

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/11
Paper 11

Key messages

For the 15 mark question candidates are encouraged to focus on the question and make a two sided argument with the points supported by a key concept or sociological study. The conclusion should make a judgement in relation to the question, not just a summary of their answer.

Use the marks per question as guidance as to how much is to be written for a particular question. Some candidates were writing half a page for a part **(a)** question worth 2 marks and the same for a part **(e)** question worth 15.

General comments

Overall, most candidates responded well to all sections of the question paper, demonstrating relevant knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and were able to apply this to the questions set.

For the 15 mark question candidates are encouraged to focus on the question and make a two sided argument with the points supported by a key concept or sociological study. The conclusion should make a judgement in relation to the question, not just sum up what they have said.

Use the marks per question as guidance as to how much is to be written for a particular question. Some candidates were writing half a page for a part **(a)** question worth 2 marks and the same for a part **(e)** question worth 15.

Many candidates have a tendency to confuse validity and reliability. It is essential that candidates know the difference and are familiar with how to use them in relation to sociological research.

Section A

Question 1

- (a)** Generally well done – most candidates gained full marks here.
- (b)** This question was answered well. A few candidates lost marks by giving sampling techniques or official statistics instead of a research method. Candidates should be advised to avoid writing at length about each method as no further marks are awarded.
- (c)** Answers to this question were correctly identified from the source e.g. errors in deciding who is disabled and people not wishing to admit that they are disabled, scoring full marks. Lower scoring answers omitted to link to source, but most gained at least one mark.
- (d)** Most good answers referenced availability, comparisons, ability to generalise and representativeness. Candidates would benefit from defining cost and time, rather than stating them and leaving them unexplained. Weaker responses made reference to validity or quantitative data without defining or making clear the meaning of the concepts.
- (e)** Generally candidates were better at identifying strengths rather than limitations. Weaker responses gave partial answers and/or referred to strengths and weaknesses without always identifying the sample methods. This meant that their responses lacked relevant detail.
- (f)** The answers that did well made a range of points covering why large scale research can be difficult. Weaker answers did not develop much further than cost and some did not explain why

there where high costs involved. Stronger answers included funding issues and developed this with reference to concepts of bias from larger funding agencies e.g. the government.

- (g) Candidates tended to answer this in terms of positivism v interpretivism. Stronger responses made reference to the positivism scientific method, identifying its features. Some responses discussed value freedom. Other successful answers looked at the problems with the methods used by positivist/ interpretivists. Lower level answers did not use appropriate sociological terminology, however they were frequently evaluative.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates were awarded at least one mark but many missed out on the second mark by not developing beyond the definition or providing an example e.g. 'being excluded' without reference to what they have been excluded from.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify two examples. Weaker candidates did develop their examples and did not know what a subculture was e.g. family.
- (c) Most common answers mentioned sanctions, either positive or negative. This was closely followed by fear of exclusion. Stronger responses identified the process and lower level responses were unable to explain how and gave a descriptive example of a subculture with no reference to the process.
- (d) Better responses addressed ethnic groups and the way their religious beliefs caused problems for them in modern industrial society. Some strong responses gave the example of conflict in India between some Hindu and Muslim groups. Examples of how religion may impact on the ability to fully join in, such as fasting, arranged marriage, clothing and treatment of women were most common. Weaker responses were unable to explain the concept of a religious subculture or provide reasons for their points.
- (e) Higher level answers recognised that they needed to discuss religion and other agencies of social control. Overall there were stronger arguments against the view in the question. There were a number of unbalanced answers where candidates took the position that religion was not the most important agency of social control and offered relatively little knowledge and understanding of the importance of religion for some social groups.

Section C

Question 3

- (a) This was answered well with most candidates gaining at least one mark. The second was gained by giving examples of social mobility.
- (b) Some responses often identified the social group but were unable to describe. Sometimes description was developed to a far greater extent than required for the four marks allocated.
- (c) Higher level answers focused on how education and employment differed for ethnic groups. Other responses did not address the difference between the ethnic groups.
- (d) Stronger responses mentioned unemployment, bankruptcy, educational failure and made strong links to why this caused downwards social mobility. Weaker responses were more descriptive and often referred to closed and open societies without links to downward movement.
- (e) Solid responses were able to apply a theoretical debate between Marxism and functionalism and used concepts like meritocracy and exploitation in an appropriate way. The concepts of bourgeoisie and proletariat were frequently mentioned. The better answers were able to look at how ethnicity and gender cut across class lines. Weaker responses did not refer to modern industrial society or social classes.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/12
Paper 12

Key messages

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General comments

Overall, most candidates responded well to all sections of the question paper, demonstrating relevant knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and were able to apply this to the questions set.

