

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/11 Paper 11

Key messages

- Candidates should avoid talking about sampling issues and response rate when discussing validity issues such as in **1 (c)**.
- Candidates may benefit from practicing describing strengths and limitations of the research methods in the syllabus, including more challenging ones such as case studies, longitudinal studies and field experiments. Candidates should focus answers on an aspect of the method and avoid wholly generic points which assert validity/invalidity or focus on practical issues such as time or cost with no link to the method itself.
- In **1 (f)** candidates should make three points in three separate paragraphs. There are ten marks available and to achieve a good mark each point must be explained in detail.
- In essay-style questions (**1 (g)**, **2 (e)** and **3 (e)**) candidates should structure their extended responses with separate paragraphs for each point. Candidates need to give a range of points, ideally 3 for the argument and 3 against with a conclusion.
- In parts **(c)** and **(d)** in the optional questions candidates should develop at least three points with evidence.

General comments

Many responses showed a satisfactory level of engagement with the question paper and the assessment objectives. Time management appears to have been good with very few candidates who did not finish the paper. Some candidates enumerated points, which is helpful, though many candidates do not write in paragraphs in longer essay-style questions.

The base understanding of methodology was mixed and application and analysis of the source for **1 (c)** was variable. However, many candidates discussed the strengths and limitations of methods. In essay responses the evaluation skills evidenced by some candidates was good, though relatively few candidates developed a range of points with suitable evidence.

The 'Culture, identity and socialisation' option appeared to be slightly more popular than the 'Social inequality' option. Some candidates showed a good grasp of the key theories, concepts and arguments and often used these to good effect. There were few very rubric errors or non-responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: 'Theory and methods'

Question 1

- (a) Nearly all candidates used the source to identify two aims of the research. Acceptable answers were what social platforms were used, how much time young people spent online and/or what interactions they engaged in.
- (b) Some candidates correctly identified two types of sampling that might be used to research social media, apart from random sampling. A few responses identified research methods such as questionnaires or interviews instead which did not answer the question. Stratified, quota and systematic sampling were the most frequent correct answers.

- (c) Candidates were asked to use the source to describe two reasons why the researchers' data might not be valid. The most successful candidates directly identified a feature of the research method from the source, for example the fact that the questionnaire had pre-coded questions. They then described how this may lead to a lack of validity, for example because respondents must choose from a 'yes' or 'no' answer or are limited to a pre-set range; in neither case can respondents express their own view in their own words. Common correct answers focused on the fact that it was a questionnaire with a standardised format, the idea that it only yields quantitative data or the fact that no researcher was present to clarify questions which may lead to misunderstanding. Some candidates discussed sampling issues such as sample composition, response rate and lack of representativeness which were not creditworthy in terms of the question.
- (d) The best responses to this question showed a clear understanding of the strengths of using pilot studies when planning sociological research. Popular correct answers focused on the fact that pilot studies allow for an aspect of the methodology to be tested including research methods, types of questions or the accessibility of the sample. Often these were described in terms of time or cost saving should errors be detected. Other acceptable answers included that pilot studies allow for checks for ethical issues or to test and refine a hypothesis. Candidates who were less successful made only one point and/or did not describe or develop their identified point sufficiently.
- (e) This question requiring candidates to describe two strengths and limitations of case studies proved challenging. Common strengths cited included the idea that case studies often give qualitative data which provides rich detail, they allow for different aspects of the case to be studied using different primary methods and that they often give a unique and deep insight into one institution or event. Popular limitations included the idea that the data from a case study may only apply to that institution or event and hence is not generalisable, or that findings are difficult to replicate as they are 'one-offs' which use a qualitative approach. Some answers identified points and did not unpack the points made. A small number of responses gave general answers, for example that they were 'valid' or 'cheap' or 'difficult to organise.'
- (f) This question proved to be quite challenging and many candidates gave only brief answers. It asked candidates to explain why some sociologists criticise official statistics. Candidates should try to make at least three different points in separate paragraphs. Common answers included that official statistics are quantitative data and hence lacking detailed explanation, they are easily manipulated by governments for political purposes and that they may be outdated if only conducted every few years. Very few candidates made three points, instead focusing on one or two which limits the number of marks available. For example candidates who only make one well developed point are limited to the top of band 1 and 3 marks out of a possible 10.
- (g) This question asked about the extent to which objectivity is possible in sociological research. Most candidates scored in band 1 (1 – 4 marks) or band 2 (5 – 8 marks) due to limited range and detail. On the 'for' side of the debate the most successful answers linked the possibility of achieving objectivity to the positivist approach and ways of minimising the impact of the researcher, for example by using self-completion questionnaires, a covert approach or laboratory experiments. On the 'against' side answers often focused on interpretivist critiques of the impossibility of value-free research or the likelihood of a researcher effect occurring in methods such as interviews (Interviewer Effect) and observations (Hawthorne Effect) thereby introducing bias and subjectivity into the research process. Candidates who scored marks in the lower bands often wrote list-like answers with two or three points.

Section B: 'Culture, socialisation and identity'

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates scored at least one mark for their definition of 'social identity.' To score two marks two core elements must be present. Many candidates identified the ideas that it is about both how we see ourselves and how we are seen by others in society. Some candidates gave examples such as gender, ethnicity, class etc.
- (b) Some candidates responded well to the requirement to describe two processes of primary socialisation. Popular correct answers included imitation, canalisation and manipulation, sanctions and rewards. Many candidates received some credit for the idea that parents generally 'teach' children norms and values, though ideally more specific processes such as those mentioned above

should have been given. Candidates who only scored two marks invariably did not develop their descriptions.

- (c) This question asked candidates to explain how social order is maintained in modern industrial societies. The most successful responses identified and developed three or more points. The most popular answers focused on the use of primary socialisation, secondary socialisation in the form of the hidden curriculum and both formal and informal social control – particularly different kinds of sanctions. Candidates who scored less well typically made fewer points and/or did not explain their points.
- (d) This question asked why inadequate socialisation might cause problems for society. There were few band 3 answers containing three or more well developed points. Most candidates scored in band 1 (1 – 3 marks) or band 2 (4 – 6 marks). Common answers discussed the idea that a lack of primary or secondary socialisation would result in children not knowing the norms, values and rules of society and hence not fitting in properly and engaging in deviant or criminal behaviour. Some candidates described feral children but sometimes did not include the impact of such cases on society.
- (e) Candidates were asked to discuss the extent to which the workplace is the most effective agent of social control. It drew a variable response. Popular points on the ‘for’ side of the debate focused on workplace socialisation and the use sanctions and rewards to keep employees conforming with expectations. On the ‘against’ side many candidates outlined various ways in which other agencies exercise social control. These ranged from informal agencies such as the family, education, peers and media to formal agencies such as the police and courts. Mid to low range responses typically lacked the range and detailed arguments needed to achieve band 3 or 4. There were a few one-sided responses. Less successful responses were often brief and characterised by points lacking development in the form of detail and examples.

