

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- In **Question 1(a)** candidates should be encouraged to identify points directly from the source and avoid describing or explaining them.
- In **Question 1(c)** candidates should be encouraged to consider the origins and the date of the research summary in **Source A** if the question asks to consider how valid the material is.
- In **question parts (d)** more marks are available than for **parts (c)**, and so candidates should be encouraged to develop points in more detail and with sociological concepts to achieve top band.
- Candidates should be encouraged to avoid lengthy introductions and definitions at the start of their responses.

General comments

In general candidate responses showed that most of the questions in this question paper were accessible. The responses demonstrated the knowledge and skills across the different sections. In section one many of the candidate responses were successful in answering the questions linked to the key strengths and limitations of sociological approaches, methods and data. Some of the candidate responses showed that identifying and describing problems with the validity of the source material was challenging and candidates should be encouraged to further practice answering these types of questions. In both option sections many candidate responses demonstrated a generally sound knowledge of the topics and key sociological ideas. Some of the candidate responses were able to use evidence and develop points in a sophisticated way. Where candidate responses achieved in the lower mark ranges this was often due to brief responses which did not make enough points or did not develop points sufficiently to achieve in the higher mark bands. Very few candidate responses indicated that candidates ran out of time or show rubric errors.

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Many candidate responses achieved both marks on this question. However, some of the candidate responses complicated their answers and made calculations or gave broad conclusions. This question simply asked candidates to identify two results and there were multiple results to choose from in the source. Very few responses only gave one answer.
- (b) Most of the candidate responses gained both marks for this question and identified two primary methods. A minority of responses made references to qualitative/quantitative data or sampling methods, which were not creditworthy.
- (c) Many candidate responses showed that this question was challenging for them. The question asked candidates to describe two problems with the validity of the data in the Source A. Many candidate responses focused on the sample sizes or the fact that the sample only came from the United States, and, hence, discussed issues to do with representativeness and generalisability. Those responses that interpreted content analysis as inherently quantitative and lacking in detail, often made the point without reference back to the source material. However, most of the candidate responses achieved some marks and frequent creditworthy answers were linked to possible bias, the source being outdated and the source being adapted.
- (d) Responses to this question were mixed, with a very few candidate responses achieving full marks. Many responses defined quota sampling in an 'introduction' but did not describe strengths well. Some of the candidate responses did not show the knowledge of what quota sample was and gave

generic and frequently incorrect answers. Others identified two strengths of quota sampling but did not develop the description. Many of the candidate responses referred to 'time saving' and 'easier' in a basic way with no further development.