Many candidates have a tendency to confuse validity and reliability. It is essential that candidates know the difference and are familiar with how to use them in relation to sociological research.

It is always worth reminding candidates to make sure that cost and time need qualification as they are generally too vague a notion to credit without qualification e.g. when used to illustrate strengths of micro approach 'takes less time' would need an explanation.

Comments on specific questions.

Section A

- (a)** Most candidates identified at least one finding using the source but a substantial number of candidates were unable to identify a second finding. Additionally, many candidates attempted to interpret the source rather than identifying findings.
- (b)** Most candidates were able to correctly identify types of interview. There were however, a number of candidates who referred to other methods such as observation, rather than interview methods.
- (c)** Good answers effectively used the source to describe issues surrounding validity with some demonstrating a sophisticated interpretation of the source. Many were able to spot the way the children were questioned. Other candidates gave reasons but without any reference to the source.
- (d)** A significant number of candidates were able to describe ways in which the interviewer may cause bias and many were able to give developed responses commonly referring to interviewer effect and characteristics, with some candidates using language such as 'social desirability'. Weaker responses simply described bias.
- (e)** This question challenged candidates' knowledge of key concepts such as validity, reliability, representativeness and objectivity. Many candidates were better at identifying strengths rather than limitations. Some candidates gave partial responses and/or referred to research methods used within the micro approach without always identifying the methods. Lower scoring answers confused micro and macro or described the micro approach rather than discussing strengths/weaknesses. Candidates should be encouraged to quantify cost and time to avoid vague answers which are not creditworthy.

- (f) Good responses made firm links between a single interviewer and generalisations. There were many answers that did not fully link their ideas back to generalisation. Many candidates gave good answers such as small sample or study, not being reliable or valid and the better responses referred to ethnicity, gender and age and explained how these points linked to generalisations.
- (g) Most candidates were able to describe some aspects of Marxism and/or feminism, often using good sociological language. Many answers were one sided, however some did mention that both were conflict approaches, concerned with equality and thus gained higher marks.

Most candidates made an attempt at a conclusion and many of these made conceptual links. Good evaluative conclusions should be encouraged as this would allow the candidate to access top band marks. There were some responses describing women as “weak” or “docile” but without connecting it to patriarchy. Higher level candidates were able to mention Marxist feminists accurately.

Section B

- (a) This was generally well answered, however marks were not awarded when the key word was repeated in the answer, e.g. “imitation is when someone imitates...”. Candidates should be encouraged to refer to the family in relation to questions about primary socialisation rather than society.
- (b) Candidates often picked relevant examples to describe, but did not always name them. Many candidates referred to canalisation, manipulation and verbal appellations, linking ideas to Oakley. Weaker responses confused primary and secondary institutions.
- (c) Overall, candidates responded well to this question. Most were able to give some reasons to explain how children are socialised. Some candidates, especially those who referred to the mass media, ignored the how part of the question, which limited the development of their answer. The key difference to gaining a higher mark was between candidates who explained how the socialisation occurred and those who did not go beyond describing the agencies. Those who focused on concepts such as the hidden curriculum, sanctions/rewards and ostracism, peer pressure and imitating media role models, scored well.
- (d) Many candidates had good descriptive content on feral children but they did not always look at the negative consequences. Better answers mentioned not fitting in, ostracism, not being able to get a job, crime and deviance, exclusion and conflict as a negative consequence of socialisation.
- (e) Many candidates demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the role education plays as an agent of secondary socialisation, making reference to the hidden curriculum, gender roles and access to employment. Lower scoring responses did not address the ‘to what extent education is the most important’ evaluative point to the question. Candidates who evaluated often did it by juxtaposition e.g. reference to peer group, mass media, work place, but did not always address ‘the most important agency’ part of the question. Weaker answers based evaluation around why education was negative for the individual. Some candidates looked at education and social mobility and did not address the socialisation part of the question.

