

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12 Paper 12

Key messages

- Encourage candidates to have a clear knowledge and understanding of both ethical issues (**Question 1(b)**) and the strengths and limitations of using triangulation in sociological research (**Question 1(e)**).
- Candidates must focus on discussing effects if the question explicitly demands it. For example, in **Question 2(c)** and **3(c)** some were not able to achieve full credit on points that did not follow through when discussing how *primary socialisation affects gender roles* or how *poverty affects individuals*.
- Many candidates faced difficulties with **Question 1(e)** due to a poor grasp of the strengths and limitations of using triangulation in sociological research.
- Candidates should practice trying to 'decode' and understand the core issue at the heart of a question to stay focused and achieve more marks. For example, many candidates misunderstood the nature of 'ageism' in **Question 3(d)** and changing social classes in **3(e)**.

General comments

Candidates showed a good level of engagement with the question paper and the assessment objectives. All candidates completed the compulsory **Section A** on Theory and Methods. They then chose to answer the questions in either **Section B** (Culture, Identity and Socialisation) or **Section C** (Social Inequality). Roughly two thirds of candidates chose to answer questions in **Section B** and about a third chose **Section C**.

Time management appears to have been good, with very few candidates not finishing the paper. There were some 'no responses' seen on several questions, notably the essay in **Question 1(g)** (positivism) and the essay **Question 2(e)** (informal agencies of social control). Very few rubric errors were seen.

Some candidates showed an impressive knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, ideas and theories. Not all were able to apply this knowledge consistently to the question, particularly in extended responses. On questions where the use of concepts was more challenging, some candidates used relevant examples to good effect and were given credit for doing so. In essay responses the evaluation skills evidenced by some candidates were good, and many were able to offer a two-sided response. The research methods unit was challenging for many candidates, though the technique for answering the data response **Question 1(c)** and the methods evaluation **Questions 1(d)** and **1(e)** showed some improvement.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Theory and Methods

Question 1

- (a) The opening source-based question asked candidates to identify two settings where the interviews took place. Almost all candidates were able to achieve full marks by correctly identifying two from: local parks, participants' homes or coffee shops. Occasionally, London was given as an answer but this was not creditworthy because, whilst the samples were all based there, London was not one of the 'settings' for the interview given in the source.
- (b) The 2-mark question asked candidates to identify two ethical issues sociologists should consider when doing research. Some responses gained full marks but included too much detail for an 'identify' question. Not all responses were able to score full marks here. There was a long list of acceptable answers, and the most popular correct ones were: no deception, informed consent, no harm (emotional or physical) and privacy/confidentiality. Some candidates did not seem to

understand what an ethical issue is, and appeared to guess, giving answers such as reliability/validity or the Hawthorne Effect. A few candidates gave no response.

