

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12

Paper 12

Key Messages

- Candidates should take full advantage of the materials provided on the paper
- Candidates need to be better able to apply their knowledge to answering the questions
- Candidates need to understand question command words better so they understand where they are required to present both argument and counter argument.

General Comments

Most candidates read the paper thoroughly and as a result there were few rubric errors. It was pleasing that candidates did make use of source A to support their answers, however, many candidates still need to be encouraged to take full advantage of the materials provided on the paper as these are carefully selected not just to assess but to assist. Some candidates needed to read the whole paper in more depth. Too frequently the materials provided were simply ignored.

Many candidates demonstrated good sociological knowledge, but due to weak technique were unable to apply it to answering the questions. This often resulted in descriptive accounts, rather than answers which addressed the question. For example, many gave accounts of sociological ethics without any attempt to link them to research problems. Many candidates did not score well on 1g, 2e and 3e because they failed to present a counter argument. Others knew that a counter argument was required and presented the connective 'however...' but were unable to present the actual argument.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) This was generally well answered most candidates recognised that the method being used was an interview. A minority mistakenly stated content analysis.
- (b) Many candidates made good use of source A to respond to this question. Asylum seekers and migrants were the most popular responses. Candidates also identified a variety of other topics few had a problem identifying anything.
- (c) Whilst many candidates were able to explain why media content might be biased many struggled to explain this in the context of the source A. Some candidates understood they were required to use source A in their response and copied out sections from source A but failed to explain why the section they had copied was relevant to their answer.
- (d) A minority of candidates struggled with the words 'media content' and wrote solely about media or media technology.
- (e) This was answered very well candidates often understood that for some research historical data might be the only source of data available. Many candidates rightly recognised that media materials are secondary data and therefore has the same strength and limitations as other forms of secondary data. This was a perfectly valid approach to the question.
- (f) Many candidates, due to the similar word stem, confused ethics with ethnic and produced answers which were about ethnicity and entirely irrelevant to the question. Others were able to describe

their knowledge of ethical issues but were unable to link them to research problems. Candidates frequently discussed ethics in the context of observation, linking covert observation to issues of consent and overt to the Hawthorne effect. Some made links to having to abandon research because those observed were involved in illegal activities. The best responses looked at a range of research methods including experiments and interviews. They included a range of ethical issues most frequently doing no harm. These issues were clearly linked to ways in which ethical concerns might impact research outcomes. The impact on validity was quite widely discussed, as was the ability to find primary data on some topics at all i.e. because of ethical concerns some research is not acceptable.

- (g) Candidates sometimes struggled with the term media content. They mistakenly spoke about using media technology like video, in research e.g. to record interviews. Candidates understood that media content was secondary data and this impacted on its validity, others drew on the details in source A and discussed issues like exaggeration and stereotyping, some used their knowledge of the media topic which was also a valid approach. Few candidates presented a counter argument, but those who did rightly recognised that certain types of media content, such as live broadcasts, could be very valid.

Question 2

- (a) Lots of candidates appeared unfamiliar with this term or confused it with socialisation or social control. This question was frequently misinterpreted. Candidates often did better where they contextualised the term e.g. making links to culturally relative gender roles.
- (b) This question was very well answered. On the whole candidates were able to identify two age groups. Adults and teenagers were the two most popular groups. Most were able to describe these life stages with greater accuracy. A minority confused age with agencies of socialisation or gave an age range rather than age group. Some mistakenly talked about 'motherhood' or 'parenthood'. Surprisingly candidates who were struggling to identify a group were unable to take the clue from **Question 2(c)** which made reference to 'old age'.
- (c) Many struggled to demonstrate that experiences differ between cultures, beyond saying the old were not respected in some societies, but are respected in others. Answers often lacked range or sociological language.
- (d) Many candidates gave common sense responses that did not go beyond 'children do not know right from wrong'. Many candidates gave simple answers relating to play or children being in need of protection. Very few reached the top marks available. The very best referred to media representation of children, modern industrial societies being more child centred and legal protection available to children. Some recognised that childhood for some, was dominated by war and hardship.
- (e) Many candidates did not have a sound grasp of the concept of social construction and others failed to present a counter argument offering one sided answers. A very high number of candidates answered this question without referring to social construction and simply answered by writing about childhood in general or socialisation in lots of detail and therefore failed to access the higher bands. Very few candidates discussed the biological arguments related to childhood but lots managed to draw comparison between children that were protected and those that have to work.