Section C

- (a) Many candidates were able to define the term and give appropriate examples. Some responses were partial and some candidates seemed unfamiliar with the term. More able candidates gave examples of different jobs that men and women do or referred to the levels of employment that men and women reach.
- (b) This questions was generally well answered by reference to pay gap, lack of promotion, glass ceiling and injustices in education. Lower scoring answers referred to examples of discrimination based on characteristics other than gender.
- (c) Overall candidates responded well to this question and were able to give accurate explanations of the changing role of women in modern industrial society supported by good examples. Most talked about education, working, new man, legislation, symmetrical family. Most candidates were able to explain how women’s roles have changed with the best answers using sociological terms such as

breadwinner, dual or triple burden and a few looking at joint conjugal roles. Less able candidates focused on describing roles rather than identifying changes.

- (d) This question was answered well with frequently used themes such as maternity, glass ceiling, pay gap, lack of promotion, a women's place still in the home, male attitudes, patriarchy and power. Weaker responses did not provide a reason for why women continue to experience discrimination.

Candidates should be discouraged from referring to women as weak and unable to manage rather than stating that these are perceived attitudes which may cause discrimination. Strong candidates were able to distinguish between the how in question 3(c) and the why in question 3(d) and as a consequence were able to avoid repetition.

- (e) This question produced a lot of good descriptive content and income itself was discussed well, often with what someone could do with their income to improve their life chances, health, education, housing etc. Stronger responses were able to discuss other factors apart from income in evaluation, such as ascribed status, marriage and the lottery being more important as well as meritocracy and free education.



SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/13
Paper 13

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SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/21
Paper 21

Key messages

- Candidates should refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts where relevant as this will raise the overall quality of the answer and will allow access to the marks for sociological/conceptual engagement.
- Essay writing techniques should be developed whereby candidates learn to plan answers in their designated reading time.
- Some candidates struggled to access questions when they did not recognise the key term in the question (e.g. 'secularisation' in **1(c)**, 'community sentencing' in **3(c)**, 'media gatekeepers' in **4(b)**). As these key terms can be drawn from the specification, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these.
- Encourage candidates to use the marks per question as guidance for how much is to be written for a particular question.

General comments

Several strong candidate responses were seen during this November session, showing clear engagement with sociological issues, theory and contemporary debates. Candidates are often thinking sociologically and applying the knowledge they have gained in the classroom successfully to the specified examination questions. Relevant contemporary and local examples were used alongside more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify points made. Theories and concepts were used very well by some candidates. Very few rubric errors were seen in the examination session, which allows candidates to demonstrate what they can do successfully.

Section A (The Family) and **B** (Education) were the most popular in terms of candidate responses during this examination session. This was followed by **Section C** (Crime & Deviance). The least answered option was **Section D** (Media), which also included a higher number of weak responses across all sub-questions.

More candidates seemed to be aware of the need to look at both sides of the argument for the 15 mark questions which helps them gain access to the higher marks. However some candidates did have difficulty making balanced arguments.

There were few answers based on 'common sense' this session, which was encouraging to see. Though candidates who achieved fewer marks seemed to have some understanding of the sociological approach, they did not always use it appropriately in order to address the question set.

The overwhelming majority of candidates answered the correct number of questions. One or two candidates wrongly labelled questions, which could have misled Examiners in terms of mark allocation so it is important for candidates to take care with this.

In the part **(a)** questions, candidates should look to include two separate elements in their definition, e.g. 'cereal packet family' two elements from: it's a nuclear family form, it's seen as the ideal family type, it's used for advertising in the media, it contains traditional gender roles etc. Often the core definition can be complemented with examples as one of the two points.

Parts **(b)** need two distinct points – candidates can separate and label these clearly for the Examiner. In part **(c)** questions make sure there are more than two points made, evidenced and developed. For part **(d)** adopt the same approach as for **(c)** but develop it further, considering a broader range of ideas and ensuring concepts/theory are used appropriately. Introductions and definitions at the beginning of **(c)**, **(d)** and **(e)**

questions take up valuable time and do not gain specific marks. Conclusions are similarly unnecessary in part (c) and (d) questions.