- (c) In the 4-mark source analysis question, candidates were asked to use the source to describe two reasons the data gathered might be accurate. The best answers clearly identified two aspects from the source that might lead the data from the research to be accurate. The fact that the researcher used unstructured interviews was a common answer and, in fact, candidates were able to make a number of different points here. For example, some argued that the conversational nature of the interview, using open questions, meant that the respondents could go into depth and detail making for a fuller and more valid picture of their experiences as stay-at-home fathers. Others pointed to the flexible format where the researcher could probe further when needed and asked additional questions based on the fathers' responses, allowing for more detail and clarification. Aside from the method itself, many responses focused on the fact that interviews were conducted three times over a two year period, allowing for changes in the fathers' experiences to be discussed giving an overall more accurate picture. Alternatively, the fact that each interview lasted for about 2 hours each was also correctly seen as a good indicator that the researcher would have been able to gather much qualitative data, enhancing validity of the findings. Some correctly identified the idea that the researcher had been a stay-at-home father himself as a possible reason why data gathered may be accurate, but then did not link this to the ability to relate to what other fathers were saying and empathise with them, suggesting a richer understanding of their situation. Responses which scored 2 marks frequently only identified two points from the source but did not develop them using the candidate's own knowledge or developed only one correct point. A minority of answers could not achieve marks. This was due to points not linking to the source material or responses that were simply incorrect, for example answers that talked about sampling or reliability etc. did not link to accuracy as such.
- (d) This question produced a mixed response. It asked candidates to describe two limitations of using focus groups in sociological research. The most successful answers were able to identify something about the focus group method and then went on to briefly describe *why or how* it could be a limitation. Successful responses referenced the fact that participants are in a group together which may mean that some people dominate discussion whilst others are left out or that some participants may give socially desirable answers in front of others, inhibiting validity. Other responses concentrated on the presence of the researcher and argued for a possible interviewer effect or interviewer bias, both of which will lower the validity of data gathered. A few responses focused on the structure of the focus group, pointing out that data is likely to be low in reliability as the group dynamic and format of the focus group will be hard to replicate in order to check findings. Others argued that they are difficult for researchers to manage due to having to keep different personalities engaged but also in check so that the groups stays on track. A few candidates argued that they can be time-consuming or expensive though these were seldom well developed.
- (e) This question asked candidates to describe two strengths and two weaknesses of using triangulation in sociological research. It should be approached in the same way as **Question 1(d)**, identifying an aspect or something about using triangulation and briefly describing *why or how* it could be a strength or a limitation in research. Some answers began with a definition of triangulation as the use of more than one method in research but then were unable to move beyond this to discuss strengths and limitations. Answers are expected to be concise, but the strengths and limitations need to be clear and this was not always the case. Popular creditworthy strengths included the idea that it allows for researchers to gather both qualitative and quantitative data allowing for both statistics and the reasons behind those statistics. Others argued that triangulation allows for greater reliability and validity due to being able to integrate positivist and interpretivist methods. Further, some responses identified that triangulation is useful to cross-check findings and then gave an example such as using observation to check the data from interviews. In terms of limitations, many candidates pointed out that triangulation may be difficult or confusing for researchers, due to the complexity of having to manage different types of data from different theoretical approaches. Many responses featured problems of time and cost though few were able to successfully develop these points. Simply asserting that triangulation is more time-consuming and expensive because more than one method is being used was not enough for full marks. Those that were able to pick up the second mark for such points invariably used an example to support their point. For example, using both a survey and unstructured interview would take time in terms of analysing the data and bringing it together to form a conclusion. The cost point would need to be linked, for example, to the need to employ specialist researchers to conduct some methods such as unstructured interviews or focus groups. There were several 'no responses' on this question.

- (f) The 10-mark question required candidates to explain why questionnaires lack validity. A good knowledge of questionnaires was seen by many though not all answers showed an ability to develop points in detail with reference to validity. This was an extended response question and required a minimum of three well developed points – of paragraph length – to score in band 3 (8 – 10 marks), with the quality of conceptuality and development being the discriminator within the band. The question proved challenging for many candidates and most answers scored in band 2 (4 – 7 marks). This was often due to points not being sufficiently developed in detail. The best answers made points linked to the use of closed or pre-coded questions limiting respondents' ability to express themselves, the resulting quantitative data lacking depth, detail and individuals' reasons. Other points focused on the lack of researcher presence in self-completion and postal questionnaires, which often leads to people misunderstanding questions, rushing or not taking the questions seriously, hence giving false answers. A few responses identified the low response rate of questionnaires but this was often not well developed in terms of validity. Some candidates spent time describing strengths, rather than explaining why they may lack validity.
- (g) The 15-mark essay question focused on evaluating the extent to which positivism is the best approach to sociological research. Some candidates were well prepared to focus on the classic debate between positivism and interpretivism and examiners saw some good quality responses. The best responses were able to achieve level 4 (13 – 15 marks) by identifying and developing a minimum of six points for and against the view, drawing on sociological language throughout. Most candidates understood what a positivist approach involves and showed good conceptual knowledge. The key to success here was not simply to describe the 'scientific' approach to sociological research, but to break positivism down into its core strengths such as its focus on objectivity, its ability to provide reliable quantitative data and gain an understanding of society from a large scale or macro view. Each of these points were then fully developed in terms of why this means that positivism is the best approach to use. In terms of evaluation some candidates chose to criticise aspects of positivism, arguing for example that objectivity is not really possible, that sociology is not a science as people are free and conscious beings who do not always act in 'law-like' ways, or that quantitative data fails to access the meanings and motivations behind social behaviour. The most common approach to evaluation was to juxtapose the merits of interpretivism as a better approach to use. Here, the most popular answers included that interpretivism can offer an understanding of the individual and their mindset, often linking to qualitative methods of data collection such as in-depth interviews or participant observation which yields data that is much higher in validity than data from positivist methods. A few responses attempted to use functionalism, Marxism or structuralism on the 'against' side of the argument, showing confusion. Some candidates attempted to use feminism as an alternative, though such attempts often simply described the feminist view of society rather than linking it explicitly to research methodology. Some responses were brief with only one point for and against which inevitably limited the marks to band 1 (1 – 4 marks) or the lower end of band 2 (5 – 8 marks). A small number of candidates evaluated interpretivism which drew no credit, mixed-up positivism and interpretivism or interpreted positivism as being positive about research, thus showing a basic misunderstanding of the term and the question.

