors with impressive references to Marxist ideas about material deprivation and cultural and social capital (Bourdieu), as well as feminist ideas of patriarchy and socialisation (Oakley). The key to achieving marks in the higher bands was to show the link back to educational achievement. Weaker answers tended to simply be descriptive. The 'for' side of the argument was undoubtedly more challenging and consequently a few candidates produced one-sided answers as they had no understanding of what was meant by 'linguistic factors' and simply guessed whilst performing relatively well on the against side of the argument. Such responses scored in Band 2, demonstrating the importance of ensuring all areas of the specification have been fully learnt and understood.

### **Section C: Crime, deviance and social control.**

#### **Question 3**

(a) There was a mixed response to this definitional question on self-report studies. The strongest responses included two aspects— for example, referring to the idea of a survey or questionnaire in which people admitted to crimes they had committed. Some responses included additional detail such as that it is used as a way to measure crime, particularly the hidden figure. It seemed that a few candidates did not understand the term at all, since some responses talked about people handing themselves in to the police or confused it with victim studies.

(b) This question asked candidates to describe two ways law enforcement agencies make people conform. Candidates approached the question in various ways, for example some focused on law enforcement agencies such as police or prisons whilst others focused on the methods used by such agencies such as punishment or deterrence, perhaps without mentioning the agencies themselves by name. Responses of the latter approach discussed the fear of arrest and coercion, jail sentences, fines and community service as ways of making individuals conform or as a deterrent to others who saw people incurring such penalties. A few responses were written in more general terms of fear of the consequences of deviant actions and ensuing sanctions. A significant minority of responses were focused on the government which could not be credited as this is not a law enforcement agency.

(c) This question asked for explanations of how deviancy amplification can occur. It drew a mixed response from candidates. There were some impressive answers demonstrating that deviancy amplification involves not just initial acts of deviance but further repeated acts, sometimes caused by the actions of law enforcement and the associated agencies. Many responses included labelling theory and the ideas of master status and self-fulfilling prophecy to good effect here often applying them to different contexts such as anti-school subcultures and peer pressure, gangs and others negatively labelled e.g. drug users who find themselves adopting a deviant career. Others discussed police targeting of ethnic minorities through stop and search, liable to create unrest and disillusionment and hence individuals turning to crime. Some responses included effective points using sociological studies of moral panics such as the mods and rockers (Cohen), drug users (Young) or 'hoodies' (Fawbert). Weaker responses often discussed explanations for crime such as status frustration or strain theory but with no attempt to address the 'amplification' of deviance beyond the initial actions. Some candidates seemed unfamiliar with the central concept of deviancy amplification. Weaker responses were often not split into 3 distinct points and frequently used

labelling theory, master status, self-fulfilling prophecy and deviant career all within one overly long point. Such responses were able to draw only partial credit and responses confined to such points were likely to be awarded marks in Band 1 (1 – 3 marks) rather than Band 2 (4 – 6 marks).

(d) The question as to why sociologists criticise the accuracy of official crime statistics was accessible for most candidates. Responses included various aspects of the dark figure of crime such as reasons for unreported crimes and the issue of police unrecorded crimes, including white-collar. A few responses discussed the police practices of 'coughing and cuffing' to good effect whilst government manipulation of the figures was also mentioned. Whilst many responses included multiple points, these were often only partially developed or narrowly focused, for example explaining three reasons why people may not report particular crimes which could only achieve Band 2 (4 – 6 marks). The key for reaching the higher bands is to explain why the identified factors make the crime statistics inaccurate. Some responses also included self-report studies/victim surveys to good effect, showing how these question the accuracy of the official crime statistics. Weaker responses often described the unreported crime but did not explain why this meant the official statistics were not accurate. Sociological language and concepts proved to be challenging here, but candidates were able to access the highest mark band by linking to Marxist and/or feminist theory, ideas about validity in research and the Interpretivist view of the socially constructed nature of statistics.