In terms of the 15 mark part (e) questions, candidates should be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully using theory, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Each point should aim to be directly focused upon what the question is asking and to engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates, for example, were writing half a page for a part (a) question worth 2 marks and the same for a part (e) question worth 15 marks. Some candidates did not use paragraphs in their longer responses, making it difficult for the Examiner to see where points began and ended. On part (e) questions ensure that candidates have a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. The response needs to include a range of points for each side (encourage candidates to have three points for each side of the debate) that are well developed and evidence based, with a justified conclusion. In the part (e) questions, very good candidates often did not include a conclusion to the debate – they discussed points for and against without attempting an overview or judgment. A conclusion is required in this essay style question in order to reach the highest marks available.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: The Family

- (a) This question produced varied answers. When candidates understood the term it was answered really well. Common errors included defining lone parent families or extended families.
- (b) There were some very good answers produced by many candidates who were able to describe several different types of marriage. Common responses typically referred to arranged, forced, monogamous, polygamous or same-sex marriages.
- (c) Answers to this question varied in quality, depending largely on whether the candidate understood the term 'secularisation'. The better answers discussed ideas such as decreasing marriage rates, increases in cohabitation, more lone parent families, higher rates of divorce and more privatised nuclear families.
- (d) This was a well answered question on the whole. Common answers involved a discussion of decreases in community/extended families, the dark side of the family, issues surrounding divorce, domestic abuse, segregated conjugal roles and the triple shift. Weaker answers had a tendency to be list-like, rather than developing and evidencing the chosen points.
- (e) A full range of answers were seen for this question. Traditional sociological studies such as Willmott and Young, and Anderson were seen frequently. A number of candidates spent too long simply describing the historical argument rather than considering the situation post-industrialisation. In terms of the 'for' arguments, the best answers discussed the need for geographical mobility, privatisation of the nuclear family, opportunities for women, feminism, functions being performed by the state and economic factors. 'Against' points typically considered different cultures and the working class, as well as modifications to the extended family form. Technological advancements were also used well within the evaluation.

Section B: Education

- (a) This was a well answered question with most candidates being able to define what is meant by a self-fulfilling prophecy. Labelling was often referred to, as well as acting in the way expected of them.
- (b) This question was answered well by many candidates. Typical criticisms included: cultural biases (either based on social class or ethnicity), its failure to measure different types of intelligence, issues to do with it being a one-off test like illness/stress etc. Some very good knowledge and understanding was shown here.

- (c) Mixed responses were seen to this question, with some candidates clearly not knowing what the term 'hidden curriculum' means. Those that did were able to refer to topics such as gender, ethnicity, social class and power/authority. The better candidates used Marxist theory really well to elaborate on their points, and linked education to preparing candidates for their future roles in society.
- (d) This was less well answered, with several candidates not knowing what is meant by 'selective education'. Topics most frequently covered in more successful candidate responses focused on private schools, income inequalities, life chances, gaining better qualifications, unfair selection processes (often linking with issues to do with ethnicity, gender and social class) and Bourdieu's concept of capital.
- (e) Surprisingly, there was some confusion by a minority of candidates about what was meant by the peer group, with some talking about family or communities instead. For the most part, however, this was a well answered question that allowed candidates to form a debate. Some candidates could not access the higher mark bands due to the lack of conceptual engagement in their responses, tending towards the common-sense. The better answers pitted ideas such as anti-school subcultures, peer pressure, setting and streaming and gendered peer groups against teacher expectations, in-school factors, home factors and cultural factors.

Section C: Crime and Deviance

- (a) Most candidates answered this question really well, referring to unrecorded and unreported crime, often substantiating with a well chosen example, e.g. white collar crime.
- (b) Most candidates attempted this question but with varying degrees of success. The best answers recognised the 'formal' part of the question and described agents such as the police, government, prison or judicial system. Other candidates, however, only focused on the social control aspect of the question.
- (c) This question was not answered well, with a lot of candidates not knowing what was meant by 'community sentencing': too many candidates talked instead about communities punishing criminals.
- (d) This question allowed for a lot of sociological theory and concepts to be used in order to explain different reasons why individuals may adopt a deviant career. Status frustration, material deprivation, peer pressure, police targeting and illegitimate opportunity structures were frequently given.
- (e) A number of candidates answering this question failed to create a debate within their answer and so could not score higher than band 2. Candidates seemed more confident in discussing how the official crime statistics were flawed, but found it harder to develop points that supported their usage. Exploring issues such as: representativeness, generalisability, being up to date, reliable sources, professional researchers, official data etc. should prove useful here. Some candidates confused official crime statistics with victim surveys or self-studies which detracted from the quality of their answer. Overall though, this was an accessible question that allowed candidates of all ability levels to respond with varying degrees of success.