Question 3

- (a) Whilst many candidates understood racism they could not articulate the institutional part which places the term within the context of organisations, the state.
- (b) Candidates sometimes ignored the "young people" in the question. Good answers tended to look at education and relations with the police/law. A number of candidates did write of legal restrictions designed to protect young people and hence got no credit.
- (c) Many candidates confuse prejudice with discrimination and hence many answers looked at general inequality via work, wages and education rather than specific examples of prejudice.

- (d) Most candidates' responses to this question discussed examples of prejudice and discrimination experienced by minority groups in general without focusing on the question. Better responses demonstrated an understanding of scapegoating, citing possible reasons why it was of benefit, along with appropriate reference to sociological theory. Particular good reference to Marxist theory was made by some candidates who recognised the link to dominance of the bourgeoisie.
- (e) There were some excellent responses to this question, some candidates' responses demonstrated a well-developed knowledge and understanding of the nature of racism. These responses were generally supported with reference to a variety of issues, examples and global differences of experiences. Some candidates' responses, however, were one sided, generally arguing that racism is inevitable without any consideration of the impact of anti-racism legislation or attempts at social integration. A significant number of candidates discussed reasons for social inequality, generally rather than focusing on racism.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/13

Paper 13

Key Messages

- Candidates showed excellent understanding of key terms
- Candidates need to be better able to apply their knowledge to answering the questions
- Candidates need to understand question command words better so they understand where they are required to present both an argument and a counter argument.

General Comments

Most candidates understood the requirements of the paper, there were few rubric errors. It was pleasing that candidates had good knowledge of the key terms from the syllabus and that many did make use of source A to support their answers. Many candidates do, none the less, still need to be encouraged to take full advantage of the materials provided on the paper as these are carefully selected not just to assess but to assist. Some candidates needed to read the whole paper in more depth. Too frequently the materials provided were simply ignored.

Many candidates demonstrated good sociological knowledge, but due to weak technique, were unable to apply it to answering the questions. This often resulted in descriptive accounts rather than answers which addressed the question. Many candidates did not score well on 1g, 2e and 3e because they failed to present a counter argument. Others knew that a counter argument was required and presented the connective 'however...' but were unable to present the actual argument or only offered a brief limited counter argument.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to identify the method being used as 'interview', better answers identified unstructured interview.
- (b) The most common responses were 'time consuming' and 'expensive' although there were a range of other possible responses, few consider them.
- (c) There were many generic answers to this question, which did not consider the information in source A. Better responses looked at the skill required to conduct the research and the opportunity for the interviewee to respond openly. The phrasing 'adapted from' caused confusion for some candidates who seemed to think that this made the information more valid.
- (d) Generally this was answered well, candidates identified the ease with which the responses could be collated and turned into statistics making generalisation easy and trends apparent. Many gave generic responses like 'it is cheaper', but this is not necessarily a valid response as cost would be relative to the size of the research population.
- (e) This was generally well answered, many identifying strengths like participants gaining confidence from other members of the group and limitations such as one group member dominating the discussion. Some candidates talked about interviews in general rather than group interviews and therefore did not score well.

- (f) This was generally well answered, although a minority of candidates described qualitative methods in general without explaining why positivists would not use them. A small minority confused qualitative and quantitative methods.
- (g) Most understood that there was some aspect of bias in most research. A lot talked about the 'Hawthorne effect' and the 'interviewer effect'. These concepts were widely known and well understood. Few candidates considered factors such as, why it is important to gain a rapport or confidence of the subject. A lot of candidates struggled to provide a counter argument to this question. Those who did, either took the view that it depended on the type of research being carried out or the skills of the researcher, both approaches were equally valid.