Section C: ‘Social inequality’

Question 3

- (a) Few candidates gave a clear definition of the term ‘intragenerational social mobility,’ referring to the two elements of movement through the social classes and the idea that this movement occurs within a person’s lifetime. Many candidates described the former but not the latter. A small number of candidates described intergenerational mobility and talked about movement across social classes over different generations. Some candidates did not understand the term in the question and hence did not score marks.
- (b) This question asked candidates to describe two examples of discrimination experienced by the elderly. Popular correct answers included being denied jobs or promotion, being stereotyped in the media and not being taken into account when decisions are made about their lives such as their care. A few candidates tried to define the term ‘discrimination’ rather than give examples linked to the elderly. A few candidates focused on stereotypes of the elderly such as their frailty which was not answering the question.
- (c) In this question candidates were asked to explain how wealth can be redistributed in society. Popular creditworthy points referred to governments creating more schools with taxation of the rich to give those in poverty greater life chances; or using taxation to divert funds to the welfare state, including benefits to the unemployed and the underclass to allow them to survive. Most answers scored in band 1 as they frequently made only one point. A minority of candidates did not answer the question and simply defined the redistribution of wealth and/or said why (rather than how) governments often tried to undertake such a measure.
- (d) This question asked candidates to discuss why a gendered division of labour exists. Some candidates turned to the family and used feminism to explain the division between breadwinner/housewife and instrumental/expressive roles as patriarchal, along with the expectation that women but not men work a ‘triple shift’. Others concentrated on the division of labour between men and women in the workplace either in terms of a glass ceiling/vertical segregation or horizontal segregation across occupations such as women being carers or receptionists and men being construction workers or engineers. Less successful answers tended to make fewer points often only partially developed with evidence.

- (e) This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which people's life chances are becoming more equal in modern industrial. Candidates discussed a variety of points on either side of the debate with reference to class, gender, ethnicity, age, disability. However, many answers lacked range and detail. Popular arguments for the view included the idea that most modern societies are meritocracies and open societies. Other points followed from this such as examples of equality or anti-discrimination legislation, the institution of free and universal education and other welfare state measures. On the 'against' side the best responses used Marxist and feminist perspectives to argue that society remains deeply divided by social inequalities such as poverty and sexism. A few candidates explored the ongoing discrimination through racism or ageism. Ideally candidates should develop three points on each side of the debate.

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Key messages

- On **Questions 1(d) and (e)** a good technique is for candidates to first identify a feature of the method in question and then describe the strengths and/or limitations.
- When teaching field experiments a good idea to use examples to reinforce the kind of approach and methodologies used. Classic examples include the Hawthorne experiment, the Stanford prison experiment or Rosenthal and Jacobsen's 'Pygmalion in the Classroom' study. Other more recent examples can be found on the internet, e.g. the ethnicity and job application experiment in 2009.
- There are no marks available for evaluation in **1(f)** so candidates should be discouraged from making points against the question.
- Candidates should write extended responses to **1(f), 1(g) and (c), (d) and (e)** in question 2 or 3 in paragraph form to prevent distinct points overlapping or coalescing into each other.
- Whilst the unpacking and development of points with evidence is crucial to success in questions **2/3 (c), (d) and (e)** the level of development required for **(c)** is not as great as the other, higher tariff questions **((d) and (e))** where more detailed analysis is expected.

General comments

Candidates showed a satisfactory level of engagement with the question paper and the assessment objectives. Time management appears to have been good, with very few candidates not finishing the paper. Many candidates showed a basic to good knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and theory. Most then applied this knowledge to the demands of the actual questions. In essay responses the evaluation skills evidenced by some candidates were good, with most giving a two-sided response. The research methods unit was challenging for many candidates and the technique for answering the data response question (**1(c)**) and the methods evaluation questions (**1(d) and 1(e)**) could be improved. **Question 2** (Culture, socialisation and identity) was far more popular than **Question 3** (Social inequality) and tended to be done slightly better overall. There were very few rubric errors though noticeably several non-responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Theory and Methods

Question 1

- (a) A particularly good response here with most candidates achieving full marks by correctly identifying from the source the two approaches used by sociologists. Candidates who did not achieve marks invariably named approaches that were not in the source, e.g. structuralism or interpretivism. A few candidates did not give an 'approach' and incorrectly gave answers such as snowball sampling or observation, both of which featured in the source.
- (b) This question was done well. Most candidates identified two types of historical document. The most common responses were diaries, newspapers/journals, magazines and photographs. A few candidates incorrectly cited official statistics which were not credited as historical documents. Candidates who did not achieve both marks gave vague responses such as 'life stories', 'old research', etc. or cited research methods such as questionnaires.
- (c) The source analysis question drew a mixed response. Candidates were asked to describe two reasons from the source why researchers chose to use snowball sampling. The key to achieving full marks was to first identify two points from the source (e.g. that no sampling frame of young

smokers was available) and then to say why that meant snowball sampling was appropriate (e.g. because in snowball sampling no sampling frame is needed as one young smoker finds another and so on until a full sample is gained). Some candidates did not use the source and asserted that snowball sampling is the quickest and most convenient type of sampling which is incorrect.

- (d) This question asked candidates to describe two strengths of using focus groups in sociological research. Some candidates chose to define the method in their first sentence and then go on to select appropriate aspects of the method and their strengths. The key to success in this question and in **1(e)** is to identify an aspect of the method and then describe why or how that is a strength. Popular correct answers included that as researchers interview a group of people together it is time and cost efficient compared to interviewing them one by one and that some people are likely to be more comfortable and supported being interviewed in a group and are thus more likely to open up and give valid answers. Another common creditworthy point was that a focus group allows for discussion and interaction between group members adding a qualitative dimension to data not achievable if being interviewed separately. Some candidates developed such points sociologically, but others missed marks by not explaining the positive impact of their point. Where candidates scored fewer or no marks responses were vague and not linked to focus groups as a method, e.g., they are high in validity or they give a lot of information.
- (e) This question on the strengths and limitations of field experiments proved particularly challenging for many candidates. Some responses started with a definition of field experiments as experiments done in a natural setting but did not include a description of its strengths and limitations. Many candidates did not appear to fully understand what field experiments are and therefore could not give possible strengths and limitations, as a result very few scored full marks. Many candidates linked this type of experiment with qualitative data and the use of participant observation to give *verstehen* which would be very unlikely in an experiment. The most popular creditworthy strengths included the natural setting (e.g. a workplace or school) which may put people at their ease and allow them to show their normal behaviour thus enhancing validity, and the idea that researchers can manipulate the variables in the experiment to test and measure a hypothesis. Popular limitations focused on the possibility of the Hawthorne Effect if people became aware they were being studied, thus changing behaviour and negatively impacting validity. Another common limitation was that ethical issues may arise if informed consent is not taken (in covert research) or possible harm and distress caused (as may have been the case in the Stanford experiment and the Rosenthal and Jacobson study). A third common limitation was that researchers cannot fully control variables in the same way as in a laboratory and hence the study will be difficult to repeat and get the same results, thus impeding reliability.
- (f) This question required candidates to explain why longitudinal studies can be useful in sociological research. It is an extended response question and requires a minimum of three well developed points to score in band three. Most responses scored in bands one and two due to a lack of development. Many candidates correctly identified longitudinal studies with the idea that they are done over an extended period, usually years, and that the sample is revisited at intervals. Often these points were then used as strengths. For example studying a sample over a long period requires commitment from the sample and may facilitate the growth of trust, both of which may enhance the likelihood of valid data. The idea of studying the sample at intervals gave rise to the idea that it allows researchers to chart the changes and even explain the factors that led to the changes in a person's life. Another common creditworthy point was the flexibility of the approach in terms of the kinds of methods that can be used to give both quantitative and qualitative data. Other candidates focused on the likely quantitative results that allow researchers to identify patterns and to make comparisons between different groups in the sample. Some candidates included evaluation points and discussed the disadvantages of longitudinal studies which was not required by the question. Some candidates provided vague points relating to the method being easy to do or that just because it takes a long time that somehow this makes it more 'valid and reliable.' Candidates who scored less well made fewer than three points and these were often undeveloped or only partially developed.