Section D: Media

- (a) This question was answered quite poorly with a number of candidates only being able to quote examples. When teaching topics on the new media it is important to contrast this with traditional media in order to show how things have changed.
- (b) Candidates who understood what was meant by a media gatekeeper answered this question well, typically referring to editors, producers, the audience and owners.
- (c) A number of candidates produced very common sense responses to this question which were typically very generalised and gave no specific examples. The better answers focused on specific

social groups and linked to aspects such as age, gender, social class and ethnicity/culture. This allowed them to focus on the word 'different' in the question far more successfully through the comparisons drawn.

- (d) This was not a well answered question as some candidates ignored the new media part of the question and instead only referred to the representation of social groups: others discussed developments in the new media in a wholly generic sense - neither of these approaches could be well rewarded. The answers that were able to score well used the more powerful role of the audience (in terms of user-generated content, uploading, blogging, interactivity etc.) to explain why representations of social groups were changing. Citizen journalism was also referred to by some candidates.
- (e) Candidates of all abilities were able to engage well with this question. Answers were differentiated through the candidate's use of examples, theory and sociological concepts. The better responses referred to models of media effects, examples of recent elections and media techniques of persuasion to argue 'for' the claim. In evaluation, candidates typically considered active audience models, different social characteristics affecting the ability of the media to affect voting patterns, and other influences on voting patterns, such as family political socialisation.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/22
Paper 22

Key messages

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Section A (The Family) and **B** (Education) were the most popular in terms of candidate responses during this examination session. This was followed by **Section C** (Crime & Deviance). The least answered option was **Section D** (Media), which also included a higher number of weak responses across all sub-questions.

More candidates seemed to be aware of the need to look at both sides of the argument for the 15 mark questions which helps them gain access to the higher marks. However some candidates did have difficulty making balanced arguments.

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Comments on specific questions

Section A: The Family

This was the most popular question by some distance, attempted by the great majority of candidates.

- (a) There were some excellent responses but many answers only received one mark, relying too heavily on copying the wording in the question. Many referred to couples no longer being happy in their marriage and choosing to divorce. Some referred to the example of empty shell marriages or separation.
- (b) This was well answered in many instances, with many candidates offering that the elderly will need supporting or will pose a burden, and that grandparents can help with the grandchildren's upbringing. However, a number of candidates talked about why life expectancy had increased, or the consequences of it for society. Some candidates did not understand the term and appeared to guess the answers.
- (c) The problem with several answers for this question was the repetition of 'conform to society's norms and values' from the question. Primary socialisation appeared in most answers, but some candidates struggled to go beyond this. Social control, use of sanctions and channelling/manipulation into gender roles often featured in the better answers.
- (d) Again some excellent answers were, seen with good use of key concepts and a wide range of points, however some answers lacked a sociological focus. Also a number of candidates did not focus on modern industrial societies or why the roles had changed; instead some simply described the changes, for example from segregated to joint conjugal roles. Too many candidates spent time explaining roles in the past and took a while to get to the crux of what the question was asking for. Good use was made of the 'new man' idea, changing technologies in the home and the switch to privatised nuclear families as the context for changing roles.
- (e) The vast majority of candidates were able to access this question; weaker candidates tended to only focus on violence or abuse in its various forms and these responses were often one-sided. Common evidence in support included reference to domestic violence, spousal abuse, child abuse, and marital rape. Evidence to support the positive side of the family were in the direction of the essential functions carried out by the family and the enactment of laws protecting women and children, though sometimes discussion tended to lack conceptual engagement and were thus a little simplistic. Many better candidates were aware of the Marxist and feminist perspective of the family on the one side, and functionalists and the New Right on the other and were able to use these theories effectively to help debate the issue.

