

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- Candidates should practise their exam technique for **Question 1 (c)**. Answers should contain an explicit reference to the source, possibly through a quotation, which should then go on to be developed through description.
- In both **Question 1 (d)** and **Question 1 (e)** candidates must link each strength or limitation to a particular feature of the method in the question. For example, in **Question 1 (d)**, showing how re-visiting a sample at regular time intervals allows researchers to track changes in people's lives.
- In **Question 1(f)** questions candidates should avoid lengthy introductions or conclusions and move straight into developing three (or more) points. It is always helpful to enumerate points using 'firstly ...secondly ...'.
- In **Question 1 (g)** candidates should be aware that the essay can focus on sociological theories (consensus or conflict, functionalism, Marxism or feminism) and not always on methodological perspectives (such as positivism or interpretivism).
- Candidates should avoid spending time defining key terms in the question before beginning their answers.

General comments

Responses showed a very good level of engagement with the question paper and the assessment objectives. In particular, candidates showed a sound knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and theory and were able to apply this knowledge well to the demands of the questions. Time management appears to have been very good indeed with some lengthy answers and very few candidates who did not finish the paper. Many candidates enumerated points which is helpful, though some candidates needed to write in paragraphs in longer essay-style questions. In general, candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the differences between the concepts of validity and reliability. In Section A base knowledge of methodology was very good, though use of the source for **Question 1 (c)** was variable. Most candidates discussed several strengths and limitations of methods. In essay responses some candidates demonstrated strong evaluation skills, going beyond juxtaposition by using other perspectives to interrogate the view in the question. The option 'Culture, identity and socialisation' was more popular than 'Social Inequality', but in both, candidates showed a good grasp of the key theories, ideas, concepts and arguments and many used these to good effect. There were few very rubric errors.

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates used the source to identify two ethical issues with laboratory experiments. Most picked out consent and harm. A small number of candidates wrote too much for a two mark 'identify' question.
- (b) Most candidates correctly identified two methods that could be used to gain quantitative data, apart from laboratory experiments. Popular answers included questionnaires, structured interviews and content analysis. Some candidates wrote unnecessary descriptions or justifications of their choices. A few candidates referred to secondary evidence such as statistics or sampling methods. Generic methods such as 'observation' or 'interview' required more detail to be creditworthy. For example, non-participant observation is much more likely to yield quantitative data than participant.
- (c) This question drew some good quality answers focusing on the reasons why a laboratory experiment was considered useful within the context of the source. Common answers featured the

idea that the experiments were standardised, allowing for replicability and hence reliability in the data about children and violence. Others described the usefulness of being able to control variables to establish the fact that it was being shown violence that caused the violence the children then showed in the laboratory. Whilst it is a good idea to quote from the source in identifying a point, weaker responses did not go beyond this to unpack why the point chosen about laboratory experiments was useful. Responses which copied a section of the source could only gain one mark per point identified.