- (g) The essay question focused on evaluating the extent to which official statistics are useful for sociological research. Many candidates formulated a balanced debate with quality of development being the main differentiator. Many responses demonstrated some knowledge of official statistics, for example that they are easy to access and often free quantitative data, often about the whole population, generated by governments. These basics were often then translated into positive points, e.g. that because they are generated by the government sociologists can use them as a source of secondary data thus saving time and effort for researchers who do not have to do the research themselves. Other common creditworthy points included that they are quantitative data and hence can be used to identify patterns and trends in social behaviours and allow for comparisons to be made, a few candidates referenced Durkheim's comparative suicide study. On the 'against' side many candidates identified the possible bias in official statistics due to political interference designed to make the government look good. Others pointed out that official statistics are not always accurate, citing rape figures or the census as examples where there may be 'hidden figures' which detract from the validity of the data. Some gave an interpretivist critique on the problems with a purely quantitative approach to research and the inability to find out the reasons or the 'why' behind the quantitative picture. A few candidates included non-official statistics and referenced other possible research methods by way of evaluation with no reference back to official statistics, an approach which was not creditworthy in the question. A minority of candidates gave no response or showed no relevant knowledge of official statistics. Where candidates did include conclusions, often they were simple and summative and only the strongest candidates made thoughtful judgements based on evidence presented.

Section B: Culture, identity and socialisation

Question 2

- (a) This question asked candidates to define the term 'masculinity.' Most candidates scored at least one mark. Those that achieved two marks gave a response which identified masculinity with a set of social expectations associated with males. Many candidates received one mark for giving an appropriate example such as being strong and unemotional.
- (b) This question required candidates to describe two sanctions used to control young people. Candidates approached the question in several different ways. Some focused on negative and positive sanctions as examples in and of themselves, others gave concrete examples such as having mobile phones confiscated or detention in school. Others talked about punishments and rewards as examples. All of these were creditworthy. For the second mark candidates could either give extra detail about the sanction identified or give some description of how the sanction was effective in controlling young people, e.g. being kept in detention deterred students from misbehaving in future. Many candidates scored full marks on this question though a few candidates did not link their examples to the control of young people specifically.
- (c) Candidates found this question demanding. It asked candidates to explain how societies are culturally diverse. A common error was that some candidates unnecessarily explained why rather than how social diversity exists. Thus many talked about globalisation and immigration. Sometimes these points were creditworthy but only if candidates then made reference to examples of cultural diversity. Common creditworthy examples of how societies are culturally diverse were in food, clothing, language and religion. Many candidates successfully linked such diversity to multiculturalism. A few candidates misunderstood the question and spent time discussing the merging of cultures in a global culture.
- (d) The eight-mark question asked candidates to explain why traditional femininity is changing. In general there was solid understanding of what traditional femininity involves with many candidates highlighting submissiveness and the expressive housewife role of taking care of the household. In explaining why femininity has changed many referred to the extension of female rights through legislation, including the right to work. This in turn was seen as key to greater confidence and independence for women in both the domestic and public sphere. So women can now be breadwinners, marry later or not at all and/or take care of children themselves without the need of a man. Women no longer need to tolerate domestic violence and can seek divorce more easily in a social environment which is more supportive. Whilst knowledge was generally good relatively few candidates sustained development over three or more points and hence few achieved top band. Some candidates spent a little too long on explaining traditional femininity rather than focusing on the reasons why it is changing.

- (e) The essay question focused on the extent to which value consensus exists in modern industrial societies. There was a mixed response reflecting and there were a few non-responses. However most responses did attempt a debate. Responses that scored well often argued that value consensus clearly exists because it is something that is taught to us through the various agencies of socialisation. Candidates often then went on to discuss how norms and values are transmitted through the family, school, the media and religion. In addition some focused on the existence of social control which attempts to bring people back into line with accepted norms and values of society, whether this be informally or formally through agencies such as the police and courts. Some candidates described functionalist arguments regarding the necessity for all agencies and institutions to work together for the common good though sometimes these descriptions did not come back to the question of value consensus explicitly. The 'against' side of the argument featured the fact that not everyone follows the value consensus, for example criminals and subcultures. Also, many candidates used Marxist and feminist theory to question whether in fact a value consensus exists at all as people are 'brainwashed' into a passive acceptance of capitalist/patriarchal worldviews. Some of these points were developed well in relation to concepts like ideology whilst others tended to focus in a simpler way on 'conflict'. Some candidates were vague and did not demonstrate understanding of value consensus and hence tended to score in band one.

Section C: Social Inequality

Question 3

- (a) Candidates who achieved both marks defined intergenerational social mobility in terms of movement between the social classes (one element) across generations such as from parents to children (the second element). Both elements were needed to score two marks. Answers which only scored one mark lacked one of the two definitional elements or simply gave an example with no definition.
- (b) There was a mixed response to this question which asked candidates to describe two examples of vertical segregation in the workplace. Ideally candidates should have focused on the idea that different social groups can occupy different levels in workplace hierarchies. Common correct answers included men being CEOs of companies whilst women worked in lower occupations such as secretaries or that ethnic minorities struggle to gain promotion to the highest positions in some organisations. Those who did not achieve full marks either identified one feature or identified two but left one or both undeveloped. A small number of responses focussed incorrectly on related ideas such as prejudice and discrimination or the gender pay gap.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain how institutional racism affects individuals. Popular responses included the impact on ethnic minorities in terms of workplace discrimination and the effect this has on financial wellbeing; whilst others focused on the affect institutional racism can have in schools where teachers may label ethnic minority children as failures leading to a self-fulfilling prophesy. Many candidates noted the likelihood of mental health problems and low self-esteem though often such points tended to be generalised and not well linked to institutions. Another common point concerned police racism and the targeting of ethnic minorities as a result. A minority of candidates did not demonstrate understanding of the meaning of institutional racism and instead made references to sexism and ageism which were not creditworthy. Few candidates gave three developed and conceptual/evidenced points to score full marks.
- (d) This question asked candidates to explain why governments choose to redistribute wealth. The best responses began each point with a clear statement of the 'why' element of the question; so, because they want to alleviate poverty or tackle inequality or pacify the working class/proletariat, etc. Such reasons were then unpacked with extra detail, sometimes with reference to government measures such as progressive taxation, unemployment benefits, free education or initiatives that provide opportunities for work or self-employment. Localised examples were given and rewarded. Other candidates took a more theoretical approach by referring to functionalist arguments about the desirability of meritocracy and social mobility as a reason for governments to redistribute wealth or Marxist criticisms of the welfare state as a ploy by the ruling class to distract the proletariat from oppression.
- (e) The essay question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which it is possible to escape the poverty trap. Most candidates gave a balanced argument with several points on each side. To score in band three a minimum of four sociological points each with some development/evidence

