

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/11

Paper 11

Key messages

- Questions requiring the straightforward application of knowledge were done well, while answers requiring more analysis needed greater discussion.

In the compulsory question:

- Questions requiring a specific number of answers would benefit from candidates numbering or splitting their answers. This would make it clearer to see how many examples have been given and eliminate confusion caused by points running together.

In the optional questions:

- In part **(a)**, repeating the wording given in the question is an unsatisfactory way of defining a term.
- To score full marks in part **(b)** questions, it is necessary to identify a process and then offer some elaboration of it.
- Part **(c)** questions are more stretching and require more detail.
- Part **(d)** questions need to be supported by two arguments and some assessment of the question needs to be offered in order to access the higher mark bands.

General comments

A full range of answers was given to this paper at all levels. Most candidates answered the correct number of questions and there were very few rushed final answers. Some candidates only answered three questions and a few answered questions from all sections of the paper.

Sophisticated evaluation of sociological material was evident in the best answers, with detailed application of knowledge in parts **(c)** and **(d)** of the optional questions, showing that candidates from many Centres had been well prepared, especially for the compulsory question. A number of candidates showed limited understanding of the terms to be defined.

Weaker candidates have a tendency to repeat the question given in part **(a)** when defining terms. Just using the words in the question shows insufficient knowledge of sociological terms. Likewise, if a question asks for two examples, giving more than two does not gain a candidate additional marks. Candidates should pay particular attention to the number of marks awarded for questions and this should be reflected in their answers. A number of candidates wrote a side for a question worth just two marks and then only gave short answers for questions worth eight marks.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i)** Most candidates defined this term well. Some candidates described interviewers carrying out questionnaires, showing confusion of understanding.
- (ii)** Most candidates understood the meaning of 'pilot study' and defined it accurately.



- (iii) 'Closed questions' were defined well in most responses. Some candidates displayed confusion by stating that closed questions have to be answered in front of a researcher when they are carrying out a questionnaire. This was an assumption that should not have been made.
- (b) Most candidates selected two methods of selecting a sample but a number answered generally in terms of any research method rather than specifically for a postal questionnaire. Some responses named a method but did not describe how the sample was selected for that method. Other candidates described how a sample is selected without naming the method.
- (c) A significant number of candidates offered no response to this question. Weaker candidates demonstrated confusion by describing the problems of selecting questions or delivering the questionnaires rather than of selecting a sampling frame for a questionnaire.
- (d) This was a well-answered question with some detailed responses. Some weaker candidates stated that the postal questionnaire was being done as an interview.
- (e) Most candidates answered this question successfully. Some weaker candidates assumed that there would be an interviewer there to explain the questions if respondents were uncertain about the meaning of the questions.
- (f) The nature of structured interviews was clearly understood by most candidates. Most responses offered two advantages and two disadvantages and the clearest answers named which were which. Some weaker answers were very generalised and offered a reason, such as cost, that could apply to a host of methods. In order to gain the highest marks, the specific advantage or disadvantage of that method should be outlined.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) A number of candidates who selected this question left this section unanswered. Other weak answers just repeated the question back as their answer. Good answers focused on different norms and values to be found in different cultures.
- (b) The best responses named two social roles that one individual performs and then described those roles. Many weaker answers named social roles but did not describe them.
- (c) There were many responses that displayed clear understanding of the question and outlined the various ways in which socialisation takes place. Some candidates needed to focus more on this and not get drawn into lengthy descriptions of the work of Freud or Piaget that added little to a sociological explanation.
- (d) Many answers outlined the ways in which socialisation leads to the sharing of norms and values. The best were supported with specific examples of norms that are shared and of those that are not shared. Candidates need to be aware that homilies about how the world would be a better place if we all shared the same norms and values are not relevant to the question.

Question 3

- (a) This term was very well understood.
- (b) Most candidates understood what was meant by informal social control. The majority of answers related to negative methods of control but there were some good examples of positive methods of informal social control.
- (c) The best answers looked at a range of ways in which governments can influence social control, outlining issues such as civil order as well as how governments may use other institutions such as religion.
- (d) Most answers either agreed or disagreed with the proposition outlined in the question, with the best responses outlining the theoretical views of functionalists, Marxist and elite theory.

Section C

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates showed a clear understanding of the meaning of status. Those who gave the most accurate answers related high status to those in a privileged position in their society. There was no need to describe low position (which a number of candidates did) in order to gain full credit for this question.
- (b) This question was well answered by most candidates. The most successful responses named a status such as doctor or father and then described how that status was ascribed or achieved. Some candidates defined what ascribed and achieved statuses are but did not give examples, as required by the question.
- (c) Many responses to this question described how individuals or families become wealthy. The most successful answers explained how wealth is retained over the generations, which weaker answers failed to do.
- (d) Many responses were limited to describing the effects of education or lack of education on life chances. This was a reasonable but limited point. The better answers looked at other avenues to social mobility as well as the different life chances that are available to individuals.