Section B: Education

- (a) Most candidates gained at least one mark here, with references to being taught in schools, following a syllabus, taking exams or a set curriculum.

- (b) Very mixed answers were seen here and many were too similar to award full marks to, or were not linked explicitly to the culture of masculinity. Some candidates tended to concentrate on teachers' attitudes towards boys, or even on girls' performance, rather than focusing on how the culture of masculinity affects boys' educational achievement. The main answers which were able to score well focused on laddish behaviour, a preference of sport to study and being influenced by peer pressure/anti-school subcultures.
- (c) This was not typically answered well as many candidates did not understand the term 'ethnocentric'. Some candidates that did attempt this question talked about class/gender inequality instead of concentrating on ethnicity. Correct answers identified majority and minority ethnic groups, the majority culture being presented as superior, syllabus content and teaching, teacher and candidate labelling and language differences.
- (d) Very mixed responses were seen for this question. A number of candidates thought anti-school subculture was a type of school and went on to describe why candidates were sent there. Alternatively, some linked it to religion where moral values are taught. Many answers were too descriptive. However, there were some excellent responses which used theory and concepts (e.g. labelling, setting/streaming, cultural/material deprivation, peer pressure etc.) to good effect.
- (e) A number of candidates did well on this question, making excellent points for both sides. The very best answers focused on the consensus/conflict debate. Some produced sophisticated answers which incorporated many concepts linked to Marxism and functionalism such as ideology, false consciousness, hidden curriculum and the various roles that education plays. Weaker candidates tended to talk about types of schools and factors that gave the ruling class an advantage in education, rather than looking at wider society and issues such as false consciousness.

Section C: Crime and Deviance

- (a) Candidates had difficulty in defining this without repeating the word 'status'. Most candidates achieved one mark, for example by referring to labelling theory. Only a few candidates referred to how people see themselves and are seen by others. A number of candidates achieved 2 marks by recognizing how this status over-rides all others.
- (b) This was generally well answered, although some candidates were unclear on what white collar crime was. Those that did answer successfully referred most commonly to fraud, embezzlement and company theft in their responses.
- (c) Most candidates understood the concept of subcultures. Common correct responses involved references to peer pressure to commit crime within the subculture, status frustration, gangs and criminal subcultures and young people within subcultures acting in a delinquent and criminal manner. A common issue in many responses involved identifying reasons for joining the subculture, rather than discussing how the subculture links to crime and deviance. Another frequent error involved candidates not developing the identified point i.e. peer pressure, in terms of how this resulted in the subculture committing crime.
- (d) Generally well answered. Candidates referred to a range of possible reasons as to why inadequate socialisation causes crime, linking to discussions of a breakdown in primary socialisation and social control through to poor role models. Some candidates branched further afield and discussed how inadequate socialisation through agencies such as education or the media made crime more likely.
- (e) 'Strategies' was often not understood though some wrote well about police targeting and surveillance, for example. Candidates found it hard to differentiate between the police and other parts of the criminal justice system, so there were often parts of the answer discussing prisons and other forms of punishment which were irrelevant. The 'against' side was not often covered well.

Question 4 – Media

Question Comment

- (a) Candidates sometimes found it hard to pick up the full 2 marks here as they had a notion of what propaganda is but often could not fully define it.

- (b) This question was answered well by many candidates. Common correct answers included reference to: criminals or violence, terrorism, the dangerous savage and experiencing poverty. A common shortfall of candidates involved the lack of development of their identified point.
- (c) Not well answered in the majority of papers that were seen, as whilst many understood the term 'globalisation', candidates often failed to then spell out the consequences for changing media content.
- (d) Mixed responses here – some answers were done very well with reference made to censorship, the watershed, propaganda, offensive content, protecting state secrets, protecting children from offensive content etc. with some references to Marxist theory also. Many however were generally common sense answers with a limited use of concepts, describing how content is controlled but not always why.
- (e) A number of common sense answers seen here, however there were also some excellent answers seen with good use of theory. Frequent points mentioned included the argument between Marxists and pluralists and media effects theories also featured strongly as one might expect.