are needed. For band four a minimum of six well developed points must be made. On the 'for' side many responses argued that there is a meritocracy where social mobility is possible via equal opportunities legislation and hence people can climb out of the poverty trap. Such arguments were often linked with the existence of free education which was seen as key to social progress particularly for groups such as women and ethnic minorities. Others focused on the welfare state and the fact that benefits keep families out of absolute poverty and allow them to meet their subsistence needs. A few candidates also discussed marriage and winning the lottery as ways of moving out of poverty though such points were more difficult to develop with sociological evidence. On the 'against' side candidates made reference to the structural barriers that make it difficult to escape poverty such as continuing discrimination against certain groups, social exclusion from services and the generational cycle of poverty. Other popular arguments put forward to keep people in poverty were the culture of poverty and the dependency culture. Most candidates scored in band two though a few candidates were able to present cogent, well developed arguments and score in bands three and four. Candidates who scored less well offered fewer points and often offered minimal evidence in development of those points. Whilst a few responses addressed the 'to what extent' and provided focused conclusions, these tended to be in the minority.

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Key messages

- In **1 (c)** candidates should first identify their points directly from the source and then develop them into description.
- In the strength/limitations questions **1 (d)** and **1(e)** candidates should identify an aspect of the method or sample and then describe how or why it is a strength or limitation.
- When dealing with the strengths and limitations of historical documents (**1e**) candidates should link their points to *examples* such as diaries, autobiographies, government records etc. to avoid generalising, for example simply asserting that historical documents are valid or conversely are biased.
- In **1 (f)** candidates should unpack each point in a paragraph to fully explain the meaning, ideally drawing upon sociological concepts.
- In essay-style questions (**1 (g)**, **2 (e)** and **3 (e)**) candidates should identify three points for and against develop these points using concepts, evidence and examples.

General comments

Responses showed a satisfactory level of engagement with both the question paper and the assessment objectives. Time management appears to have been particularly good with very few candidates who did not finish the paper. Some candidates were enumerating points and writing in paragraphs in the more extended questions, which is good practice.

The base knowledge and understanding of methodology was sound, with many candidates demonstrating a good understanding of the difference between validity and reliability and representativeness and generalisability, though application and analysis of the source for **1 (c)** could be improved. Most candidates were well-equipped to identify strengths and limitations of aspects of research methodology. In essay responses the evaluation skills evidenced by some candidates was very good, with a few candidates going beyond juxtaposition by using other perspectives to interrogate the view in the question.

Question 2, 'Culture, identity and socialisation', was slightly more popular than question 3, 'Social inequality', but in both questions many candidates showed a good grasp of the key theories, concepts and arguments and used these to beneficial effect. There were few very rubric errors or non-responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: 'Theory and methods'

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates identified the two sociologists in the source. Acceptable responses were Weber and Durkheim. A small number of candidates named sociological theories, such as functionalism instead of the sociologists.
- (b) Most candidates correctly identified two sociological perspectives, apart from functionalism. The most common answers were Marxism and feminism though several candidates gave other creditable responses such as interpretivism, structuralism or postmodernism.

- (c) Candidates were asked to use information from the source to describe two reasons why comparative studies are useful in sociological research. Common answers included that they are seen as objective and scientific, that they use large samples or that they can be used to identify patterns and trends in numerical data. Any of these points would score one mark and candidates needed to unpack the points in terms of comparative studies. For example, comparative studies are usually objective due to the fact they are often based on quantitative secondary data and hence there is no researcher effect to invalidate the findings of the comparative exercise. Some candidates successfully identified two discrete points about comparative studies from the source but did not then describe how or why they are useful; others only made one point which meant that a maximum of 2 marks could be given.
- (d) The best responses to this question showed a clear understanding of the strengths of postal questionnaires in research. Popular answers focused on the idea that postal questionnaires yield quantitative data which may be used to generate patterns and trends or that there will be no interviewer effect since the questionnaire is self-completed at a distance (as it is administered through the post). Other candidates wrote that respondents would feel more comfortable without a researcher present and that it is convenient for them as they can complete the questionnaire in their own time. Another strength identified by many candidates was that such questionnaires can be used to access a sample over a large geographical area and hence is likely to be more representative. Candidates who scored less well only made one point or did not unpack both of their identified strengths.
- (e) There was a varied response to this question about the strengths and weaknesses of using historical documents in sociological research. Popular creditworthy strengths included that they give information about the past which we cannot get in any other way, for example Ann Frank's diary as an insider's perspective of a Jewish family living under Nazi rule. Diaries and autobiographies were sometimes used by candidates to discuss the value of personal experiences and the rich detail that comes with qualitative data. A few candidates focused on the fact that historical documents can be used to compare with evidence from society today to reveal how norms and values have changed. Popular limitations included the idea that historical documents by their nature are out of date and may be irrelevant to the topic under study. Alternatively some candidates wrote about the possible bias emanating from documents that may have been written for publication such as a politician's memoirs or the fact that it is unclear what methods were used to collect data in some historical documents such as biographies and whether the information is therefore untrustworthy. Most candidates scored some marks on this question. Those that were less successful made vague allusions to 'validity' or 'reliability' without further elaboration or simply did not describe two strengths and limitations.
- (f) The best responses to this question showed a clear focus on the reasons why sociological research is often biased. Most answers scored in band 2. To score in band 3 a minimum of three developed points need to be made, ideally in three separate paragraphs and using sociological concepts. Some candidates scored well, drawing upon ideas such as the inevitability of researcher bias in questions, interpretation of data etc., the Hawthorne Effect occurring during observations and the researcher effect, based on the social characteristics of the researcher, causing socially desirable answers. Other prominent answers included the likely political bias emanating from government funded research and intentional bias to prove a hypothesis. A common reason for low-scoring answers was a lack of proper development of points made. List-like answers are placed in band 1, candidates need to develop their responses to score higher.
- (g) There was a generally good response to this question. On the 'for' side a wide range of points featured. Some candidates focused on the functionality, for both individuals and society, of various social institutions such as the family, schools and workplace or the functionality of processes such as primary/secondary socialisation and social control. Theorists such as Durkheim, Parsons and Davis and Moore featured prominently. On the 'against' side many candidates drew upon Marxist criticisms of the 'meritocracy' and the dysfunctionality of capitalism, feminist arguments regarding gender inequality and descriptions of ethnic inequalities that belie the idea of meritocracy. There were a few impressive answers from candidates who developed a range of points on both sides of the debate, linked to sociological concepts and theory in an effective way. Many candidates attempted to draw a conclusion though often these were summative rather than evaluative. Candidates who scored marks in the lower bands often wrote list-like answers with a limited range of points.