Question 5

- (a) The best answers clearly described the meaning of social inequality but many weaker answers looked at the rest of the question and assumed that part (a) was solely to do with the position of ethnic minorities.
- (b) Most candidates described two ways in which ethnic minorities face discrimination. One common mistake was to describe why ethnic discrimination takes place rather than the way in which it takes place, which was the question asked in part (c).
- (c) Many candidates wrote clear accounts of why ethnic minorities face discrimination and supported their answer with examples. Weaker answers assumed that ethnic minorities have to be black and that ethnic minorities cannot have a privileged position, as is found in South Africa.
- (d) The best answers to this question looked at how the life chances of ethnic minorities may or may not have changed by examining a range of factors that included education and legal changes.

Section D

Question 6

- (a) The best answers clearly described the meaning of political participation but many weaker answers just repeated the question back as an answer. It was a term with which many candidates struggled.
- (b) This question was well answered by most candidates, who were able to identify two methods of participation. Some candidates only identified one method and did not go on to describe it.
- (c) Many candidates had a firm grasp of the differences between the two types of system. Some candidates described one in detail but made little comparison with the other.
- (d) Some candidates assessed the limitations on the powers of democratic governments but most gave limited one-sided accounts of how democratic governments have their powers controlled.

Question 7

- (a) Political socialisation as a process of socialisation connected to the development of political values was well understood by most candidates.
- (b) Most candidates identified two ways in which political views develop but some weaker candidates thought it meant expressing political views.

- (c) This was the most challenging question for many candidates, as they tended to overlook the 'older' in the question and described political socialisation and the development of views with little link to age. The better answers identified ways in which political views change with age and some sophisticated answers supported this with links to studies of political participation.
- (d) Most candidates identified several ways in which the media can influence voting behaviour and considered a range of subject matter in their answer, such as the position of tactical, target and floating voters.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12

Paper 12

Key messages

- Questions requiring the straightforward application of knowledge were done well, while answers requiring greater analysis needed more sociological examples and discussion.
- A significant number of questions was left blank by some candidates.

In the compulsory question:

- Questions requiring a specific number of answers would benefit from candidates numbering or separating their answers with a blank space. This would make it clearer how many examples have been given and eliminate confusion caused by points running together and repeating the same, or similar, information.

In the optional questions:

- In part **(a)**, repeating the wording given in the question is an unsatisfactory way of defining a term.
- To score full marks in part **(b)** questions, it is necessary to identify a process and then offer some elaboration of it.
- Part **(c)** questions are more stretching and require more development and greater use of examples in responses.
- Answers to part **(d)** questions need to be supported by two arguments and offer some assessment of the question in order to access the higher mark bands. Many able candidates would have done better if they had included more developed answers.

General comments

Responses at all levels were given to this paper. The very best answers displayed excellent sociological knowledge with detailed analysis. Most candidates answered the correct number of questions and there were very few rushed final answers. A few candidates only answered three questions and a small number answered questions from all sections of the paper. A number of candidates left some sections of each question blank.

Sophisticated evaluation of sociological material was evident in the best answers, with detailed application of knowledge in parts **(c)** and **(d)** of the optional questions, showing that candidates from many Centres had been well prepared, especially for the compulsory question. A number of candidates showed limited understanding of the terms to be defined.

Weaker candidates displayed a tendency to repeat back the question given in part **(a)** as their definition answer. Only using the words in the question shows insufficient knowledge of sociological terms. Likewise, if a question asks for two examples, giving more than two does not gain a candidate additional marks. Candidates should pay particular attention to the marks awarded for questions and this should be reflected in the length and detail of their answers. A number of candidates wrote a side for a question worth just two marks and then only gave short answers for questions worth eight marks.

Candidates must consider analysis in their responses, particularly to part **(d)** questions. To develop this, they should include more concepts, studies, theory and material, such as laws from specific societies. There