- (e) In this question candidates were asked to describe two strengths and two weaknesses of non-participant observation. A common misconception seen in many of the candidate responses were that non-participant means that the researcher is always covert or is not present. This may sometimes be the case, but candidate responses which used these points needed to contextualise their remarks. Relatively few candidate responses focused on the non-participant aspect – the researcher is watching but not joining in – and, as a result, few achieved maximum marks. Candidate responses which did achieve high marks discussed strengths such as that it allows the researcher to avoid potential danger, for example, in research on gangs, or that it is easier to record results. Limitations included the inability to understand the action from an insider's point of view or that if a researcher is taking part there may be an observer effect on the sample.
- (f) Candidate responses which showed the knowledge of what a case study was, often also achieved at least the middle mark band marks for this question. Though relatively few responses made three well developed conceptual points. Answers which achieved high marks included links to the high level of detail due to intense concentration on one event or social phenomena, the ability to mix and triangulate methods, or the validity achieved when conducting research in a naturalistic environment. Some of the candidate responses made good use of Goldthorpe's study 'The Affluent Worker' or case studies of gangs. Many of the candidate responses were generalised in their approach, sometimes showing confusion of what a case study may involve but managed to achieve some marks. The unsuccessful answers confused case study with pilot study or secondary data.
- (g) In this long response question most of the candidate responses showed a sound knowledge of various types of interview and their strengths and weaknesses. The most successful candidate responses identified and developed a range of points both, for and against the view, drawing on sociological concepts consistently. An effective and evaluative conclusion at the end was needed to achieve full marks, and a few candidate responses achieved this by giving a thoughtful and reflective summary. The more successful candidate responses were also well linked with validity as per the instruction in the question. Candidate responses which achieved middle mark band often confined the discussion to the pros and cons of interview types, without focusing on the validity aspect at times. The most successful responses incorporated theory and developed interpretivist ideas to good effect. Popular points focused on the strengths of unstructured interviews in terms of flexibility, qualitative data, rapport and empathy. Some of the candidate responses discussed the advantage of having an interviewer present to clarify and prompt. In terms of evaluation candidate responses often advocated the strength of participant observation in giving more valid data. Some of the candidate responses chose to use the strengths of positivist methods to evaluate the validity of interviews, which was more difficult to do but sometimes worked well when linked to the objectivity and neutrality of positivist researchers, which is likely to minimise researcher bias and effects. A minority of candidate responses offered a critique of the positivist methods, which was unnecessary and did not achieve marks.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) This question asked candidates to define the term 'role'. It was well answered, and many responses achieved both marks for discussing it as a part that individuals play in society, often referring to examples such as 'father', 'housewife', etc.
- (b) Many of the candidate responses showed a good knowledge of feral children often achieving full marks. Some of the responses did not show an understanding of what a feral child is and answered in terms of deviance. Some of the candidate responses wrote more than is necessary for a 'describe' question and showed their knowledge with examples from real life and fictional books such the Jungle Book.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain how individuals are socialised into an ethnic identity, and candidate responses indicated that this question was challenging. Many of the responses focused on socialisation in general and made creditworthy points, but often did not apply this to ethnic identity, which was often simply linked to the end of other points. Candidate responses which

achieved higher marks discussed techniques, such as role-modelling, imitation, peer pressure and religious teachings, and linked them to food, festivals, clothing and language in terms of how they express ethnic identity. In general, however, candidate responses showed that it was difficult to apply socialisation techniques to ethnic identity.

- (d) Many of the candidate responses showed an understanding of the idea of social construction and applied it to old age. Responses which achieved the highest mark band made excellent points about differing retirement ages across cultures, different perceptions of old age across time and also different perceptions and media stereotyping of old age within societies. Many of the candidate responses identified norms associated with age, but frequently did not link them to being a social construct. Some of the candidate responses gave different points together, making it difficult to award marks to discrete points. The less successful candidate responses often described aspects of being old. A minority of candidate responses misunderstood the question and focused on children and youths and, therefore, achieved no marks.
- (e) In assessing the extent to which education is the most effective agent of social control many candidate responses showed a very good knowledge and understanding of a variety of both, informal and formal, control techniques. Sociological theory and a wide range of concepts were seen, such as the hidden curriculum, sanctions, peer pressure, as well as formal techniques such as arrest and imprisonment. Many of the responses showed knowledge of several points both 'for' and 'against', giving a wide range of points. A few answers focused more on socialisation rather than social control. However, well-constructed arguments on both sides were seen, with a significant number of candidate responses distinguishing between formal and informal social control and effectively contrasting school with family, peers and the state. Answers that were less successful often made two or three arguments which were only partially developed. Conclusions, where present, often made a judgement, but this was not always well justified using the evidence from answers.