Section B: 'Culture, socialisation and society'

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates scored at least one mark for their definition of 'coercion.' For two marks both the idea of the use (or threat) of physical force or violence and another additional detail was needed. For the latter, many candidates made reference to agencies such as the police or examples such as arrest, physical detention, etc. Candidates who did not score any marks often made vague reference to people being 'influenced' or manipulated,' for example by peer pressure, with no reference to force.
- (b) Many candidates responded well to the command to describe two examples of role-modelling. Common answers included parental or elder sibling behaviour as an example for children to imitate, older candidates in school and celebrity influencers. A few candidates referred to deviant role models such as criminal parents or gang leaders. A few candidates who did not score full marks either did not make the required number of points or did not unpack or properly describe their example.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain how women experience role conflict. To achieve full marks some reference to two roles that clash were needed. Responses which scored well often referred to the conflict between being a breadwinner and the maternal role, or a breadwinner and the traditional housewife role. A few candidates made reference to the roles that women play without explaining the nature of the conflict. So, for example, identifying the double shift or triple burden without explaining *how* looking after children and housework can conflict with paid employment, hence why many women work part-time.
- (d) Many candidates scored in band 2, but few responses included the three well-developed points needed to access top band. Common answers included that value consensus provides stability and harmony to social life as people agree in terms of what is acceptable, desirable etc., and are less likely to rebel or get into conflict. Some referred to a 'sense of belonging' and social cohesion being a product of value consensus or the idea that people accepted the sanctions and rewards that facilitate social control that is necessary to fend off anomie in society.
- (e) Candidates were asked to discuss the extent to which social identity is influenced by social class. On the 'for' side many candidates put Marxist theory to good use, arguing for example that the status of individuals was determined by their place in the proletariat or the bourgeoisie and that the socialisation of the two major classes differed. Some responses turned to labelling theory and argued that the lowest social classes tended to be scapegoated and negatively labelled by the media, and other forces of social control such as police, leading to the self-fulfilling prophesy of a deviant career. Still another approach seen was to identify those aspects of social life which are profoundly affected by social class such as one's social network, education and other life chances such as employment. On the 'against' side of the argument common approaches included feminist arguments regarding the greater importance of gender to social identity, discussions about the importance of ethnicity in shaping one's culture and status in society or age-related arguments often linked to negative stereotyping and ageism against both young and old. In many answers there was a good knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and theory. Less successful responses were often brief and lacking development.

Section C: 'Social inequality'

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates gave a clear definition of the term 'caste,' referring to a closed stratification system or hierarchy where status is ascribed rather than achieved. Many candidates linked the caste system with India and gave examples of people not being able to marry outside their caste, having one's job determined by caste or the lowest caste being seen to have a 'polluting' influence. Many candidates scored full marks.

- (b) This question asked candidates to describe two examples of racial discrimination and drew a generally good response. A variety of examples were seen including most prominently the differential treatment for Black people in job recruitment and the workplace generally, labelling of ethnic minority candidates by teachers and subsequent neglect and verbal/physical assault and other hate crimes caused by racism. Candidates did need to unpack their points briefly to score both marks per example. A few candidates simply defined racial discrimination instead of giving examples.
- (c) In this question candidates were asked to explain how wealth can improve a person's life chances. More successful answers tended to focus on wealth as a gateway to elite private education and the cultural and social capital that often goes with it. Other popular points focused on housing and access to decent quality food and medical care, both linked to higher life expectancy. A few candidates pointed to the disadvantages that a lack of wealth or poverty brings for example not being able to pay the rent or buy enough food to feed their family. Candidates who scored less well tended to write in less detail and/or gave more 'commonsense' than sociological answers.
- (d) This question asked candidates to discuss why the welfare state is criticised by some sociologists. Most candidates answered it well. Successful points included New Right criticisms about the culture of poverty and dependency culture allegedly created by welfare payments. Other candidates pointed out that welfare benefits only provide a minimum amount needed for subsistence and fail to address structural problems that cause poverty or that such benefits wrongly depict a 'caring capitalism' that deters workers from rebellion (Marxism).
- (e) This question required candidates to discuss the extent to which inequality in the workplace is affected by gender. To achieve top band candidates needed to outline six well-developed and conceptual points, in a balanced structure, with a conclusion that makes a judgement based on the evidence presented. Very few candidates did this though many scored in band 3 by providing a range of points with variable development. Popular arguments for the view included the gender pay gap, the existence of the glass ceiling/cliff and horizontal segregation – all supported by negative stereotypes about women's capabilities. Arguments against the view focused on using competing explanations based not on gender but on ethnicity via various examples of institutional racism. Other common points focused on social class as a more influential factor in the workplace with the bourgeoisie keeping their power over the proletariat who remain 'wage slaves' with a false consciousness. A few candidates took another approach which was to criticise feminist accounts of discrimination by pointing out that society is now a meritocracy; a fact evidenced by changes in legislation that have brought in equal opportunities and examples of women who have got to the top of their profession.

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Key messages

- Some candidates write out the question, a definition or an introduction or conclusion when it is not necessary for the question, this wastes time and no additional marks can be gained.
- Responses given to **part (e)** questions need to cover both sides of an argument, a one-sided response limits the marks that can be achieved.
- Some candidates would benefit from practice in organising their answers, e.g. enumerating their points and/or writing in separate paragraphs as required.
- Candidates should have a solid understanding of key terms and be able to clearly define them. This would enable them to not only obtain full marks in **part (a)** questions, but would also help them to understand key terminology in other questions. A definition should aim to include two clear elements.
- Candidates should show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This approach allows candidates to achieve good marks.
- Responses based on common-sense rather than explicit sociological understanding will not be able to achieve full marks.
- Candidates would benefit from spending some time thinking about what the questions are asking and planning answers to those longer questions accordingly before they start to write – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidate's remain focused on the specific demands of the question set.
- Some candidates are not using paragraphs in the longer responses, making it difficult to see where points begin and end. The 'point per paragraph' structure is therefore recommended. Candidates would benefit from developing discrete essay writing skills and techniques for the **part (e)** questions.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use the marks per question as guidance for how much should be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. For example, some candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question worth 6 marks as for a **part (e)** question worth 15.
- Command words are crucial; candidates should be familiar with the requirements of the various command words used.

General comments

Many responses to the 15-mark **part (e)** questions were one-sided. A series of points on both sides of the debate are required to achieve above 8 marks on these questions. Many answers were short, and only covered the view in the question, with no evaluation. Where answers did consider the other side, they sometimes listed all other approaches with little if any link to the question itself.

Some scripts had very poor handwriting and some could not get marks because of this; examiners cannot give credit for what cannot be read.

Candidates often expressed relevant ideas but used everyday, common-sense language without sociological terms or concepts. Candidates should take opportunities to use key terms, names, studies and perspectives in their answers, to explicitly demonstrate the sociology they have learned.

Sometimes candidates scored poorly on particular questions because they did not demonstrate the necessary knowledge, at times the key words in the questions were not understood. In particular, victim surveys and cultural deprivation were not well understood. Questions are always based on the syllabus content, and the syllabus gives a list of key terms and key questions. Candidates thus need to study all of the required content to support their chosen topic options and to be familiar with all the key terms and concepts.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Family

- (a) Generally well answered. Family connections and the role of parents/elders were the most commonly seen ideas. Some weaker responses repeated the term from the question. Sometimes confused with forced marriage.
- (b) This question was generally well answered, with candidates choosing recent changes to the family, such as more equal conjugal roles, fewer/no children and more lone parent families, and stating that these could be attributed to feminism.
- (c) This question was not well answered overall. Some answers did not refer to social class at all, others did not make clear points. The most common ideas seen linked to money, values and lifestyles.
- (d) Most candidates offered several reasons why many people today choose not to marry. Popular answers included alternatives to the family that do not involve marriage such as cohabitation, the declining influence of religion through secularisation and women focusing on their careers rather than marriage and family.
- (e) Many candidates addressed only the view in the question, offering no debate or evaluation. At times points were accurately stated but without any sociological development. Some answers were unclear about the differences between roles and functions, writing more about roles. Those candidates that did discuss family functions typically focused on socialisation, social control, economic provision, care and emotional support.