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Key messages

- Candidates should refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts where relevant as this will raise the overall quality of the answer and will allow access to the marks for sociological/conceptual engagement.
- Essay writing techniques should be developed whereby candidates learn to plan answers in their designated reading time.
- Some candidates struggled to access questions when they did not recognise the key term in the question (e.g. 'secularisation' in **1(c)**, 'community sentencing' in **3(c)**, 'media gatekeepers' in **4(b)**). As these key terms can be drawn from the specification, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these.
- Encourage candidates to use the marks per question as guidance for how much is to be written for a particular question.

General comments

Several strong candidate responses were seen during this November session, showing clear engagement with sociological issues, theory and contemporary debates. Candidates are often thinking sociologically and applying the knowledge they have gained in the classroom successfully to the specified examination questions. Relevant contemporary and local examples were used alongside more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify points made. Theories and concepts were used very well by some candidates. Very few rubric errors were seen in the examination session, which allows candidates to demonstrate what they can do successfully.

Section A (The Family) and **B** (Education) were the most popular in terms of candidate responses during this examination session. This was followed by **Section C** (Crime & Deviance). The least answered option was **Section D** (Media), which also included a higher number of weak responses across all sub-questions.

More candidates seemed to be aware of the need to look at both sides of the argument for the 15 mark questions which helps them gain access to the higher marks. However some candidates did have difficulty making balanced arguments.

There were few answers based on 'common sense' this session, which was encouraging to see. Though candidates who achieved fewer marks seemed to have some understanding of the sociological approach, they did not always use it appropriately in order to address the question set.

The overwhelming majority of candidates answered the correct number of questions. One or two candidates wrongly labelled questions, which could have misled Examiners in terms of mark allocation so it is important for candidates to take care with this.

In the part **(a)** questions, candidates should look to include two separate elements in their definition, e.g. 'cereal packet family' two elements from: it's a nuclear family form, it's seen as the ideal family type, it's used for advertising in the media, it contains traditional gender roles etc. Often the core definition can be complemented with examples as one of the two points.

Parts **(b)** need two distinct points – candidates can separate and label these clearly for the Examiner. In part **(c)** questions make sure there are more than two points made, evidenced and developed. For part **(d)** adopt the same approach as for **(c)** but develop it further, considering a broader range of ideas and ensuring concepts/theory are used appropriately. Introductions and definitions at the beginning of **(c)**, **(d)** and **(e)**

questions take up valuable time and do not gain specific marks. Conclusions are similarly unnecessary in part (c) and (d) questions.

In terms of the 15 mark part (e) questions, candidates should be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully using theory, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Each point should aim to be directly focused upon what the question is asking and to engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates, for example, were writing half a page for a part (a) question worth 2 marks and the same for a part (e) question worth 15 marks. Some candidates did not use paragraphs in their longer responses, making it difficult for the Examiner to see where points began and ended. On part (e) questions ensure that candidates have a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. The response needs to include a range of points for each side (encourage candidates to have three points for each side of the debate) that are well developed and evidence based, with a justified conclusion. In the part (e) questions, very good candidates often did not include a conclusion to the debate – they discussed points for and against without attempting an overview or judgment. A conclusion is required in this essay style question in order to reach the highest marks available.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: The Family

- (a) This question produced varied answers. When candidates understood the term it was answered really well. Common errors included defining lone parent families or extended families.
- (b) There were some very good answers produced by many candidates who were able to describe several different types of marriage. Common responses typically referred to arranged, forced, monogamous, polygamous or same-sex marriages.
- (c) Answers to this question varied in quality, depending largely on whether the candidate understood the term 'secularisation'. The better answers discussed ideas such as decreasing marriage rates, increases in cohabitation, more lone parent families, higher rates of divorce and more privatised nuclear families.
- (d) This was a well answered question on the whole. Common answers involved a discussion of decreases in community/extended families, the dark side of the family, issues surrounding divorce, domestic abuse, segregated conjugal roles and the triple shift. Weaker answers had a tendency to be list-like, rather than developing and evidencing the chosen points.
- (e) A full range of answers were seen for this question. Traditional sociological studies such as Willmott and Young, and Anderson were seen frequently. A number of candidates spent too long simply describing the historical argument rather than considering the situation post-industrialisation. In terms of the 'for' arguments, the best answers discussed the need for geographical mobility, privatisation of the nuclear family, opportunities for women, feminism, functions being performed by the state and economic factors. 'Against' points typically considered different cultures and the working class, as well as modifications to the extended family form. Technological advancements were also used well within the evaluation.