Question 2

- (a) This question was answered well most candidates understood the term.
- (b) Candidates had little problems with this question. Most identify two types of youth culture.
- (c) Many candidates did this well, they were able to talk about globalisation, the Internet, social media and the influence of western music.
- (d) Many candidates were able to describe youth cultures but they often struggled to explain why young people might reject main stream norms and values, those who showed some understanding mostly talked about rebellion and the need to belong to the peer group.
- (e) Generally this was answered well, most candidates not only considered the role of the peer group but also presented a counter argument that considered the media, often concluding that the media was more important.

Question 3

- (a) This term was well understood and well answered.
- (b) Generally well answered. Class, ethnicity and gender were frequently identified and most clearly described. A minority failed to score because they confused 'sex' with 'gender'.
- (c) Whilst there were some strong answers to this question with an awareness of the new right perspective, many did not get much beyond: 'the poor stay poor because they are happy to live on benefits'. There was a general failure to grasp the notion that work might be neither profitable nor affordable because benefits were taken away as employment was gained. The concept of dependency was often well understood and the term 'culture of poverty' appeared in many better answers.
- (d) Better responses showed a good grasp of the concept of 'status' and the various social factors which contribute to status. Some responses, however, did not get beyond 'they lack experience or employment'. Many answers lacked range and specific sociological knowledge.
- (e) Better responses considered disengagement and ageism, few consider factors like 'grey power', wealth and longevity. Answers often simplistically talked about the elderly being weak. Better responses understood that other social characteristics may be more important than age.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/22

Paper 22

Key Messages

Centres are to be congratulated on the quality of work produced by candidates in the new assessment for IGCSE/O Level Sociology. A lot of excellent responses were seen, demonstrating a real engagement with the issues and a clear consideration of how and why societies are changing. Both topical and local examples were well used to substantiate points made and these complimented the more traditional sociological studies, theories and concepts well. No rubric errors were seen in the examination session which is excellent.

Below are some specific messages that should help Centres to effectively prepare their candidates for the examination:

- Prepare the candidates for the exam by practising lots of exam style questions in timed conditions and emphasise how to make the point and develop it without going into too much unnecessary descriptive detail;
- Ensure what is being written specifically addresses the issues raised in the question;
- Refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts (using the specific vocabulary) as this will raise the overall quality of the answer;
- Only use sociological sources / references when candidates are certain of the material they are citing and where it is relevant to the question;
- Do not repeat questions in the answer or define terms in the question – get to the point and focus on making material relevant to the set question;
- Ensure candidates substantiate their work with sociological evidence;
- Use the marks per question as guidance as to how much is to be written for a particular question;
- Encourage candidate's to use their reading time to carefully read the questions, decide on the two options they will answer and to 'thought shower' appropriate ideas for their answers;
- On **part (e)** questions, ensure that candidates have a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. This needs to include a range of points for each side (look for a minimum of 3 for and 3 against) that are well developed and evidence based with a justified conclusion. Sociological concepts are expected to be used here.

General Comments

In general there appeared to be the full range of quality of answers on the paper. The most popular questions answered by candidates appeared to be on the family and education topics with a lesser number answering on crime and very few at all on the media.

It was pleasing to see how many candidates were well prepared for the new 15 mark questions. There were many essays of appropriate length covering a range of points and with a good understanding of different sides of the issue in question. A surprising number of candidates, however, either gave no response or gave one-sided answers on the 15 mark **(e)** questions. Further guidance could be given to encourage candidates to develop points, to have balanced answers covering both 'for' and 'against' arguments and for the 'against' side to think of alternatives rather than just a negation of the 'for' side. A considered conclusion should also be included by candidates in the 15 mark question. Some candidates wrote long and unnecessary introductions that were descriptive in nature which did not get marks; for example, on **1(e)** there were sometimes lengthy accounts of how society used to be less child centred before answering the question set.