Section B

Question 2

Education

- (a) Many candidates explained the term clearly, typically referring to classes of pupils of similar abilities for all subjects. Benefit of the doubt was given where answers might equally refer to setting or banding.
- (b) The term 'positive discrimination' was not well understood overall, with several responses not referring to the 'positive' aspect of the question and including examples of discrimination instead. Better responses referred to ideas such as additional support for disadvantaged groups or specific points such as girls being given priority over boys to use laboratory equipment/scholarships for ethnic minority students. Others made less successful points for example about individuals being favoured by teachers which were rarely able to gain credit.
- (c) Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the key term of 'self-fulfilling prophecy' in the question, but some did not go beyond a simple point about how some students failed because they were expected to do so. Better answers included two or more developed points, bringing in terms such as labelling, master status and ideas about the ideal pupil. Some interesting answers were seen that contrasted negative and positive labels in education and the effects on students.

- (d) This question was generally well answered with a range of creditable points given. Answers referred to, for example, social control to reduce deviance, the 'sifting and sorting' process of role allocation and the learning of core norms and values through secondary socialisation, notably through the hidden curriculum.
- (e) Many candidates demonstrated some understanding of the meaning of 'deprivation' but not specifically of 'cultural deprivation', which was often confused with or seen as being the same as material deprivation. The outcome was that it was often unclear how points related to the question (whether they were for or against the view in the question) and many answers were one-sided or covered both sides in little depth and with little evidence. Candidates who scored well typically considered ideas such as cultural capital (via trips to the theatre/museums/galleries etc.), values and parental engagement with education. In evaluation, material factors could be used (lack of resources/quiet space to study), as well as in-school factors such as anti-school sub-cultures and teacher expectations. It was important for success though that social class still remained as a focus.

Section C

Question 3

Crime, Deviance and Social Control

- (a) The term 'status frustration' was generally understood, but candidates repeated one or both words of the term in their definitions. It is important for candidates to clearly demonstrate their understanding through the use of alternative words than those found in the definition for full marks to be awarded.
- (b) This question was generally well answered, with points often made about recent technology such as CCTV, internet and drone surveillance. Answers referring to more traditional methods of surveillance, such as a police 'stakeout', were also rewarded.
- (c) A good, basic understanding of the idea of deviancy amplification was often seen in candidate answers. Better answers often discussed terms such as labelling, moral panics, deviant careers and master status, or used examples that allowed them to develop ideas and points further successfully.
- (d) Candidates typically made three or more points about low levels of female criminality, including different socialisation or expectations, limited opportunities to commit crime (i.e. because of the housewife/mother role) and higher levels of social control imposed than on males. The best answers were both conceptual and well developed/explained.
- (e) There was some good knowledge demonstrated of Marxist explanations of crime, often covering how the ruling class criminalise working class activities and how the police and criminal justice system concentrate on working class crime at the expense of, for example, corporate crime. Poverty and material deprivation were also often discussed. The other side of the debate, when covered, usually applied functionalist and/or interactionist approaches and their relative merits as explanations for crime. A lot of answers, however, were quite confused and did demonstrate clear understanding of the core ideas of the Marxist explanations.

Section D

Question 4

Media

- (a) Some answers showed some understanding of the term 'distortion', but often needed to go beyond a simple near-synonym (such as 'bias') to get the second mark. Examples are a useful way that candidates can do this.
- (b) Very few candidates answered on the Media option and for this question there were very few responses demonstrating an understanding of the concept of diversification. This reiterates the need for all key terms and questions in the syllabus to be covered and learnt.

- (c) The term 'digital divide' was not well understood. Those that offered creditable points typically did not develop ideas or distinguish different points. The easiest way for candidates to do this is to focus on clearly different ideas in their response, for example social class, old age and location.
- (d) There were some good points made about the use of state media for propaganda and to exclude dissenting views. Candidates sometimes used relevant contemporary examples to back up and develop their ideas and this worked well, e.g. North Korea, China, google.
- (e) Candidates discussed representations of a range of social groups in terms of stereotypes. Examples were often used to help substantiate points made. Some responses did not include any debate and were one-sided and often short.

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Key messages

- Some candidates write out the question, a definition or an introduction or conclusion when it is not necessary for the question, this wastes time and no additional marks can be gained.
- Responses given to **part (e)** questions need to cover both sides of an argument, a one-sided response limits the marks that can be achieved.
- Some candidates would benefit from practice in organising their answers, e.g. enumerating their points and/or writing in separate paragraphs as required.
- Candidates should have a solid understanding of key terms and be able to clearly define them. This would enable them to not only obtain full marks in **part (a)** questions, but would also help them to understand key terminology in other questions. A definition should aim to include two clear elements.
- Candidates should show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This approach allows candidates to achieve good marks.
- Responses based on common-sense rather than explicit sociological understanding will not be able to achieve full marks.
- Candidates would benefit from spending some time thinking about what the questions are asking and planning answers to those longer questions accordingly before they start to write – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidate's remain focused on the specific demands of the question set.
- Some candidates are not using paragraphs in the longer responses, making it difficult to see where points begin and end. The 'point per paragraph' structure is therefore recommended. Candidates would benefit from developing discrete essay writing skills and techniques for the **part (e)** questions.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use the marks per question as guidance for how much should be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. For example, some candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question worth 6 marks as for a **part (e)** question worth 15.
- Command words are crucial; candidates should be familiar with the requirements of the various command words used.

General comments

Many responses showed a generally good level of engagement with the question paper and the assessment objectives. Time management appears to have been good with there being very few candidates who did not manage to finish the paper. There were relatively few rubric errors or non-responses.

In the 15-mark essay responses the evaluation skills evidenced by some candidates were good, though relatively few candidates developed the full range of points with suitably robust evidence. Most candidates created a debate but a significant number of candidates offered only one-sided responses which cannot score higher than Band 2.

Questions 1 and 2, *Family and Education*, were the most popular questions and in both cases some candidates showed a good grasp of the key theories, concepts and arguments and these candidates often used these to good effect. **Question 3 (*Crime, deviance and social control*)** was the next most popular question with only a minority choosing **Question 4 (*Media*)**. The quality of answers on the media option were noticeably lower than on other options.