Section B: Education

- (a) This was a well answered question with most candidates being able to define what is meant by a self-fulfilling prophecy. Labelling was often referred to, as well as acting in the way expected of them.
- (b) This question was answered well by many candidates. Typical criticisms included: cultural biases (either based on social class or ethnicity), its failure to measure different types of intelligence, issues to do with it being a one-off test like illness/stress etc. Some very good knowledge and understanding was shown here.

- (c) Mixed responses were seen to this question, with some candidates clearly not knowing what the term 'hidden curriculum' means. Those that did were able to refer to topics such as gender, ethnicity, social class and power/authority. The better candidates used Marxist theory really well to elaborate on their points, and linked education to preparing candidates for their future roles in society.
- (d) This was less well answered, with several candidates not knowing what is meant by 'selective education'. Topics most frequently covered in more successful candidate responses focused on private schools, income inequalities, life chances, gaining better qualifications, unfair selection processes (often linking with issues to do with ethnicity, gender and social class) and Bourdieu's concept of capital.
- (e) Surprisingly, there was some confusion by a minority of candidates about what was meant by the peer group, with some talking about family or communities instead. For the most part, however, this was a well answered question that allowed candidates to form a debate. Some candidates could not access the higher mark bands due to the lack of conceptual engagement in their responses, tending towards the common-sense. The better answers pitted ideas such as anti-school subcultures, peer pressure, setting and streaming and gendered peer groups against teacher expectations, in-school factors, home factors and cultural factors.

Section C: Crime and Deviance

- (a) Most candidates answered this question really well, referring to unrecorded and unreported crime, often substantiating with a well chosen example, e.g. white collar crime.
- (b) Most candidates attempted this question but with varying degrees of success. The best answers recognised the 'formal' part of the question and described agents such as the police, government, prison or judicial system. Other candidates, however, only focused on the social control aspect of the question.
- (c) This question was not answered well, with a lot of candidates not knowing what was meant by 'community sentencing': too many candidates talked instead about communities punishing criminals.
- (d) This question allowed for a lot of sociological theory and concepts to be used in order to explain different reasons why individuals may adopt a deviant career. Status frustration, material deprivation, peer pressure, police targeting and illegitimate opportunity structures were frequently given.
- (e) A number of candidates answering this question failed to create a debate within their answer and so could not score higher than band 2. Candidates seemed more confident in discussing how the official crime statistics were flawed, but found it harder to develop points that supported their usage. Exploring issues such as: representativeness, generalisability, being up to date, reliable sources, professional researchers, official data etc. should prove useful here. Some candidates confused official crime statistics with victim surveys or self-studies which detracted from the quality of their answer. Overall though, this was an accessible question that allowed candidates of all ability levels to respond with varying degrees of success.

Section D: Media

- (a) This question was answered quite poorly with a number of candidates only being able to quote examples. When teaching topics on the new media it is important to contrast this with traditional media in order to show how things have changed.
- (b) Candidates who understood what was meant by a media gatekeeper answered this question well, typically referring to editors, producers, the audience and owners.
- (c) A number of candidates produced very common sense responses to this question which were typically very generalised and gave no specific examples. The better answers focused on specific

social groups and linked to aspects such as age, gender, social class and ethnicity/culture. This allowed them to focus on the word 'different' in the question far more successfully through the comparisons drawn.

- (d) This was not a well answered question as some candidates ignored the new media part of the question and instead only referred to the representation of social groups: others discussed developments in the new media in a wholly generic sense - neither of these approaches could be well rewarded. The answers that were able to score well used the more powerful role of the audience (in terms of user-generated content, uploading, blogging, interactivity etc.) to explain why representations of social groups were changing. Citizen journalism was also referred to by some candidates.
- (e) Candidates of all abilities were able to engage well with this question. Answers were differentiated through the candidate's use of examples, theory and sociological concepts. The better responses referred to models of media effects, examples of recent elections and media techniques of persuasion to argue 'for' the claim. In evaluation, candidates typically considered active audience models, different social characteristics affecting the ability of the media to affect voting patterns, and other influences on voting patterns, such as family political socialisation.