(e) This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which ethnicity is a factor in explaining why some people commit crime. Most candidates were able to produce several points on each side of the debate and balance arguments successfully. There were very good opportunities for candidates to show off a wide and detailed knowledge of explanations for crime, including the corresponding theory links, concepts and sociological studies. On the 'for' side of the debate, commonly seen points included racial discrimination and labelling or scapegoating, provoking deviant responses from persecuted ethnic groups. Many referred to the relative deprivation and marginalisation experienced by some ethnic minorities leading to the creation of deviant subcultures/gangs and used recent examples of BLM and alleged police brutality. Some responses included theories such as Cohen's status frustration and Merton's strain theory, applying them successfully to ethnic minority experience. Other responses drew upon the latter theories as well as Cloward and Ohlin in arguments against the view in the question. Examiners marked accordingly to how the candidates used the theories, allowing for a wide variety of answers to be seen. Aside from arguments about ethnicity, discussions of the extent to which social class, age and gender explain why some people commit crime also featured prominently on the 'against' side of the debate and were done quite well. At times, some responses lost focus on the question and included extensive amounts about, say, social class and crime without bringing attention back to ethnicity – the crux of the question. Linking back explicitly to the question is the key to achieving high marks. An impressive array of concepts and theory were on show here and a good number of responses were able to reach Band 3 (9 – 12 marks) and Band 4 (13 – 15). Weaker responses made fewer points with either no development or only partial development. A lack of sociological evidence also characterised weaker responses.

## Section D: Media

### Question 4

(a) This definitional question asked candidates to describe what is meant by the term propaganda. On the whole, this question was answered well with a good number of responses scoring full marks. The best answers alluded to ideas that it was often a biased or distorted view which aimed to influence people's attitudes and behaviour. Some responses included Nazi propaganda against Jewish people as an example. A few candidates seemed not to understand the term but these were few and far between. Using examples to support the core definition helped candidates achieve full marks in this question.

(b) This question asked candidates to describe two examples of interactivity in new media. Some candidates seemed to find the idea of interactivity challenging and relied on a common sense and often inaccurate notion, giving examples of texts and emails going back and forth between two people. Such ideas gained minimal or no credit (depending on the context). To answer this question successfully, an understanding of how people interact with wider groups or the public through digital technology and the two-way communication facilitated by new media was needed. Common correct examples included posting onto social media platforms and chatrooms/forums,

blogging and vlogging (e.g. TikTok), citizen journalism, user generated content, and gaming with others from across the globe.

(c) Many answers to this question on how moral panics distort reality predictably focused on aspects of labelling theory. Responses discussed aspects of moral panics in different points. For example, pointing out exaggeration of a story beyond the original facts, the sensationalism that can affect the way stories are written and edited and the creation of folk devils, scapegoats and stereotypes. Classic examples featured in the strongest answers such as Cohen's mods and rockers, Fawbert on hoodies, Young's drug-takers and Becker's labelling theory. Modern examples were also successfully included, such as knife crime and moral panics associated with race (and its tragic consequences) such as the death of George Floyd and others in the US. Some responses used labelling theory to develop points linked to deviance amplification as individuals choose a deviant career in response to labelling and persecution by agents of social control – such amplification being in itself a distortion of original misdemeanours. Weaker responses often described elements of a moral panic but struggled to fully explain the distortion they create.

(d) The question on why the media can influence behaviour was an accessible question and produced some very good responses. There were a variety of ways that candidates could choose to answer the question. Some discussed media effects theories such as the hypodermic syringe or cultural effects theory, with relevant examples e.g. the Bandura case study or children and violence. Others explained how the media functions as an agent of socialisation, particularly new media with its influencers and popular apps such as TikTok which may draw copycat behaviours and participation in trends. Other responses discussed advertising and propaganda and its effects on the audience, often with pertinent examples. Weaker responses often made fewer developed points or relied on common-sense rather than sociological evidence.

(e) This essay style question focused on the extent to which media representations of gender are changing. All candidates were able to access this question, with responses ranging from common sense to highly developed and engaging sociological essays. Many responses included contemporary examples in both sides of their response with reference to films, television programmes and new media. A few responses did not focus on gender, including reference to ethnicity, age and social class which were not creditable. The strongest responses made a wide range of points in a two-sided, balanced argument. Stronger sociological responses offered examples of changing gender representations from TV, new media and film in terms of how both males and females are shown in their social role and positions, character traits and importance in plot lines. Some responses included long descriptions of past representations without explicit focus on the question. In arguments 'against', popular points included feminist ideas of the 'male gaze' and continued male dominance over the film-making industry which affects the representation of gender: examples being the continuation of sexual objectification of females and the persistence of hegemonic stereotypes for males. Many responses had a lack of full development. To improve, including chosen examples and sociological concepts would make a real difference to marks.