was some excellent use of theory by some candidates and some clear application of sociological material to the questions as set.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) (i) Most candidates defined this term well. A common error was to include material that could be applied to all types of interviews.
- (ii) Many candidates saw interviewer effect and interviewer bias as synonymous. A small number of candidates described how the interviewer distorts the data, with most outlining how the presence or characteristics of the interviewer influence the findings of the interview.
- (iii) Few candidates defined this term correctly and many left it blank.
- (b) Most candidates selected two limitations of unstructured interviews. Weaker candidates gave generalised answers. Stronger responses outlined how interviewers need to be trained carefully and the problems of managing data.
- (c) Many candidates answered this question well. Time and cost were amongst the most popular responses given. There were some good responses that analysed the reactions of interviewees or the need to ask difficult questions.
- (d) This was a well-answered question and most candidates had thoroughly learnt the definition for each term. Some sophisticated answers pointed out what was different between them.
- (e) Most candidates were able to identify problems when attempting to record data from covert observation. Some candidates outlined a general problem of the method that was unconnected to recording data, so could not be rewarded.
- (f) The nature of non-participant observation was clearly well understood by many candidates. Some answers lacked clarity as it was hard to know if the candidate was describing covert or overt observations. The strongest answers made this clear. It was acceptable to highlight strengths and limitations of either method.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Many candidates gave accurate definitions to this question. There was a range of attempts at the definition which showed some detailed understanding.
- (b) The term 'sanction' was not understood by all candidates. Some were able to identify rewards and punishments but could not name examples of sanctions. Generalised responses without examples were common. Better candidates linked their answers to social conformity, while other candidates described formal and informal sanctions.
- (c) Many candidates produced competent responses to this question. There were many who focused on parents teaching alone and produced list-like answers describing activities such as feeding and manners. The best responses wrote about imitation, rewards and sanctions. Some candidates had misread the question and many wrote about all forms of socialisation, so school and the mass media were included. A few candidates did not mention parents at all.
- (d) Some candidates did not understand the question. Weaker answers were characterised by a tendency to write about a range of societies and then compare them, or to assert that norms and values are shared. Some of these candidates then gave examples of different religions or peer groups to be found within one society, so clearly did not understand the question. The best responses addressed the specific question asked and discussed sub-culture within a theoretical framework.

Question 3

- (a) There was some confusion about the meaning of social identity. Many candidates could give examples of what it might involve, such as gender, but few could define it. Some candidates repeated the question back.
- (b) Many responses described two ways in which individuals learn their gender roles. Weaker answers lacked focus on the question, in that they did not address how roles are learnt but gave generalised responses, such as 'they are learned in families or in school'.
- (c) Many candidates identified the ways in which socialisation influences the development of gender identity. Others included the role of parents and the use of rewards and sanctions. The best responses gave a range of reasons why young people conform, focusing mainly on the peer group. Weaker candidates struggled to understand what conform meant.
- (d) This question was well understood by candidates and many answers covered all aspects of the question in a relevant way and were supported by careful analysis. A few candidates concentrated solely on teenagers, which limited the success of their answer. Many candidates included a good range of comments about changing family roles, women's education, work, changing male roles and masculine identities. Better candidates were able to refer to feminism, legal changes and contemporary societies. Many candidates offered assessment, referred to studies and used sociological terms.

Section C

Question 4

- (a) Very few candidates could accurately define relative poverty. Many mistook it for absolute poverty and many saw it as between being poor but not desperately poor or even interpreted it as having poor relatives.
- (b) The majority of candidates successfully identified two examples of absolute poverty. Features such as lack of food were identified by most candidates but development was lacking in many answers. A few candidates gave some excellent responses, referring to different examples of global societies and focusing specifically on issues that cause absolute poverty.
- (c) There were some very good responses to this question that explored a range of problems, and some candidates were able to look at broad structural issues and economic factors. Weaker candidates wrote in a generalised way about the need to get a job, or lack of education. A number produced only a polemic on the failure of the poor to do anything for themselves. There were some sophisticated answers on the cycle of poverty and underclass culture. Candidates should be aware that provision by a welfare state, however limited, should prevent absolute poverty, even if it does not solve poverty itself.
- (d) Many candidates were able to answer this well, giving a range of reasons both within and outside the individual's control. Some candidates used Marxism to explain the class position. Better candidates responded to the focus on control in the question. Weaker candidates either wrote a description of why people were poor, or identified features in the characteristics of the poor, such as gambling, alcohol consumption and use of drugs, to account for their poverty.

Question 5

- (a) The best answers clearly described the meaning of stratification, drawing attention either directly or implicitly to inequalities. Weaker candidates gave examples of stratification rather than defining it.
- (b) A common error was to see social class as somewhere you came from rather than a position you could achieve. A number of candidates misunderstood the question and so could not gain any credit.

- (c) There was a fundamental misunderstanding of 'white-collar' by a number of candidates, who saw it as an ethnic issue. Some candidates misread the question, as it asked for reasons why white-collar workers have better conditions, while some candidates just gave descriptions of the perks of white-collar workers. In terms of reasons, a number of candidates named education but did not then develop the point, so their answer lacked assessment. Some better answers contrasted white-collar workers and blue-collar workers well.
- (d) Some candidates produced valid responses with detailed material on one class. Better candidates looked at more than one social position, whether this was class or caste, and produced valid assessment and reference to functionalism. Weaker answers repeated material from **Question 5(c)** and simply wrote about poverty. 'Life experiences' was defined by many candidates very narrowly and many only described employment and education.