- (d) The best responses to this question showed a clear understanding of the strengths of longitudinal studies, firstly identifying a feature of longitudinal studies and then clearly describing how that feature is a strength. For example, many likened the studies to a movie which gives researchers a picture that evolves over time rather than the quick snapshot that researchers get from a one-off method. Many candidates discussed the idea that, as the sample were committed to a long process, a rapport could be developed with researchers which is more likely to yield valid data. Weaker responses described longitudinal studies but did not focus on strengths. Candidates who asserted that longitudinal studies were more valid/in depth or more reliable than other methods did not achieve marks unless the point was linked explicitly to a feature of the longitudinal approach.
- (e) Overall, there were a considerable number of excellent and focused responses to this question. Many candidates referred to the idea that researchers can cross check data using different methods or are able to combine qualitative and quantitative data or indeed mix elements from interpretivist and positivist approaches. Popular limitations involved the time and cost needed to run several research methods, the necessity for skilled researchers or the difficulty of bringing together data from a combination of interpretivist and positivist methods. Weaker responses did not develop the description given or did not link points to triangulation.
- (f) The best responses to this question showed a clear focus on the reasons why some sociologists criticise the data from unstructured interviews. Popular answers focused on issues such as interviewer bias, the interviewer effect, the close relationship between interviewer and interviewee or the lack of standardised questions. The best responses included three well developed, conceptual points. The emphasis on data is important; the question did not ask candidates to discuss the limitations of unstructured interviews in general terms. Thus, points about the time-consuming nature of the actual interviews or the costs were not appropriate here. Some responses discussed of the advantages of using unstructured interviews which was not creditworthy.
- (g) Many responded well to the demands of this challenging question demonstrating a sound understanding of the debate between the consensus and conflict views of society. On the consensus side functionalism featured prominently with candidates discussing the organic analogy and then often focusing on the functionality of institutions such as the family and schools in socialising individuals or the function of formal agencies of social control in maintaining social order and averting anomie. Candidates who discussed Durkheim's study of suicide often used it well as part of a discussion of the structuralist approach favoured by functionalists. In terms of the conflict view, most candidates focused on elements of the Marxist and feminist views with a few candidates also discussing race and racism as an area of social conflict in many societies. Some candidates focused on Weberian theory, though with varying levels of success. The best answers developed a range of points on both sides of the debate and made links to sociological concepts and theory in a sophisticated way. Many responses included a conclusion though often these were summative rather than evaluative. Weaker responses were list-like with a limited range of points. Some candidates misunderstood the question and there was some confusion with methodological debates between positivists and interpretivists with incorrect or tenuous links being made to the consensus and conflict views of society.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates scored at least one mark for their definition of 'lifestyle', linking well to the idea of how individuals live in society. Answers which scored full marks often included examples such as clothing, diet and general consumer choices.
- (b) Many candidates responded well to this question on global culture. Popular answers included global brands, food chains, sports and fashion or global media such as Hollywood/Bollywood and the internet as a site for social media communication across the world. Some candidates went off track writing about cultural diversity or multi culturalism. A minority focused on universals such as the institution of the family which gained no credit.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain how negative sanctions are used to control individuals. The best responses gave examples of sanctions used by different agents and then discussed how these sanctions result in control or conformity. For example, a prison sentence deters others from committing the same offence or a warning in the workplace makes people afraid of losing their job and hence they conform to the expected norms and rules. Weaker responses described only negative sanctions and did not engage with the 'explain how' aspect of the question.
- (d) Many candidates found the question of why age is a social construction a challenge. The best answers gave three or more well-developed points. A popular point was the idea that childhood never existed in former historical periods (Aries), whereas now childhood is seen as a distinct phase with its own norms and values. Some candidates discussed the idea of relativity and that childhood or old age is viewed differently cross-culturally, for example in laws. Others cited the Postman study and the media's role in changing ideals of childhood innocence. Weaker responses described life stages or discussed the stages of socialisation, but with minimal or implicit understanding of the idea of 'social construction.'
- (e) Many candidates responded well to this question and engaged in an interesting debate about the relative influence of primary and secondary socialisation, deploying good knowledge and understanding. Responses which scored highly focused on a balanced debate with range, detail and conceptual knowledge. In favour of secondary socialisation, candidates discussed a range of agents. For example, many focused on education and the hidden curriculum, peer group use of peer pressure (e.g. ostracism), media role models and stereotypes, workplace 're-socialisation' and the norms and values taught in religion. There were frequent references to studies such as Parsons, Mead, Oakley etc. and went a lot further with primary socialisation, which weaker answers could only make up for if they offered volume for the secondary socialisation part of their essay. Arguments for primary socialisation being more influential included feral children, learned gender roles (Oakley and Parsons) and the idea of the family as the foundation for all subsequent learning and culture. There were very few one-sided responses. Less successful responses were often brief and characterised by points lacking development and conceptuality.

Section C

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates gave a clear definition of the 'closed society', referring to rigid stratification and the impossibility of social mobility. Some cited examples such as the caste system or apartheid. A few responses confused a closed society with patriarchy or a society with closed borders.
- (b) This question drew a mixed response. Few candidates named specific laws. Laws that were named were the Equality Act and the Sex Discrimination Act. Localised examples were also creditworthy. Many candidates discussed key legislative areas such as equal pay or equal opportunities for disabled people and described their impact. A few weaker responses discussed issues linked to the welfare state which was not credit worthy.
- (c) In this question candidates were asked to explain how women experience inequality in the workplace. Many good conceptual responses focused on vertical and horizontal segregation, the glass ceiling, the gender pay gap and sexual harassment. Very few answers strayed from the workplace as the focus area. Weaker responses included less detail or were more 'commonsense' rather than sociological in focus.