# SOCIOLOGY

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Paper 0495/23

Paper 2

## Key messages

- Candidates do not need to write an introductory paragraph when answering any of the questions. Responses should focus on the question from the beginning to maximise marks.
- Many candidates do not write in paragraphs which makes it difficult for Examiners to differentiate between points and award for range. It would be beneficial for candidates to write in paragraph form, particularly in banded **Questions (c), (d) and (e)**.
- There was a good awareness that **Question (e)** requires a debate, with several points for and against, and a judgement at the end in the form of a conclusion. To further improve performance, candidates should include sociological evidence to substantiate each point made. This could be in the form of examples, statistics, sociological concepts, theory or even a sociological study. This way, answers will be better developed and explained.
- Some responses for **Questions (b) and (c)** are overly long. Responses here can be quite short – perhaps a couple of sentences per point. A couple of words will not meet the requirement to 'describe' in **(b)** questions or to explain in **(c)** questions. Understanding the requirements of the command words used is crucial to candidate success.
- Points in **Questions (d) and (e)** should be developed more fully, sociologically evidenced and always written in paragraphs. These questions are looking for depth, detail and complexity in the responses.
- Candidates' knowledge of definitions could be further improved. This would enable them to obtain full marks in **(a)** questions and help them to understand key terminology in other questions as well as being able to better apply it.
- Candidates should demonstrate their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This approach allowed many candidates to achieve good marks in this examination series. Some candidates could only score lower marks as their answers tended to be based on common sense rather than Sociology.
- Candidates should spend time thinking about what the questions are asking and planning answers to those longer questions before they start to write their response. This is particularly important in the 15-mark essay questions to ensure that candidates remain focused on the specific demands of the question set rather than writing at length but without answering the question.
- Candidates should use the number of marks per question as guidance for how much should be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. At times, for example, candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question, worth 6 marks, as for a **part (e)** question, worth 15 marks. Time management skills and regular practice of timed examination questions in the classroom will really help with this.

## General comments

In general candidates showed a good and, in some cases, impressive knowledge of the subject matter, often integrating sociological conceptuality and, in many cases, a range of theory into their answers. **Family** and **Education** were the most popular questions followed by **Crime, deviance and social control**. Rubric errors were minimal and most candidates appeared to manage their time well.

Many candidates used relevant contemporary, global and localised examples alongside the more traditional 'textbook' evidence in order to justify and substantiate several of the points made. This demonstrated both sociological knowledge and the ability to apply sociological concepts and theory to the real world. Very few rubric errors were seen this examination session, allowing most candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number or incorrectly numbered their answers. Candidates should be aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

In the **part (a)** question, candidates should look to include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a really useful way of adding a second element to an answer and are to be encouraged.

**Part (b)** needs **two** distinctly different points with some development – candidates should separate these and label them clearly.

In **part (c)** questions, candidates should make sure there are more than two sociological points made, evidenced and developed.

For **part (d)**, candidates should adopt the same approach as for **part (c)** but develop ideas further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts, development, quality of response and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** question.

In terms of the 15-mark **part (e)** question, candidates should organise their answers into paragraphs and develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Clear signalling of the points and the arguments that are being used to support (i.e. for or against) is also good practice. Responses should aim to include three developed points for and three developed points against the claim in the question. There also needs to be a well-focused conclusion that makes a supported judgement on the claim in the question. Each point made should be directly focused upon what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates are choosing to answer the 15-mark questions first to make sure that they do not run out of time. This worked well for several candidates but ultimately this is the candidates' own decision to make.