Section D

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates focused on the right to speak out freely.
- (b) Many candidates knew what censorship meant but a common error was to confuse it with the census. Some candidates who knew what the term meant struggled to go beyond a generalised answer.
- (c) In contrast to part (b), this part of the question was answered well. 'Authoritarian' was well understood and a range of examples was given to support responses.
- (d) There were responses that showed clear understanding and had a sound grasp of pluralism. Pluralism was rarely well explained and answers tended to focus on the voting system, rather than the sharing of power widely. There was very little critique of the workings of democratic societies and when assessment was included it concentrated on elite power theory.

Question 7

- (a) 'Setting the political agenda' was not well understood and many candidates simply repeated the question back as an answer.
- (b) Most candidates identified two ways in which the media can influence political discussion but many candidates chose to describe what the media do rather than focusing on the influence of the media. Some candidates gave interesting local examples.
- (c) This was well answered by most candidates but there was a dominance of what parties would give voters, rather than any other examples of the actions that political parties can undertake. There were many cross-cultural examples in responses.
- (d) Many candidates were able to talk about what the media do. Better answers also discussed how the media help governments to maintain power. The mass media cover a number of forms yet the focus remained on newspapers, and there was little mention of the new media. Assessment was very limited, with better answers raising the issue of whether the mass media might work against governments by relating their failings to a wider public. A number of candidates were able to draw on relevant examples from their own society.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/13

Paper 13

Key messages

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SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/21

Paper 21

Key messages

- Candidates need to be able to define clearly and understand sociological concepts.
- Candidates should be taught to differentiate between concepts, for example to know the difference between **segregated** and **symmetrical roles**.
- Candidates need to recognise that 'How far...?'; 'Assess...' and 'To what extent...?' questions are asking them to argue for and against. It is not expected to be a balanced argument.
- Candidates should be aware of the main sociological perspectives on all topics, in particular the Marxist, feminist, functionalist and pluralist views. Some topics such as the media have perspectives which are particular to them.

General comments

The most popular topics were Family, Education and Crime and **Questions 1, 5 and 6** were the most popular questions. In order to gain high marks, candidates need to be aware of sociological perspectives and to present both sides of the argument in the part **(d)** questions. For example, in **Question 6(d)** candidates should be aware of the connection between social class and crime, but they should also know that there are other factors, such as the influence of peer groups, ethnicity and gender etc.

Some candidates could improve their knowledge of the types of secondary school in the UK and the systems used within them, for example, setting and streaming. Candidates should be advised not to answer a question if they have not studied the topic in class or if there is a concept in it which they do not understand.

Questions 7 and 8 were not popular questions and those who answered them lacked knowledge of sociological perspectives on the media, for example, the hypodermic-syringe model and the uses and gratification model etc.

Comments on specific questions

SECTION A: Family

Question 1

- (a) The term 'polygamy' was well understood and many candidates gained full credit for this question.
- (b) To gain full credit, candidates needed to provide two clearly-defined answers. Most candidates found this difficult. Appropriate answers included the stabilisation of sexual relationships, that it is a form of social control, and because of religious/moral values.
- (c) This question was accessible but there were few high-scoring answers. Divorce was usually in the response. Credit-worthy answers also included secularisation, heightened expectations, change in the status of women, women more independent, cohabitation, longer life expectancy, and births outside marriage.
- (d) Most of the answers to this question were one-sided, so could only gain limited credit. To access Level 3, candidates need to recognise that a 'How far...?' or 'Assess...' question requires points for and against the premise in the question. Candidates were aware of the role of marriage in



providing functions for the family, such as socialisation, and quoted the New Right view. They also indicated that there is an increase in remarriage, with some candidates referring to serial monogamy, that marriage is still the dominant form of cohabitation and that it is difficult to assess how important marriage was in the past. Other valid points included the increase in divorce rates, the decline in first marriages, and loss of functions of the family that have been taken over, for example, by state education.

Question 2

- (a) The term 'segregated conjugal roles', meaning that there are different roles for male and female partners (usually bread-winner and house-maker), was not always understood and was sometimes confused with 'symmetrical family', where conjugal roles are similar.
- (b) There were some good answers to this question. Answers included changing occupational structure, increase in male unemployment, changing expectations of women, and both partners working.
- (c) This question was accessible. Candidates referred to the feminist view of the patriarchal family, expectations of childcare/housework, indifference or opposition from partner, lack of economic power and negative attitudes/values in wider society.
- (d) There were some good answers to this question, mainly relying on the dominance of men and the traditional roles of women. 'To what extent...?' questions require points for and against. The best answers showed awareness of alternative divisions of labour, where men are more involved in the home in childcare and housework, and the symmetrical family.