- (d) The question as to why racial discrimination may be negative for an individual drew some good responses. Many candidates often cited labelling, job discrimination and the ethnocentric curriculum and then proceeded to discuss a range of negative effects in terms of lower life chances, poverty, underachievement in school etc. Less successful answers focused on the discrimination without really exploring what would happen to the individual as a result or offered generalised ideas about mental health. Many candidates discussed issues such as hate speech and how it can have a negative impact upon individuals in ethnic minority communities.
- (e) This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which it is possible to escape poverty. Strong responses included six well-developed and conceptual paragraphs organised in a balanced structure with a conclusion. The best answers fully developed their arguments in paragraphs and wrote an evaluative, rather than just a summative, conclusion. Popular arguments for the view included references to functionalism, meritocracy and the possibility for social mobility, often underpinned by legal changes prohibiting discrimination, the redistribution of wealth, the welfare state and free education. Arguments against the view were very well represented with concepts such as poverty trap, culture of poverty and dependency culture. Candidates demonstrated a particularly good knowledge of Marxist theory. A small number of candidates spent time defining poverty (absolute and relative) without applying this knowledge to the question. The best responses addressed the ‘to what extent’ aspect of the question in the conclusion.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/22
Paper 22

Key messages

- Responses to **Questions (1b) and 4(c)** indicated that candidates should be encouraged to read questions carefully and understand the significance of terms used.
- To score full marks in **part (e)** questions, a debate is required— for and against developed points, with a conclusion.
- Candidates should be encouraged to show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. Some candidates expressed ideas without explicitly doing this.
- Candidates should spend time thinking about what the questions are asking and plan answers to those specific questions in their reading time – this is particularly important in the 15-mark essay questions to ensure that responses remain focused on the specific demands of the question.
- Some candidate responses did not use paragraphs in the longer responses, which made it difficult for examiners to see where points began and ended. The ‘point per paragraph’ structure is thus recommended. Centres should encourage candidates to develop discrete essay writing skills and techniques to help them answer the **part (e)** questions.
- Encourage candidates to use the marks per question as guidance for how much is to be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. Some candidates wrote as much for a **part (c)** question, worth 6 marks, as for a **part (e)** question worth 15. Candidates should be encouraged to manage their time to maximise the marks achieved.
- Understanding of the command words is crucial. In the **part (b)** questions, for example, some answers were insufficiently developed (the command word is to ‘describe’), and the candidates did not achieve full marks even though some relevant knowledge was shown.

General comments

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

Relevant contemporary, global and localised examples were used well alongside the more traditional ‘textbook’ evidence in order to justify and substantiate several of the points. These were all duly credited.

Very few rubric errors at all were seen, allowing most candidates to maximise their chances of success. However, some candidates did not number or incorrectly numbered their answers, and centres should encourage candidates to be aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

There was a good range of answers produced, with marks awarded across the full spread of available marks. In **part (a)** questions, candidates should include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a really useful way of adding a second element to an answer and should be encouraged. **Part (b)** questions require **two** distinctly different points with some development – candidates should separate these and label them clearly. In **part (c)** questions candidates should make more than two evidenced and developed sociological points. 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, quality of response and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** question.

Candidates should be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant for the 15-mark **part (e)** questions. Candidates should aim to give three developed points 'for' and three developed points 'against' the claim in the question. A well-focused conclusion that makes a supported judgement on the claim in the question is also required. Each point should be directly focused on what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates chose to answer the 15-mark questions first to make sure that they did not run out of time – this worked well for several candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1: Family

- (a) Most candidates answered this question well, linking the term 'polyandry' to a woman having more than one husband; some answers stressed that this occurs 'at the same time'. Some responses defined the term as a marriage to more than one person, and therefore presented a partial response. A few mistook it for the term 'polygyny' which was not correct.
- (b) The majority of candidates correctly identified two trends in marriage in modern industrial societies, citing most commonly increasing numbers of same-sex marriages, rising divorce, cohabitation chosen over marriage and/or serial monogamy. Some responses needed to develop their points further, making clear links to marriage. Answers which described types of marriages in different cultures rather than focusing on trends in marriage were not credited. When considering 'trends', candidates should think about changes, increases and decreases.
- (c) Many candidates demonstrated knowledge and understanding of primary socialisation carried out by the family. The more successful answers focused on the question and explained the processes of socialisation (how individuals are socialised). Less successful responses provided a generic description of socialisation. Teaching norms and values, role modelling, imitation and learning gender roles through the processes of manipulation and canalisation were often discussed. A few candidates misunderstood the question, writing about children socialising with friends or family members instead which did not gain credit.
- (d) Candidates engaged well with the question and gave some good answers. Most candidates offered a range of credible reasons as to why family life may benefit males, with clear references to feminism through ideas such as patriarchy and the triple shift. Marxism and functionalism were also well used by some candidates through relevant concepts such as the 'warm bath theory' and the 'domestic division of labour'. Weaker answers did not engage sociologically, offering a common-sense interpretation which could not be highly credited. The best answers were well-developed and explained.
- (e) This question was answered well. Responses discussed a range of reasons why extended families may be the best type of family to live in, such as financial and emotional support, care provided for both grandparents and grandchildren and effective primary socialisation. The evaluation points were sometimes not fully applied to the question as they did not offer comparisons with the extended family but discussed other types of family, most commonly the nuclear family, instead. The best responses gave six or more well-developed points and consistently engaged with the extended family. Weaker responses discussed the strengths of alternatives to the extended family.