### Comments on specific questions

#### **Section A: Family**

##### **Question 1**

(a) Many responses were awarded full marks for a clear definition of the term 'symmetrical family.' Responses commonly referred to 'equality in the family' and/or 'equal/joint conjugal roles'. Some responses included examples such as 'both partners doing domestic work.' Some answers gained partial marks due to not including two separate elements that could be credited, while a few candidates mistook the term for a family with segregated/traditional conjugal roles and so could not be credited.

(b) This question was answered well, with successful responses describing two positive features of extended families. Responses commonly referred to financial/economic assistance, emotional support, care of children and the elderly, primary socialisation, and childcare in the context of working parents. Weaker answers provided generic descriptions of families that may not be specific to extended families and/or vague statements such as 'they may help each other solve problems.' Such answers could not be fully credited as focus on the specific demands of the question is essential.

(c) A number of responses included two or three developed points, therefore many candidates gained marks in the higher band. The most common answers seen were the idea of families being more child centred, children not having to partake in paid work, and new legislation which protects children. Another concept commonly seen, and used well as a comparator, was Aries 'mini adults'. The stronger responses developed their points to show changes in children's roles, while weaker responses often did not demonstrate this link and thus gained partial credit. The vast majority of responses answered the demands of the question well.

(d) The majority of candidates showed understanding of the demands of this question. Responses were mixed in terms of conceptuality and development. Most responses focused on segregated gender roles and the feminist view of the patriarchal family in terms of the triple shift, as well as gendered socialisation in families and domestic violence against women. Stronger answers referred to feminist theory and sometimes Marxism (in terms of 'warm bath' theory) and/or to theorists/studies such as Oakley and Dobash and Dobash. Weaker responses were written too generically about issues of gender and did not utilise sociological concepts to fully develop points made.

(e) This question was answered well overall, with most responses demonstrating good understanding and meeting the demands of the question. Many responses successfully presented valid sociological reasons for why families can be dysfunctional as well as counterarguments against the claim to provide a balanced answer. For the dysfunctional side of the debate, responses most frequently discussed domestic violence/abuse/neglect, empty nest families, the views of Charles Murray concerning the underclass and single parent families, double burden/triple shift, inadequate socialisation and the loss of functions. For evaluation points, responses commonly referred to symmetrical families and joint conjugal roles, functionalism and the family's essential functions, for example Parsons and the nuclear family, as well as family diversity. Some responses were unclear as to whether points were for or against the claim in the question.

### **Section B: Education**

#### **Question 2**

(a) This question demonstrated the need for candidates to be confident in their understanding of all key concepts as many responses were not awarded the full two marks as they showed little or no understanding of the term 'cultural capital'. The strongest answers referred to the knowledge, values, and attitudes that give an advantage in education and some gave pertinent examples such as museum or gallery visits. Many responses were vague/confused or simply incorrect that could not be credited at all.

(b) This was an accessible question to the vast majority of candidates who could accurately describe two ways schools socially control students. Most responses opted for formal and informal social control, providing examples of positive and negative sanctions by schools, teachers and/or peers.

(c) The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate some accurate knowledge and understanding of how private schools benefit students from higher social classes and the associated issues of class inequality. Responses mentioned smaller class sizes, cultural capital and better resources, access to elite universities and better jobs later on through the 'old boys' network'. Stronger responses also utilised relevant theory well, such as Marxism.

(d) Many responses discussed reasons why the comprehensive system of education was introduced and while some developed their points accordingly using sociological knowledge to answer the question, others offered generic and sometimes vague and repetitive points that were often only partially developed. Responses focused on meritocracy and equal access to education for different social classes, ethnic groups and both genders. Inclusivity and the avoidance of negative labelling through the 11+ examination was a frequent focus. Perhaps surprisingly, the disadvantages of the tripartite system were not frequently mentioned.

(e) On the whole, this question was answered well with many candidates able to make sociological points on both sides of the debate. Common arguments on the 'for' side incorporated hegemonic masculinity, peer pressure and anti-school subcultures (stronger answers used specific examples such as Willis' 'Learning to Labour'), teacher labelling, gendered subject choice and socialisation, role models, etc. For evaluation, candidates considered changing notions of masculinity and the rise of metrosexuality, changing gender roles and consequent socialisation, feminism, functionalism and meritocracy. These were often discussed alongside other factors that affect educational experience such as cultural and material deprivation or other home and school factors. The strongest answers made successful links to sociological theory/studies while the weaker answers either focused on general differences between male and female education without clear reference to the culture of masculinity, or lacked depth and/or range and/or were not organised into paragraphs, offering undeveloped or underdeveloped points, as well as common-sense arguments. This question seemed to differentiate well between the various range of responses seen.