SECTION B: Education

Question 3

- (a) Very few candidates were able to define 'culture of masculinity' as the norms, values and expectations of 'typically' male behaviour.
- (b) This was an accessible question, although not many candidates mentioned school uniform, career guidance, gender-based sports and sexism in textbooks. Differing expectations of teachers and parents were widely understood.
- (c) The main reason given was that girls are usually hard-working. Candidates were also aware of the benefits of the National Curriculum, meaning that boys and girls study the same subjects, that it is now more socially acceptable for girls to study and that there are greater employment opportunities for women.
- (d) Candidates needed to provide evidence of the relationship between educational underachievement and cultural deprivation, but also to show awareness of other factors which lead to underachievement, for example, material deprivation, labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy, middle class nature of schools, lack of parental interest etc.

Question 4

- (a) This question was well understood. Candidates knew it was part of 'informal' learning.
- (b) There was some misunderstanding of 'official curriculum' – most candidates mentioned subjects. Answers could have referred to setting, streaming, sexism, racism, school resources and cultural bias.
- (c) Candidates could have made reference to Bernstein here (restricted and elaborated code). Other relevant factors include material deprivation, teacher expectation, stereotyping, labelling and sub-cultures.
- (d) Many candidates did not understand what was meant by 'policies to promote equal education'. Some spoke of education being free but lacked knowledge of policies. Some mentioned comprehensive schools but assumed that all children now go to comprehensive schools in the UK. (Some areas of the UK still have the '11 plus' test, so children may go to grammar schools. What

may cause further confusion is that the present government is encouraging directly-funded schools, called academies, which can be of any type, including primary and special schools.) There was some awareness of the fact that it is still difficult for lower classes to go to university. Equal opportunity provided by the National Curriculum and loans for Higher Education were both known.

SECTION C: *Crime, Deviance and Social Control*

Question 5

- (a) The term 'deviance' was understood as the failure to conform to social norms.
- (b) This question was accessible to all candidates, provided they named two crimes, each with an explanation.
- (c) Most candidates gave specific rather than general answers, for example, discussing the Marxist view relating to protection of private property and labelling of groups by the media, rather than explaining that this is dependent on time, place, society or social group.
- (d) This question was not widely understood, although the best candidates wrote of the conflict/Marxist view on one side and the pluralist view on the other. They also mentioned the power of the media to influence and of the government to make laws. Many said that the powerful could get away with offences, either by bribing people or because they did not receive the same punishment.

Question 6

- (a) This term was not well understood. It could be learnt as 'the number of crimes (in the official statistics for different offences) per one thousand of the population'.
- (b) This was an accessible question. Answers included labelling, stereotyping, more likely to be convicted if caught, unemployment, lack of education and the wealthy have more power/their crimes are less detectable.
- (c) Most candidates acknowledged more opportunity, more to steal, more anonymous, more deprivation and unemployment, greater police presence and detection.
- (d) 'Assess...' questions require points for and against. Candidates needed to consider the influence of social class and then recognise other factors, such as the influence of peer groups, inability to achieve goals by legitimate means, primary socialisation, ethnicity and gender.

SECTION D: *Mass Media*

Question 7

- (a) The term 'labelling' was quite well understood as 'defining a person or group of people in a particular way or as a certain type'.
- (b) Candidates understood this and most frequently described the position of women and black men.
- (c) This was well understood and some candidates were able to speak of 'moral panic' and 'folk devils', referring to specific examples.
- (d) Perhaps because of the previous question, most answers tended to focus on the media and only a few mentioned other powerful groups, such as the government and the judiciary. To gain full credit, candidates needed to present the way other people label individuals or groups.

Question 8

- (a) Few candidates understood the term 'dominant values', which are the ruling values within a society.
- (b) If candidates did not understand the term 'dominant values', they were not able to answer this question correctly. Candidates could have referred to religious and moral values, or economic and political values.

- (c) Candidates usually discussed the influence of celebrities and advertisements but without making any reference to sociological perspectives, agencies of social control and socialisation or mentioning 'role models'.
- (d) Centres should advise candidates not to answer a question if an unfamiliar term is used more than once in the different parts. Candidates needed to accept the role of the mass media but also refer to other agencies of social control and socialisation, such as the family, religion and education.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/22

Paper 22

Key messages

- Candidates need to be able to define clearly and understand sociological concepts.
- Candidates should be taught to differentiate between concepts, for example, the difference between a **family** and a **household**.
- Candidates need to recognise that 'How far...?' and 'Assess...' questions are asking them to argue for and against. It is not expected to be a balanced argument.
- Candidates should be aware of the main sociological perspectives on all topics, in particular the Marxist, feminist, functionalist and pluralist views. Some topics, such as the media, have perspectives which are particular to them.