Section C

Question 3

- (a) Many of the candidate responses answered this question well and achieved both marks for defining relative poverty, often referencing being able to afford basic necessities but being poorer than neighbours or others in society. A few candidate responses mistakenly described absolute instead of relative poverty and a few used the word 'relative' to refer to the family and, therefore, their answers did not achieve the mark.
- (b) This question was very accessible and most of the candidate responses achieved marks by describing two ways in which status can be achieved. A small number of responses focused on ascribed rather than achieved status. The most common responses identified hard work, employment, education and marriage. A very small number of responses identified correct points but then did not describe them, thus achieving partial marks.
- (c) Candidate responses generally showed a good knowledge of how traditional male roles have changed in modern societies. The most successful responses developed three or more discrete points and included concepts in each point. There were references to the breadwinner, the new man, emotional roles, changing work patterns, symmetrical families and conjugal roles. There were also some interesting cultural differences identified with some of the candidate responses depicting men and women working together at home and this being changed by industrialisation as men left the home to become the breadwinner. Some of the candidate responses did not achieve the top band as they did not identify the 'change' element of the question. Some of the responses focused on feminism and changes to women's role. The less successful answers did not achieve the higher mark band and wrote a long description of traditional male roles which had only limited relevance. Answers which achieved lower marks often were more common-sense rather than sociological, though most of the candidate responses recognised changes, despite it being in a basic way.
- (d) This was the most challenging question for the candidates in this section. The most successful answers often compared the way different countries defined or measured poverty and made comparative statements about different types of poverty. Many of the responses were vague and not well linked to why poverty may be difficult to define, for example, discussing the difference between absolute and relative poverty but then not linking this back to the question. Other

responses focused on the causes of poverty, with discussion of the culture of poverty, the poverty trap and the poverty cycle, without a focus on definition.

- (e) This question was generally well answered. Candidate responses were usually linked to the number of points and the quality of development. Higher achieving answers engaged with the failures and successes of welfare states, gave a wide range of examples and used theories such as Marxism, feminist and functionalism in a sophisticated way. These were well-structured with points on both sides and a range of concepts. Welfare, education, equality acts, employment and taxes were all discussed 'for' and 'against', and there were localised examples given, which were interesting and relevant. Candidate responses which were less successful often focused on basic ideas of poverty and inequality, but the majority of candidate responses showed knowledge of what government measures were and gave some examples.

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Paper 2251/22
Paper 22

Key messages

- Candidate responses to **Questions 1(c), 2(c) and 3(b)** indicated that candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully and understand the significance of terms used.
- Most of the candidate responses showed an understanding that **part (e)** questions require a debate – ‘for’ and ‘against’, with a conclusion. There were fewer one-sided **part (e)** responses than in the past sessions. However, some of the more successful candidates discussed all the alternatives to the theory on the ‘against’ side, or viewed the question in a juxtaposed way. Instead candidates should be encouraged to counter the points on the ‘for’ side and specifically address the question asked.
- Some candidate responses repeated questions in their opening paragraph or included definitions or historical context before starting to address the question. This may help candidates to prepare to answer the question, but is unlikely to gain any marks and often result in timing issues at the end of the question paper.
- Candidates should be encouraged to show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. Many candidates expressed ideas without explicitly doing this.
- Candidates should be encouraged to think about what the questions are asking and plan answers to those specific questions in their designated 15 minutes of reading time – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidates remain focused on the specific demands of the question.
- Some candidate responses are not using paragraphs in the longer responses, making it difficult for examiners to see where points begin and end. The ‘point per paragraph’ structure is thus recommended. Centres should encourage candidates to develop discrete essay writing skills and techniques to help candidates answer the **part (e)** questions.
- Many candidate responses indicated that candidates who did not show an understanding of the key term in the question (e.g. demographic trends, linguistic influences, white-collar crime, digital divide, etc.), could not access the question. As the key terms in the questions will be drawn directly from the syllabus, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these terms during their examination preparation. Some candidates did not achieve any marks for some of the questions because of this issue.
- Candidates should be encouraged 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 were writing 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 responses were insufficiently developed (command word is ‘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, followed by **Section B** (Education) and **Section C** (Crime). The least popular option was **Section D** (Media).