### **Section C: Crime, deviance and social control**

#### **Question 3**

(a) The majority of responses showed at least some understanding of the term 'victim surveys' as a sociological research method and gained partial or full marks. Some responses did not include two separate creditable elements so could not be awarded full marks. A few responses misunderstood the term, often confusing it with self-report studies, and so could not gain any marks at all.

(b) This proved to be an accessible question with most candidates being able to identify and describe at least one, and often two, agencies of informal social control. Responses commonly referred to the family, education/school, the media, peers and religion. A minority of responses referenced formal agencies of formal social control such as the police and so did not gain any credit.

(c) This question produced mixed responses. Some responses presented two or more developed points to explain how youth sub-cultures can be linked to crime, and others provided generic, more common-sense answers. Many responses clearly linked sub-cultures to both youth and crime and thus answered the question set. Weaker responses incorrectly discussed the causes of youth subculture formation and/or simply described subcultures or did not make it clear that they are talking about youth subcultures specifically. The best responses used Marxist research on youth subcultures and/or subcultural ideas from Cohen/Merton/Cloward and Ohlin.

(d) Overall, candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of why Marxists believe some individuals commit crime. Clear understanding of the theory was shown from many responses where it was specifically linked to crime. Many responses referred to material deprivation, marginalisation, capitalism and white-collar crime, social inequality, police targeting, etc. The best answers presented well developed, sociologically relevant points, while the weaker responses were more general, sometimes list-like, and therefore could not receive marks in the highest band or at the top of Band 2. A number of responses made just two points and so did not demonstrate adequate range. Three fully developed and evidenced points is the requirement for top band responses.

(e) Many responses made points to support both sides of the debate, with the strongest answers bringing in sociological concepts and theory to support their arguments. Examiners also saw some misunderstanding with responses instead focusing on why females commit crime. Stronger responses used evidence on both sides of the debate with chivalry thesis, police targeting, white-collar crime, the culture of masculinity, opportunity, gendered socialisation and victimless crimes frequently being seen. Weaker responses leaned more towards one side of the debate and/or offered unconvincing/tangential arguments and undeveloped or underdeveloped points which could not be fully credited.

#### **Section D: Media**

##### **Question 4**

There were very few responses on Media from the cohort as a whole so comments below will be quite unrepresentative of the paper overall.

(a) This question was generally answered well. Links were made to a product being sold and the process of consumption alongside the desire of the media to make the audience do something.

(b) Typically, responses presented very general descriptions of media representations of ethnic minorities, some of which were too vague to be awarded marks. Some credit was also given for statements that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the media. Few responses were able to give two clear and distinct points with some development.

(c) Many of the responses to this question presented rather generic and/or confused and/or repetitive points. Stronger answers discussed advertising, imitation, new media and social influencers, as well as media effects models such as the hypodermic syringe model and cultural effects theory. Strong responses successfully applied Marxist theory to the question and used contemporary examples to support their points.

(d) On the whole, this question was accessible to candidates, who seemed to really understand what this question was asking and discussed this in a very sociological way. References were commonly made to stereotypical representation or underrepresentation of women reflecting patriarchy in the media through the emphasis placed on physical appearance and sexuality, as well as showing women performing stereotypical expressive roles as the norm. Weaker responses often did not write enough and did not make the required three different evidenced points.

(e) Candidates who understood the demands of this question wrote strong responses about class inequality and its links to the media. The most common answers seen were the idea that the media is controlled and manipulated by the ruling class, and that the ruling class wants to keep the

proletariat under their control. Diversion from social problems, creation of false needs and the role of propaganda were also well discussed by some candidates. Arguments against the claim in the question commonly included the pluralist argument about choice and diversity as well as post-modern arguments focusing on new media and global user generated content.