General comments

In order to do well in this subject, candidates need to be able to define sociological concepts clearly. Precise knowledge of concepts such as 'agency' will increase marks. Candidates will gain full credit for the definition questions and be able to understand following questions better.

In order to achieve Level 3 in the part **(d)** questions, candidates need to argue for and against in 'How far...?' and 'Assess...' questions. It is not expected to be a balanced argument. Candidates are expected to agree with the premise in the question and then offer an alternative view. For example, in **Question 3(d)** candidates are expected to know the importance of parents' and teachers' expectations and to be familiar with the sociological perspectives on this, such as 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and 'labelling'. Knowledge of school systems such as streaming would also be helpful. Candidates should then write about other factors, such as social class and ethnicity.

Family, Education and Crime were the most popular topics and **Questions 1, 3 and 5** were the most popular questions. Candidates should be advised not to answer a question if they have not studied the topic in class. It is advisable to know three or four topics really well and aim to answer questions on these. **Questions 7 and 8** were not popular questions and those who answered them seemed to lack knowledge of sociological perspectives on the media, such as the hypodermic-syringe model, and the uses and gratification model etc.

Comments on specific questions

SECTION A: Family

Question 1

- (a) To achieve full marks, candidates need to recognise that a 'household' can be a single person or a group of people sharing the same accommodation. This means that an answer which specifies either a group or a single person is too particularised to gain full credit, as are answers which state that the people involved are either related or not related. Candidates need to know the difference between the definitions of 'family' and 'household'.



- (b) Candidates need to know that a household is connected with living arrangements. An answer which lists a family without describing its living arrangements can only gain limited credit. To gain full credit, candidates should give a description such as 'extended family where there are three generations of a family living together in the same house, for example, grandparents, parents and their children'. Candidates should also be aware that, as many families in modern industrial societies cohabit rather than marry, two adults cohabiting with their children is also regarded as a nuclear family.

The 'modern extended family' does not live together. 'Symmetrical' family describes the function of the roles of the members of the family and is not a type of household. 'Reconstituted family', 'extended family', 'kibbutz', and 'commune' were accepted if living arrangements were specified. Also accepted were people sharing the same address, sheltered or elderly accommodation, children's homes and single-person units.

- (c) Candidates need to understand clearly the term 'nuclear family'. Some background to how this became the norm would be helpful as some candidates were unclear about how common nuclear and extended families are. Most candidates mentioned that divorce is acceptable, available and affordable, but there are other important factors, such as secularisation, the changing role of women and changing attitudes to single mothers.
- (d) Candidates need to recognise that 'Assess the view...' means give points for and against. They should also be advised to read the question really carefully, as some candidates did not take 'threatening the stability of society' into account and focused on 'decline'. A clear knowledge of the functions of the nuclear family and the implications of its breakdown is required here, but candidates also needed to know that some of its functions are now fulfilled by different family types, for example, reconstituted families and agencies of the state such as education and the benefits system. Candidates should also have acknowledged that the nuclear family has some disadvantages, such as the roles expected of women in a patriarchal system.

The answer required some acceptance of 'decline' but then candidates needed to make the point that differing family types and the Welfare State are fulfilling the same functions. Also, there is greater freedom and choice now, especially for women.

Question 2

- (a) Full credit was given to answers which stated that a dysfunctional family is either a family whose members do not perform their expected functions or that it is the hostile and often dangerous side of the family, characterised by features such as divorce, domestic violence and child abuse.
- (b) Candidates need to understand how geographical mobility distancing families leads to less reliance socially and financially on wider kin, as does the Welfare State. Other relevant points include differences in education and status between nuclear family and wider kin.
- (c) Candidates understood 'abuse' and 'violence' in the family but answers could have been expanded to include other negative points about the modern family, such as isolation, emotional stress, divorce, and difficulties for working families especially with the changing role of women. Candidates also need to know the significance of 'dark side' of the family. This refers to a situation where family life damages its members.
- (d) The functionalist perspective provides a positive view; the Marxist and feminist perspectives provide the negative view relating to 'conflict' in the family. Candidates should recognise that a 'How far...?' question requires points agreeing and disagreeing with the premise, which are required in order to access Level 3.

Section B: Education

Question 3

- (a) This question required an answer linked to education, for example, expected educational achievement.