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

Very few rubric errors were seen in the examination session, allowing most of the candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number or incorrectly numbered their answers, though, and centres should encourage candidates to be aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

A good range of answers was produced, with marks achieved across the full spread of available marks. In the **part (a)** questions, candidates should be encouraged to 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)** requires **two** distinctly different points – candidates should separate these and label them clearly. In **part (c)** questions candidates should make more than two sociological points: 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 and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** questions. 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 points 'for' and three 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 do not run out of time – this approach worked well for several candidates this session.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Family

- (a) Most of the candidates answered the question correctly, linking the term 'reconstituted family' to remarriage and then divorce/death. Some responses did not make clear, or any, links to the formation of a new family, and therefore presented partial definitions. Terms like 'step-family', 'step-father' or 'step-siblings' were also mentioned, and some candidates referred to 'blended' family.
- (b) Some candidate responses did not show an understanding of the term 'demographic trends'. Several candidate responses mentioned birth/death rates, but did not give a trend or link to how it affected family life. Many responses discussed divorce/family types, however, these answers were not creditable. Those candidates who showed an understanding of the term 'demographic trends', also achieved full marks.
- (c) Many successful, sociologically engaged responses to this question were seen, and, consequently, many candidates achieved high marks. Many candidates linked changes in family functions to other institutions/agencies performing these functions instead. Some candidates, however, lacked focus as their responses were more about changes in gender roles than changing family functions. While some of the responses did provide links to family functions, others did not, and, therefore, received low or no marks.
- (d) Some excellent answers were seen to this question with a good use of key concepts and studies. The responses were wide ranging and focused on why conjugal roles had changed. Common responses included references to feminism, dual worker families, changes in the definition of masculinity, the privatisation of the nuclear family and/or the importance of labour-saving devices. Many responses also discussed family diversity, particularly same-sex families and lone parents. Weaker responses described traditional roles instead of discussing the reasons for change.
- (e) Overall, majority of the candidates gave balanced answers, offering a range of valid arguments for both sides of the debate. To argue for family life being negative for its members, majority of responses discussed domestic violence, child neglect and abuse and/or empty-shell marriages, where the most successful responses provided developed points with clear links to the question. For evaluation, many candidate responses talked about child-centeredness, emotional and

financial support and/or socialisation, among other factors, with many responses referring to functionalism. The more successful responses made clear references to other sociological perspectives, such as the New Right, Marxism and feminism. Weaker responses were typically not organised into paragraphs, offering undeveloped or underdeveloped points as well as generic arguments. Many responses with valid conclusions reached Band 3 and some reached Band 4. Some of the most successful responses presented a developed judgment.

Section B

Question 2

Education

- (a) Majority of the candidates answered this question correctly linking the term to punishment and deterrence, frequently citing examples of a sanction such as detention or exclusion.
- (b) Most of the candidate responses correctly identified and developed two relevant points, referring mainly to male and female subject choices, differences in gender socialisation, teacher expectations and role models. Some responses did not link gender expectations to subject choice and therefore achieved marks for identification only.
- (c) There were some very successful responses to this question, making references to Bernstein's restricted and elaborate codes, language issues of ethnic minority groups, and different dialects that may influence educational achievement. A few responses also discussed bilingualism as an asset to educational achievement. The weaker responses provided little sociological engagement, presenting more generic answers, while a few candidates misunderstood the question, and focused on various home factors that may impact educational achievement instead of linguistic ones specifically.
- (d) Majority of the candidate responses provided a range of valid reasons to explain why material factors can influence educational success. Common points made included overcrowded homes and inadequate diets, candidates not being able to afford extra resources and private teachers, and working class candidates having to combine part-time jobs with studying at school. The more successful responses demonstrated a high level of sociological knowledge and understanding, often referring to Marxist theory, while the weaker ones offered generic and/or vague responses.
- (e) Most of the candidates interpreted the question correctly, making points 'for' and 'against' private education and challenging the functionalist view that education is meritocratic, thus providing balanced answers. Many candidate responses outlined the functionalist view of education, while evaluating it with alternative explanations, with the stronger responses linking these with Marxism and, some, with feminism. Majority of the responses included points such as private education not being able to be afforded by all, private schools offering better opportunities, more resources and better teachers and facilities, as well as top universities preferring candidates from private schools. The weaker responses presented some undeveloped and/or underdeveloped points and some responses made little or no reference to theory or to meritocracy. Many candidate responses did not show an understanding of what was meant by the term 'private education'.