Some candidates tended to spend too much time on lower scoring questions, such as the **part (b)** questions, thus not having sufficient time to devote to the higher tariff **part (d)** and **(e)** questions which was detrimental to their overall mark.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Family

- (a) The question was answered correctly by many candidates who linked the term 'step-parent' to the new marriage partner of a parent, i.e. non-biological parent, after a divorce or death of the previous partner. The formation of a reconstituted family was often mentioned. Many candidates achieved two marks by identifying two clear elements, frequently the idea that one parent re-marries and that the second parent is not a blood relation but takes responsibility for the child/children. Candidates who only scored one mark often repeated the term in the question or omitted one of the two core elements.
- (b) The vast majority of candidates correctly identified two types of family, apart from step-families, most frequently providing brief but sufficient development of their points. The most commonly described types of family were the nuclear and the extended family, followed by single parent and same sex families.
- (c) Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of how marriage can vary cross culturally but not all applied their knowledge well to the question. The best answers made three points, each with a cultural contrast indicating different marriage styles in different cultures. For example, contrasting arranged marriage in Pakistan with love marriage in the UK or contrasting Islamic polygamy with the idea of monogamous marriage in Christian culture. Many responses scored in band 1 because they simply described different types of marriage without any cross-cultural contrast. Some candidates discussed intra-cultural marriage which was not applicable to this question.
- (d) Responses generally showed good knowledge of why not all contemporary families are symmetrical though some included a long and unnecessary explanation of what the term 'symmetrical' means. Those students who were clear on the meaning of 'symmetrical' gave excellent answers discussing instrumental and expressive roles, dual burden/triple shift, decision making and domestic violence/control. Many candidates supported these ideas within a framework of feminism and functionalism. However, a number of responses demonstrated a lack of understanding of the terms symmetrical or contemporary.
- (e) There were very mixed responses to this question with some very generic and common sense answers about children being special and cared for in families. The more successful responses included explanation and development of several reasons for the emergence of child-centred families, such as legal changes, fewer children, better medical care, compulsory education, consumerism and the perception of children as innocent. Evaluation of the question tended to be stronger and more conceptually developed with candidates discussing Postman and changing technology, the dark-side of the family, poverty, war, Aries, child-labour and the growth in childless families. Overall, this questions was answered well but responses often lacked sociological concepts.

Section B

Question 2

Education

- (a) A number of candidates described the term 'secondary socialisation' correctly, linking it to learning norms and values after primary socialisation and/or in schools. Where candidates only scored one mark it was usually due to them only giving one correct element of the definition, e.g. only talking about the teaching of norms and values.
- (b) A broad range of answers were acceptable as findings of IQ tests. Most candidates identified the idea that they are a measure of intelligence, that that they can be used to indicate academic potential or to secure places in certain schools. Some alluded to the New Right link between intelligence and ethnicity. A minority of responses focused on exam results rather than IQ tests. Some inferred a link between intelligence and gender which was not creditworthy.

- (c) Functionalist theory was often discussed, often including points about socialisation, social control, role allocation and acquiring knowledge and skills to benefit the workplace. A small number of candidates made excellent reference to Marxist and feminist accounts of the functionality of education for the systems of capitalism and patriarchy. Weaker answers offered common-sense and/or undeveloped points.
- (d) Most candidates identified several reasons for girls performing better than boys in examination results; maturity, role-models, labelling by teachers, different leisure pursuits and boys forming anti-school sub-cultures were the most common ideas seen. Some candidates developed these with reference to the likes of Sharpe, Willis, Mac an Ghaill or McRobbie with accompanying concepts. Weaker responses were more common-sense and less sociological, including ideas of girls being more motivated because they could now attend school and boys being lazy and deviant.
- (e) Many candidates demonstrated a good knowledge of the material barriers faced by some students in education. Most responses were two-sided with the 'for' side of the debate often lacking in concepts but abounding in relevant examples which were duly credited. Common points on this side of the debate focused on a lack of necessary materials such as textbooks, extra tuition or the limitations of state education as opposed to private education. Material factors such as home conditions like cramped housing with a lack of study space also featured. The 'against' side of the argument was often more explicitly sociological with candidates drawing on a good range of explanations such as cultural factors (language, cultural capital and home values), in-school factors (teacher labelling, an ethnocentric curriculum or setting and streaming) or the type of school attended (Rutter). Some candidates offered gender or ethnicity as contributory factors in the case against purely material issues. Many candidates offered a simple, summative conclusion but few developed an effective critical conclusion to their debate.

Section C

Question 3

Crime, Deviance and Social Control

- (a) Candidates demonstrated knowledge of the term 'judicial system' by linking it to a court system, laws, dealing with crime and punishment. Some confusion was seen as a number of responses talked instead about the police which could not be credited.
- (b) Overall, this question was answered well and candidates appropriately described two internet crimes, most frequently hacking, internet fraud, identity theft and cyberbullying. Some candidates did not make explicit connections to the internet, for instance describing just fraud in general, and so could not gain full marks for development.
- (c) This question on how courts deal with crime drew a mixed response. Many candidates wrote one long, undifferentiated answer instead of separating and signalling separate points and hence often scored in band one. More successful answers were organised as a series of discrete points, often linked to different punishments that the court can give e.g. from fines, community service and drug rehabilitation to different custodial sentences. Other credited approaches included the outlining of different aspects of the court procedure such as the work of lawyers, jury and judges.
- (d) It was evident a large number of candidates did not understand what victim surveys were so were discussing policing and recordings of official statistics or talking about self-report studies – such answers could not be credited. Some candidates did discuss clearly sociological criticisms of victim surveys such as the lack of validity caused by victims not telling the truth due to faulty memory, or the idea that the offender is known to them so they do not wish to speak out of fear of reprisal leading to a dark figure of crime. Other creditworthy points that featured included the idea that the sample size may not be wholly representative of the population (for example children sometimes do not feature) and that the surveys offer little evidence of white-collar or sexual crimes and are thus inadequate.
- (e) Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the demands of the question, presenting reasons why prisons may prevent crime as well as arguments against this claim. The better answers focused on issues such as public safety, deterrence and/or rehabilitation on the 'for' side, and reoffending rates, crime within prisons and/or crimes that are not prosecuted, e.g. white-collar

crime, as evaluation points. A few candidates argued that other forms of social control were more efficient in preventing crime which were duly credited. Many responses were well balanced but some presented confused and undeveloped/underdeveloped points which could not be fully credited.

Section D

Question 4

Media

- (a) The definitional question on postmodernism drew a mixed response from the small number of candidates who selected to answer the media option. Some did not define the term correctly at all but some did describe an emphasis on individual choice and the death of the meta-narrative.
- (b) The majority of candidates did not demonstrate understanding of what news values were, thus very few secured marks. Some candidates interpreted the question incorrectly as asking about who determines the content of the media and so gave answers such as journalists and editors. For those who did understand what 'news values' were the most common responses seen were celebrities and negative press or the reporting of negative news such as disasters and war.
- (c) This question focused on how pluralists view the media. Better answers referred to increasing media diversity, audience choice and competition between media companies as core elements of this perspective. Many responses were limited to band 2 and below as they did not include appropriate knowledge or did not develop points made sufficiently.
- (d) This question on why the hypodermic syringe model has been criticised proved challenging. Some candidates correctly linked the model with Bandura's Bobo Doll experiment but spent too long describing this rather than answering the question. Most answers made the criticism that media effects do not have a direct and immediate effect. The best answers used other media effects theories to identify flaws within the hypodermic syringe model itself. The audience selection model and the uses and gratifications model featured in this way. Responses that scored less well tended to lack full development of points, included an insufficient number of points or did not demonstrate an understanding of what the hypodermic syringe model was.
- (e) Few candidates showed understanding of the demands of the question, to evaluate the extent to which patterns of media use are affected by the gender of the audience. A number of responses misinterpreted the question, discussing differences in gender representation instead which could not be credited. For those candidates who did interpret the question correctly, on the 'for' side of the debate points included males being more likely to be 'gamers' than females, that the choice of programme is often gender-based with females drawn to drama, males to action or that males dominate the decision-making process when it comes to what to watch on tv. On the 'against' side there were some accurate references to the digital divide based on social class as being more important or that today individuals have free choice and are not impacted by their gender in what they choose to consume. However few responses included an unpacking of such points in sufficient detail.