Section B

Question 2: Education

- (a) Many candidates correctly defined the term 'restricted code', linking it to informal language, used with family and friends and/or often by the working class. Most candidates at least partially defined the term. A few said it was a code of conduct in school which did not score any marks.

- (b) This question was answered well. The majority of candidates identified and described two ways schools use rewards to motivate students. The most common responses included prizes and certificates, privileges and treat trips, teacher praise and scholarships. The weaker answers needed to develop points. A few responses discussed the system of positive sanctions in general terms rather than focusing on schools.
- (c) Many candidates explained at least two ways through which teacher labelling could affect student achievement in school. However, some needed to support their views with sociological terminology and ideas such as 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and 'self-negating prophecy'.
- (d) Many candidates provided a range of valid reasons to explain why examination results in private schools are often better than in state schools. Candidates frequently mentioned the differences in class sizes, resources and facilities as well as the quality of teaching. The most successful answers discussed concepts such as cultural capital, parental engagement and/or linguistic factors, linking them to relevant theory.
- (e) Most candidates took their lead from the question and focused on functionalism, drawing on Parsons, Davis and Moore and Durkheim (socialisation, social control, sifting and sorting and meritocracy) and many gave really well-developed arguments against from Marxist and feminist perspectives. The best responses had breadth (six points and over) as well as development of the points made. Overall, the majority of the candidates provided balanced answers, offering a range of valid arguments for both sides. Less successful answers offered little sociological engagement, commonly discussing increased opportunities for acquiring better jobs and helping society in general, common-sense terms.

Section C

Question 3: Crime, deviance and social control

- (a) Most candidates managed to define 'penal system' correctly with reference to prisons, police or courts.
- (b) Many candidates achieved full marks for this question, correctly identifying and describing two types of under-reported crimes. Those most commonly seen were white-collar crime, petty/trivial crimes, domestic abuse and sexual crimes.
- (c) Many candidates explained how moral panics are created well. There was good use of concepts such as exaggeration, stigma, master status and folk devils often with reference to studies such as Cohen, with examples – especially the mods and rockers. Some candidates needed to clearly separate their points as sometimes it was difficult to see where one point ended and another began.
- (d) The majority of candidates scored well, making a good range of points – most often referring to peer pressure, masculinity and inadequate socialisation and going into theoretical ideas such as Matza's Drift theory, edgework and status frustration. Some well applied, topical examples were also seen and were duly credited – BLM, for example. A few candidates misinterpreted the question, providing descriptions of juvenile delinquency and/or possible forms of punishments instead.
- (e) This question was answered well. The majority of the candidates interpreted the question correctly, making points for and against the statement. However, in some cases candidates did not make it sufficiently clear whether the point was 'for' or 'against'. Strong answers used signal words well. Many candidates engaged theoretically with Marxist theory as a way of explaining crime in terms of social class. Merton's strain theory and Cohen's status frustration were also well used in the stronger answers. In evaluation, age, gender and ethnicity were frequently discussed as other valid explanations for crime. The best answers developed their points well and substantiated them with evidence and explicit focus on applying knowledge to the question.

Section D

Question 4: Media

- (a) The majority of candidates provided at least a partial definition of 'news values' with examples of these being used to demonstrate understanding e.g. sensationalism, celebrity focus, disaster etc.
- (b) The majority of candidates identified and explained two negative effects of the media on the audience such as violence, stereotyping, body image and pressure to conform. Most points were developed, achieving high marks.
- (c) There was a mixed response to this question. There was some confusion between public and private funding, leading some candidates to explain how private sponsors/conglomerates influenced the content of the media which could not be credited. The best responses were clear and well-informed about what public funding is, making developed points often mentioning government pressure on broadcasters, propaganda and the lack of bias.
- (d) The best responses to this question explained why new media increases interactivity in terms of this being a two-way process. Some of the factors/points discussed were social issues, social movements and protest groups (with examples) and social media (platforms and channels). Weaker responses focused on how new media increases communication in general or globally, without focusing on the question.
- (e) The best responses used good examples from a range of media such as TV and film. In general, there was a slight lack of sociological studies and theory beyond points regarding feminism. Most candidates demonstrated understanding of the term 'stereotypical' well. In the 'for' side of the debate, candidates discussed the male gaze, under-representation and tokenism. Some candidates discussed issues such as social change, strong female role models and changing gender roles in evaluation.