Section C

Question 3

Crime, deviance and social control

- (a) The majority of candidates achieved at least one mark for this question, but many did not give enough detail to achieve two marks. A group of friends was a common partial response. The most successful responses most often linked the 'peer group' to a group of people of similar age and status.
- (b) While some responses correctly described two policing strategies aimed at reducing crime, others described those used by courts or other institutions instead. Some responses were vague and could not be credited fully or at all. Out of the correct policing strategies discussed, the most common ones were surveillance, police targeting, arrest and police presence in public places.

- (c) Overall, this question was answered fairly well, and candidate responses showed knowledge and understanding of white-collar crime. Some of the common points made were that such crimes were often ignored by the police/courts, that they were not perceived as serious, and that they were frequently dealt with inside the company with white-collar criminals being more knowledgeable when negotiating the justice system. While many of the responses offered developed points, the weaker ones were generic, and did not adequately focus on the 'how' part of the question.
- (d) Candidate responses showed a good understanding of different reasons why a lack of opportunity may lead to crime. This lack of opportunity was principally connected to unemployment and discrimination/marginalisation of ethnic minorities and working class people and, in some cases, to a lack of educational opportunities. The more successful responses outlined Cohen's status frustration and Merton's strain theory, while the weaker ones offered generic information with limited sociological engagement.
- (e) Most of the candidate responses presented reasons for supporting the argument that inadequate socialisation can explain criminal behaviour. References were mainly made to improper socialisation by family and other institutions, hence not knowing or conforming to the accepted norms and values. The more successful responses then linked this clearly to criminal conduct. Other candidate responses discussed much crime being motivated by financial gain, lack of opportunity, masculinity and status frustration. Evaluation was often stronger than the 'for' side of the debate which was often less well developed/explained. The most successful responses made clear references to theory and perspectives, such as Marxism, functionalism or Cohen's status frustration, with the majority offering more general, hence somewhat less sociologically engaged, responses.

Section D

Question 4

Media

- (a) Most of the candidates achieved at least one mark for this question, and many candidates achieved two marks. The more successful responses showed a clear understanding of the term and gave an example of a group it applied to. For example, the term was defined correctly as a social group that is not represented/under-represented in the media with the example of ethnic minorities or women.
- (b) While some responses were rather vague about how media violence affected societal violence, others were successful in describing clear ways. Common responses described imitation, glamourising violence, hypodermic syringe model and role modelling.
- (c) The question was answered well overall, with candidate responses outlining a range of different ways in which the working class are represented in the media. References were made to them being portrayed as scroungers, unskilled and living in poverty, criminals, etc. More positive representations were also credited such as the supportive working class community and being hard working. Some of the most successful responses made references to GUMG research and Marxism.
- (d) Most of the candidate responses showed a correct understanding of the term 'digital divide' and discussed it with links to age, class and/or location. Other responses, however, misinterpreted the question explaining how there were differing views presented in the new media. Such answers did not achieve any marks or achieved marks in the lowest band, as they were generally incorrect and were not answering the question set.
- (e) Some candidate responses showed understanding of the debate within the question and the Marxist view of the media, evaluating it with pluralist and postmodernist theories. The more successful responses discussed a range of points on both sides developing them well with examples. Weaker responses, lacked range and clarity, hence presenting limited knowledge of the Marxist and other perspectives' views of the media, and/or providing undeveloped and/or underdeveloped points.