- (b) Candidates understood this question but some lost marks through lack of organisation of the content of the answer. To gain full marks, candidates needed to make two clear points, each with an explanation. The main points required were good job, high salary, status and life skills.
- (c) To gain full credit, candidates needed to focus on the problems of the underachievement of some ethnic minorities. This would include problems shared with the working class, such as poverty, but also discrimination, racial issues, different language and culture, and the ethnocentrism of school.

Although Bernstein's view of 'restricted' and 'elaborated code' was mentioned, this refers primarily to differences between working class and middle class language.

- (d) Candidates who demonstrated good knowledge of the effect of parents' and teachers' expectations and made references to 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and 'labelling' were able to access Level 2. To gain full credit, candidates also needed to discuss other factors which influence educational achievement, such as class, family background, peer group, type of school, area, systems within school such as streaming (if not included with parents' and teachers' expectations) and poverty, material and cultural deprivation.

Question 4

- (a) The answer required 'material or cultural deprivation which affects a person's life chances'. Most candidates indicated poverty.
- (b) Candidates needed to understand 'anti-school' in order to answer the first three parts of this question successfully. The main difficulty was organising the content of the answer into two clear points, each with an explanation. Candidates showed awareness of characteristics such as against school values, disruptive, vandalism, and missing school.
- (c) Candidates needed to understand two terms here: 'anti-school sub-cultures' and 'emergence'. Credit-worthy answers included 'status frustration', 'labelling', 'self-fulfilling prophecy', the effect of failing in school and being in the lower streams, setting, stereotyping, resentment, alienation and anomie.
- (d) This was another 'How far...?' question which required for and against views in the answer. Candidates who concentrated on the good and bad influence of the peer group could only access Level 2, unless the candidate gave an exceptional one-sided answer. Other factors to mention were parents' and teachers' expectations, class background, area, and type of school.

SECTION C: Crime, Deviance and Social Control

Question 5

- (a) This question required a definition of 'agencies of social control'. To gain full credit, candidates needed to say what they are as well as what they do.
- (b) Answers describing the difference between formal and informal agencies, as well as giving examples of agencies of social control, were acceptable in this question. Candidates needed to be clear about what agencies are as well as what they enforce, for example, police rather than law, judicial system rather than courts.
- (c) Candidates needed to have knowledge of sociological perspectives on the role of the media to answer this question successfully. Statements of positive and negative influences, such as focusing on imitation, the impact of violent films and seeing people punished for crime, were limited to Level 1. Good answers mentioned moral panic, amplification spiral, folk devils, and stereotyping.
- (d) This question required an understanding of the role of the powerful in defining what is criminal.

Answers outlining how powerful people avoid punishment remained in Level 1. To access Level 2, candidates needed to be aware that powerful groups, such as the media owners, business people, and the government, are in a position to influence and make law, sometimes in their own interest.

This is also linked to the difference between the detection of white and blue-collar crime and the Marxist and feminist views. To access Level 3, answers required an alternative view, such as pluralist and functionalist views that the laws are for the benefit of everyone and even the powerful cannot escape the law.

Question 6

- (a) Candidates need to have a clearer understanding of 'inner city' as an area in or near the centre of a city where there are usually social and economic problems, such as poverty, unemployment, poor housing, where low income and ethnic minority groups often live. It is not the business district or the market area.
- (b) Most candidates provided good answers, such as failure in the educational system, status frustration, unemployment, lack of social control, poverty, police stereotyping, more opportunity, higher police presence, or can be more anonymous.
- (c) Answers could refer to some of the following factors: poverty and unemployment, status frustration, anomie, police stereotyping, opportunity and higher police presence in working class areas. Some answers also referred to greater freedom of young males compared with greater supervision of females.
- (d) This question required some knowledge of the link between poverty and social deprivation and crime. In order to address the 'How far...?' aspect of the question, knowledge was required of other factors, such as the fact that white-collar crime is not usually related to poverty, and the influence of family, education and socialisation. Other crimes which are not always linked to poverty and social deprivation are domestic and violent crimes.

SECTION D: Mass Media

Question 7

- (a) Answers to this question needed to mention exaggeration and over-dramatic reporting.
- (b) Advertising was the best known way. Other answers could refer to bias and distortion, concentrating on conflict and gossip, agenda setting and gate-keeping, such as ignoring or misrepresenting minority views, and selecting and presenting the more colourful and interesting events.
- (c) Most answers recognised stereotyping of black youths, youths in general, and females. Good answers also recognised the creation of folk devils and moral panics. Candidates could also refer to ethnic minorities and benefit 'scroungers'.
- (d) To score well in this question, candidates needed awareness of sociological perspectives on the media, such as the hypodermic syringe theory in support of the proposition that social attitudes are shaped by the mass media, and audience selection, selected perception, and uses and gratification etc. against the proposition.