Candidates should be encouraged to organise their longer answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea. They should also be discouraged from trying to apply named sociologists, theories or concepts when these are not relevant to the question.

A small number of candidates wrongly labelled questions which could have misled Examiners in terms of mark allocation. For example whilst answering **Question 2e**, the candidate wrongly labels it as **2d**.

Comments on specific questions

Comment

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates found the definition of beanpole families difficult. A common error was the tendency of some candidates to refer to it as a form of nuclear family and a few, just as a variation of the extended family. On the whole, accurate definitions were lacking. Centres need to ensure that all aspects of the specification, including key concepts and terms are covered in the exam preparation.
- (b) This was the most successfully answered question in this section. A significant majority of candidates were able to correctly identify and describe two types of families other than beanpole families. A good range of types featured, though predominantly nuclear, extended and single parent.
- (c) There were many common sense answers, with a lack of key concepts apart from norms and values. There were however, some excellent answers which used a wide range of points, particularly those that addressed gender identities and roles and engaged with specific processes such as imitation. Having successfully identified families as passing on norms and values to babies, some candidates could not accurately unpack or develop the identified point.
- (d) One of the better answered questions with many candidates able to discuss several points, such as increasing independence of women, high expectations, changes in law, changes in attitude, loss of stigma, secularisation. Some candidates engaged very conceptually with the question which was excellent to see. Others had several points that were not always very sociological in focus. Weak responses included list-like answers which focused on generic, common sense reasons such as having an affair.
- (e) A fair number of candidates did not understand child-centeredness with some confusing the term for child centres. Some, whilst making assertions that family life today is child-centred, proceeded to give evidence to the contrary. Some candidates wasted time on historical analysis. For those who understood the question, common evidence against child-centeredness was the dark side of family life where children are abused, neglected and even involved in child labour. Reference to sociological perspectives and concepts needed to be better integrated into responses.

Question 2

- (a) This was generally done well. Some candidates found an accurate definition of hidden curriculum difficult. Few wrongly made reference to learning at home and less commonly, at the workplace.
- (b) Many clear and good answers seen, with some less obvious functions (such as instilling a sense of patriotism) appearing. A significant minority misunderstood 'functions', discussing formal and informal education instead and so did not get marks.
- (c) Most candidates were able to explain fairly well the key differences between state schools and private schools. A number of responses were somewhat 'commonsensical' but often managed to develop more than two points. The most successful answers also incorporated key terms and concepts.
- (d) Most candidates showed some sociological knowledge and understanding of setting and streaming. Labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy and anti-school subculture were common concepts identified by candidates. A few excellent candidates engaged with the question conceptually throughout. A surprising number, however, had a fairly limited grasp of setting and streaming and how it linked to life chances often focusing instead on home factors which could not be credited.
- (e) A fair number of candidates did not appear to understand meritocracy. Whilst making assertions that education is meritocratic, some proceeded to give evidence to the contrary. Some candidates,

however, engaged with the question conceptually and theoretically and moved on to make sound, well argued judgements. Common responses across all mark bands included the idea of equal opportunities. Opposing arguments often centred on factors outside School that could then have an effect inside such as material deprivation, cultural deprivation and so on.