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Key messages

- Some candidates write out the question, a definition or an introduction or conclusion when it is not necessary for the question, this wastes time and no additional marks can be gained.
- Responses given to **part (e)** questions need to cover both sides of an argument, a one-sided response limits the marks that can be achieved.
- Some candidates would benefit from practice in organising their answers, e.g. enumerating their points and/or writing in separate paragraphs as required.
- Candidates should have a solid understanding of key terms and be able to clearly define them. This would enable them to not only obtain full marks in **part (a)** questions, but would also help them to understand key terminology in other questions. A definition should aim to include two clear elements.
- Candidates should show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This approach allows candidates to achieve good marks.
- Responses based on common-sense rather than explicit sociological understanding will not be able to achieve full marks.
- Candidates would benefit from spending some time thinking about what the questions are asking and planning answers to those longer questions accordingly before they start to write – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidate's remain focused on the specific demands of the question set.
- Some candidates are not using paragraphs in the longer responses, making it difficult to see where points begin and end. The 'point per paragraph' structure is therefore recommended. Candidates would benefit from developing discrete essay writing skills and techniques for the **part (e)** questions.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use the marks per question as guidance for how much should be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. For example, some candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question worth 6 marks as for a **part (e)** question worth 15.
- Command words are crucial; candidates should be familiar with the requirements of the various command words used.

General comments

The majority of responses to the 15-mark **part (e)** questions considered points both for and against the view in the question. Most also included a conclusion, though these were often brief claims that one side is correct; candidates should be encouraged to give a more balanced overview that makes a clear judgement on the claim in the question.

There were few 'no responses' and few brief answers, suggesting good time management. This clearly benefited candidates in terms of the marks achieved.

Sometimes candidates scored poorly on particular questions because they did not demonstrate the necessary knowledge, at times the key words in the questions were not understood. In particular, self-report studies and cultural capital were not well understood. Questions are always based on the syllabus content, and the syllabus gives a list of key terms and key questions. Candidates thus need to study all of the required content to support their chosen topic options and to be familiar with all the key terms and concepts.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Family

- (a) This was a generally well answered question, with some answers focusing on feminism as a sociological perspective and others on it as a social movement. Supporting points were made about patriarchy and seeking equality in society.
- (b) This question about alternatives to marriage was generally well answered, with responses often focusing on cohabitation, singlehood and communes.
- (c) Better answers to this question demonstrated an understanding of the concept of an ageing population in terms of population structure and discussed how this affects family life. Many answers looked at the roles, both positive and negative, of grandparents and at multi-generation families. Interesting points about the pivot generation were also often well discussed. Some answers did not demonstrate an understanding of the term 'ageing population' and thus were not able to gain credit.
- (d) This question was generally well answered with most candidates offering several reasons why people stay in empty shell marriages, such as financial reasons, fear of social disapproval or to protect children. Religion and cultural diversity were well used here. Some otherwise good answers lacked sociological terms and concepts – one of the qualifying factors for scoring in the top band.
- (e) This was generally well answered with most candidates making points on both sides of the debate using relevant sociological concepts, studies and theories to support their points. Feminism and its associated ideas were particularly well used. Some candidates, however, lost focus on the question by discussing general family roles rather than conjugal roles specifically. It is vital to ensure that the specific wording of the question is adhered to.

Section B

Question 2

Education

- (a) Most candidates understood the term 'meritocracy' and explained it clearly, in terms of hard work and talent leading to rewards.
- (b) The term 'cultural capital' was not well understood by most candidates. A few candidates answered this well, referring, for example, to access to books, visits to museums and galleries and to having understanding of how education systems work. Others mentioned, in general terms, parents encouraging children (a very partial response) whilst many did not make relevant points.
- (c) Candidates typically demonstrated an understanding of the key concept and idea in the question, but some did not go beyond a simple point about members of anti-school sub-cultures breaking school rules. Better answers discussed ideas such as Marxist concepts of resistance, self-fulfilling prophecies and status frustration.
- (d) Responses often demonstrated a good, basic understanding of the idea of labelling, but did not always extend this to a series of developed sociological points. Better answers often discussed how labelling could be positive or negative and how labelling can affect different social groups according to gender, ethnicity and social class. Some interesting sociological examples were also seen and used well, such as Willis' 'The Lads' and The Black Sisters.
- (e) Many candidates had a range of knowledge that they applied successfully to this question. It was typically well understood, with many candidates using sociological terms, theories and concepts. Many answers used theories well; Marxism and feminism were seen being used successfully on both sides of the debate. Concepts such as the hidden curriculum, deference to authority and inculcation into patriarchal norms and values were seen in the strongest answers. Some very good sociological knowledge was used here.

Section C

Question 3

Crime, Deviance and Social Control

- (a) This was generally understood well, with candidates typically basing answers on punishment for rule breaking and often giving a well-chosen example to support, e.g. prison.
- (b) Many candidates did not demonstrate understanding of what a self-report study is, with some not realising that this was a question about sociological research into crime, rather than something involving the police and courts. Other responses talked instead about victim surveys. Better answers concentrated on the inability to know whether the respondent was telling the truth and the influence of peer pressure on exaggerated answers amongst some social groups.
- (c) Better answers usually gave points based on different agencies of social control, usually the family, schools, peers and the media, although formal agencies were also credited. Those that took a more general approach, not naming agencies, were often limited to just one or two points. Candidates needed to focus specifically on females within their answers to be awarded top band, some did this well through examples such as different gendered socialisation/social control.
- (d) This question was generally well answered with candidates making a range of points including the less visible nature of some corporate crime, the difficulties of assigning responsibility and the ability of the powerful to evade prosecution. Answers often confused white collar and corporate crime, but these were accepted through benefit of the doubt. Marxist theory was particularly well used here.
- (e) There was some good knowledge seen of types of policing and of police tactics, such as surveillance and targeting used to control crime. Military, community and zero tolerance policing were well discussed by some candidates. In evaluation, candidates talked about the ineffectiveness of the police through examples such as BLM, lack of successful prosecutions (e.g. for domestic and white-collar crimes) and police bias, e.g. institutional racism.

Section D

Question 4

Media

- (a) Very few candidates attempted questions from the Media topic. The term 'media culture' was not well understood and reinforces the need for familiarity with all elements of the syllabus within the selected options.
- (b) Some answers seemed unfamiliar with the term 'traditional media'; better answers usually named and expanded on newspapers, advertising and/or television.
- (c) A few good answers were seen, usually based on examples of film and television characters and personalities that allowed the candidate to demonstrate the more positive representations of disability now seen in the media.
- (d) There was generally good, basic knowledge of Marxist views on ownership of the media and media bias affecting content. The role of power and influence was well considered here.
- (e) This question was found to be accessible and was well answered, with candidates making points on both sides of the debate and using some concepts such as sensitisation and catharsis well. The hypodermic syringe model was also well integrated to support the 'for' side of the debate, as were several well-chosen examples.