Question 8

- (a) Candidates needed to define 'lifestyle' as 'the way or manner in which a group or individual lives'.
- (b) Some candidates mentioned celebrities. To gain full credit, candidates needed to refer to use of role models, sensationalised images and to have some knowledge of sociological perspectives on the media, such as the hypodermic syringe model, audience selection and the cultural approach.
- (c) This question was frequently misunderstood to be about the content of the advertisements rather than the content of the mass media. To score well, candidates needed to recognise that the content has to attract high circulation/viewing figures in order to attract advertisements, appealing to a wide audience or readership or to a particular audience/readership.
- (d) This question required knowledge of the different sociological perspectives on the role of the mass media. Some candidates were aware of the conflict (Marxist) view. To access Level 3, they needed to discuss this and the alternative pluralist view on the nature and role of the media.



SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/23

Paper 23

Key messages

- Candidates need to be able to define clearly and understand sociological concepts.
- Candidates should be taught to differentiate between concepts, for example, the difference between a **family** and a **household**.
- Candidates need to recognise that 'How far...?' and 'Assess...' questions are asking them to argue for and against. It is not expected to be a balanced argument.
- Candidates should be aware of the main sociological perspectives on all topics, in particular the Marxist, feminist, functionalist and pluralist views. Some topics, such as the media, have perspectives which are particular to them.

General comments

In order to do well in this subject, candidates need to be able to define sociological concepts clearly. Precise knowledge of concepts such as 'agency' will increase marks. Candidates will gain full credit for the definition questions and be able to understand following questions better.

In order to achieve Level 3 in the part **(d)** questions, candidates need to argue for and against in 'How far...?' and 'Assess...' questions. It is not expected to be a balanced argument. Candidates are expected to agree with the premise in the question and then offer an alternative view. For example, in **Question 3(d)** candidates are expected to know the importance of parents' and teachers' expectations and to be familiar with the sociological perspectives on this, such as 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and 'labelling'. Knowledge of school systems such as streaming would also be helpful. Candidates should then write about other factors, such as social class and ethnicity.

Family, Education and Crime were the most popular topics and **Questions 1, 3 and 5** were the most popular questions. Candidates should be advised not to answer a question if they have not studied the topic in class. It is advisable to know three or four topics really well and aim to answer questions on these. **Questions 7 and 8** were not popular questions and those who answered them seemed to lack knowledge of sociological perspectives on the media, such as the hypodermic-syringe model, and the uses and gratification model etc.

Comments on specific questions

SECTION A: Family

Question 1

- (a) To achieve full marks, candidates need to recognise that a 'household' can be a single person or a group of people sharing the same accommodation. This means that an answer which specifies either a group or a single person is too particularised to gain full credit, as are answers which state that the people involved are either related or not related. Candidates need to know the difference between the definitions of 'family' and 'household'.



- (b) Candidates need to know that a household is connected with living arrangements. An answer which lists a family without describing its living arrangements can only gain limited credit. To gain full credit, candidates should give a description such as 'extended family where there are three generations of a family living together in the same house, for example, grandparents, parents and their children'. Candidates should also be aware that, as many families in modern industrial societies cohabit rather than marry, two adults cohabiting with their children is also regarded as a nuclear family.

The 'modern extended family' does not live together. 'Symmetrical' family describes the function of the roles of the members of the family and is not a type of household. 'Reconstituted family', 'extended family', 'kibbutz', and 'commune' were accepted if living arrangements were specified. Also accepted were people sharing the same address, sheltered or elderly accommodation, children's homes and single-person units.

- (c) Candidates need to understand clearly the term 'nuclear family'. Some background to how this became the norm would be helpful as some candidates were unclear about how common nuclear and extended families are. Most candidates mentioned that divorce is acceptable, available and affordable, but there are other important factors, such as secularisation, the changing role of women and changing attitudes to single mothers.
- (d) Candidates need to recognise that 'Assess the view...' means give points for and against. They should also be advised to read the question really carefully, as some candidates did not take 'threatening the stability of society' into account and focused on 'decline'. A clear knowledge of the functions of the nuclear family and the implications of its breakdown is required here, but candidates also needed to know that some of its functions are now fulfilled by different family types, for example, reconstituted families and agencies of the state such as education and the benefits system. Candidates should also have acknowledged that the nuclear family has some disadvantages, such as the roles expected of women in a patriarchal system.

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Question 3

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- (d) Candidates who demonstrated good knowledge of the effect of parents' and teachers' expectations and made references to 'self-fulfilling prophecy' and 'labelling' were able to access Level 2. To gain full credit, candidates also needed to discuss other factors which influence educational achievement, such as class, family background, peer group, type of school, area, systems within school such as streaming (if not included with parents' and teachers' expectations) and poverty, material and cultural deprivation.

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