Question 3

- (a) Generally well answered, although a number missed out on 2 marks by only giving a partial definition.
- (b) This was successfully answered on the whole. A good number of candidates were able to correctly describe two agencies of social control, though a minority of candidates described the two types of social control rather than agencies and hence lost valuable marks.
- (c) Crime was well understood but there was some confusion here over deviance and how it differs from crime. Some candidates were confused when making points about the relativity of both crime and deviance, some arguing that crime is not relative, for example. Many answers focused on examples rather than explanation of differences.
- (d) There were some good answers seen relating to hacking and cyber crime. However, some answers were about technology generally rather than new technology, for example discussing how violence on TV could be imitated. Others were about new technology but old crimes (e.g. thieves wanting to steal smart phones). Most candidates showed basic sociological knowledge and understanding of why new technologies are leading to new crime being committed. Examples abounded but sometimes clear technological reasons for new crimes were not evident. Relatively few candidates engaged with the question conceptually and attained top marks here.
- (e) A good number of candidates understood this question but their responses sometimes lacked range. Hence relatively few engaged with the question conceptually and theoretically and moved on to make reasoned judgements. Arguments for, tended to centre on the severity of punishments, deterrence etc. Some candidates neglected the informal agents and thus lost the opportunity to evaluate as effectively as they could have done.

Question 4

- (a) Very few candidates who attempted this section could accurately define the term newsworthy.
- (b) Again, many candidates seemed unable to properly identify and describe news values though sensationalism. Celebrity culture did feature fairly prominently on the better responses.
- (c) Many candidates were unable to explain media representations of the lifestyles of young people. A large number of responses were very 'commonsensical' and poorly developed. The candidates that did better tended to focus on the negatives, discussing 'delinquency' and 'trouble-making'. A small number of answers used terms such as folk devils and stereotype and were able to discuss negative aspects of young people's behaviour well.
- (d) Candidates here often discussed child safety and the necessity to guard state secrets, though many showed very little sociological knowledge and understanding of censorship of the media, so conceptual knowledge was not strong here.
- (e) The best candidates here framed their answers in terms of pluralism 'v' Marxism and had a real debate. A significant number of responses, however, demonstrated only a limited sociological understanding of the details of the pluralist view. Some brought in media effects theories which were not always relevant to the case being made.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/23

Paper 23

Key Messages

Centres are to be congratulated on the quality of work produced by candidates in the new assessment for IGCSE/O Level Sociology. A lot of excellent responses were seen, demonstrating a real engagement with the issues and a clear consideration of how and why societies are changing. Both topical and local examples were well used to substantiate points made and these complimented the more traditional sociological studies, theories and concepts well. No rubric errors were seen in the examination session which is excellent.

Below are some specific messages that should help Centres to effectively prepare their candidates for the examination:

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- On **part (e)** questions, ensure that candidates have a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. This needs to include a range of points for each side (look for a minimum of 3 for and 3 against) that are well developed and evidence based with a justified conclusion. Sociological concepts are expected to be used here.

General Comments

In general there appeared to be the full range of quality of answers on the paper. The most popular questions answered by candidates appeared to be on the family and education topics with a lesser number answering on crime and very few at all on the media.

It was pleasing to see how many candidates were well prepared for the new 15 mark questions. There were many essays of appropriate length covering a range of points and with a good understanding of different sides of the issue in question. A surprising number of candidates, however, either gave no response or gave one-sided answers on the 15 mark **(e)** questions. Further guidance could be given to encourage candidates to develop points, to have balanced answers covering both 'for' and 'against' arguments and for the 'against' side to think of alternatives rather than just a negation of the 'for' side. A considered conclusion should also be included by candidates in the 15 mark question. Some candidates wrote long and unnecessary introductions that were descriptive in nature, which did not get marks.

Candidates should be encouraged to organise their longer answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea. They should also be discouraged from trying to apply named sociologists, theories or concepts when these are not relevant to the question.

A small number of candidates wrongly labelled questions which could have misled Examiners in terms of mark allocation. For example whilst answering **Question 2e**, the candidate wrongly labels it as **2d**.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Comment

- (a) Most candidates were able to give good, clear and accurate answers here, often using well chosen examples to support their definition.
- (b) This was the most successfully answered question in this section. A significant majority of candidates were able to correctly identify and describe two ways in which family life could be negative. Candidates focused on parents, relationships, gender roles, children etc.
- (c) There were many common sense answers seen for this question, with a lack of key concepts. There were however, some excellent answers which used a wide range of points, particularly those that considered the wide range of people and factors that divorce could affect. Some really good points about the economic position of women, for example, were seen.
- (d) This question prompted a variety of responses of very different quality. Some candidates did not talk about the nuclear family being in decline but instead explained the rise of other family forms. Others focused on Functionalist views of the nuclear family form being the best. The best answers looked at family diversity, secularisation, rising divorce rates and the changing roles of women. It is crucial that candidates directly answer the question set in order to maximise their chances of success.
- (e) This was a well answered question with candidates making good use of Feminist theory and evidence in many cases, in order to develop and substantiate their points. Conceptual engagement was good here. Some candidates, however, compared families today with those in the past and these could only be credited at a low level. A few others did not look at both sides of the debate and so could score no more than eight marks.

Question 2

- (a) Answers to this question were very variable with most candidates scoring only one mark for a partial definition. It is crucial that terms are accurately and fully defined in the **part 'a'** section.
- (b) Some good answers were seen here that engaged well with sociological concepts and theories i.e. hidden curriculum, Marxism, Functionalism and gender roles. A small number of candidates misunderstood the word 'socialisation'.
- (c) This was a generally well answered question although a number of candidates made quite repetitive points that thus prevented them from scoring at the top end of band 2. A lot of examples of sanctions (both positive and negative) were seen but fewer candidates were then able to explain how sanctions controlled candidates.
- (d) A few candidates produced excellent answers to this question, engaging theoretically through discussion of Functionalist theory. A key focus was on equal opportunities and ideas about achieved status. However, several candidates either did not understand the term 'meritocratic' or were confused about it. Others wrote instead about how education was not meritocratic and this could not be credited.
- (e) Candidates engaged well with the issues in this question with most being able to discuss both home and School factors and their influence on educational achievement. Less successful was the conceptual engagement with several 'commonsensical' answers being seen.

Question 3

- (a) Generally well answered, although a number missed out on 2 marks by only giving a partial definition.
- (b) Answers varied in quality here. At the top end excellent examples were chosen in order to illustrate how definitions of deviance can vary between societies. However, a number of candidates simply defined the term deviance or gave examples of deviant behaviour without answering the specific question set.
- (c) This was a well answered question that saw candidates engaging with a range of relevant sociological ideas and terms such as peer pressure, status frustration, sanctions, breadwinner role and domestic violence.
- (d) This was a generally well answered question with most candidates being able, on some level at least, to question the accuracy of the official statistics. Points were typically made about issues around defining crime, political manipulation of figures, non-reporting of crime and non-recording of crime. The best answers also made reference to alternative measures of crime such as victim surveys and used concepts such as validity and the dark figure of crime to substantiate their points.
- (e) This question differentiated well, allowing candidates to answer at a variety of different levels. Some were very 'commonsensical' in nature whereas others used ideas such as Marxism, education, stereotyping and material deprivation to develop points. A number of candidates, however, produced a one sided answer to this question, failing to consider other reasons for crimes to be committed.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates who attempted this section could accurately define the term distortion but some responses were quite confused.
- (b) This was not a well answered question in general. Several candidates clearly did not understand the term 'citizen journalism' and thus were unable to produce a relevant response.
- (c) Some interesting and well explained answers were seen here. Inevitably some candidates relied on simplistic answers with limited sociology but several used concepts such as under-representation, invisibility, stereotyping etc. to inform their response. Well chosen examples were also seen here.
- (d) Candidates were able to engage well with this question and could explain several reasons why political parties made use of the media, often citing examples from elections and political coverage in their answers. Media effects theories were often well used here.
- (e) Candidates generally showed a good knowledge and understanding of the hypodermic syringe model of media effects theories. However, this was often dealt with in a descriptive manner rather than being directly linked to the issues raised in the question i.e. why some children commit acts of violence. Similar issues arose in the 'against' arguments. The best answers, however, used concepts, examples and theories well to produce informed and developed answers.