Section B: Culture, identity and socialisation

Question 2

- (a) The 2-mark definitional question asked candidates to describe what is meant by the term 'diversity.' Answers that were successful in achieving two marks identified diversity in terms of cultural differences within or between society, with many responses citing different norms, values or customs as examples or different groups such as ethnicities and religious groups. Some responses showed some confusion between diversity and multiculturalism, no credit was available for references to groups living in harmony with each other. Responses that scored only 1 mark were invariably brief, for example simply alluding to differences in society.
- (b) The 4-mark question required candidates to describe two examples of peer pressure. No credit was given for definitions of peer pressure because the question asked for examples. Some successful responses focused on describing negative strategies such as ostracism or positive techniques such as praise and group acceptance, sometimes within a specific context. For example, ostracising someone in the friendship group who refused to do something deviant, such as smoking, when everyone else was doing it. The best answers explicitly integrated the idea that the pressure brings conformity. Responses that simply described a scenario such as influencing someone to join a youth sub-culture only achieved 1 mark. This is because the actual mode of peer

pressure needed further description, whether this 'influence' came in the form of persuasion, bullying or threats etc. In a few instances, examples were linked to the family or teachers, rather than peers, and hence did not achieve credit.

- (c) Candidates seemed to find the 6-mark question challenging. It asked candidates to explain how primary socialisation affects children's gender roles. The majority of candidates could describe the importance of primary socialisation and the key techniques used by parents to form gender identities in their children. So, there were frequent references to Oakley's ideas about canalisation, manipulation, verbal appellation and the use of differential activities. Many responses were confined to band 1 (1 – 3 marks) because they did not explain how such techniques *affect* children's gender identity. Thus, an answer describing canalisation, how girls are given Barbie dolls whilst boys are given construction sets to play with, only answer half of the question. To gain full credit such an answer needed to then say that by using such toys, parents are effectively instructing girls about the importance of appearance and being attractive, whilst boys are being taught that they are the builders and problem-solvers of the future. The best answers addressed both aspects of primary socialisation *and* the effect they have on gender identity.
- (d) The 8-mark question asked candidates to explain why ethnicity affects an individual's social identity. To achieve marks in band 3 (7 – 8 marks), candidates needed to develop at least three points conceptually and in detail. The best answers discussed how ethnicity can affect social identity negatively due to labelling, prejudice and discrimination in various areas of society. Many points were well expressed, conceptual and evidenced; for example, discussing how Black people in the USA continue to be stereotyped as deviant and are therefore targeted and treated unfairly by police and the criminal justice system. Other creditworthy points looked more positively at how one's cultural heritage enriches an individual's life through customs, festivals, the language shared, traditional foods and clothing styles. Weaker answers made fewer points in less detail, often only partially unpacking the point. Answers which only made one developed point were limited to band 1 (1 – 3 marks). A small number of responses showed no understanding of the term 'ethnicity' and confused it was social class or gender identity.
- (e) The 15-mark essay question focused on the extent to which informal agencies of social control ensure conformity. Many candidates made a good attempt at this essay and produced two-sided debates. Most were able to correctly identify several informal agencies of social control such as the family, education, peers, religion, workplace and media. Most answers focused on describing how these agencies use a range of positive and negative sanctions to achieve conformity. For example, there were frequent discussions of examples of family punishments, techniques used in peer pressure, the way schools use rewards and sanctions such as detention and the workplace use bonuses and warnings from the boss to keep workers in line. Aside from sanctions, other creditworthy points included the teaching of norms and values in primary socialisation by parents who have an emotional attachment with children which enhances their effectiveness. Many responses featured references to the hidden curriculum in schools. In terms of the latter, there were some impressive references to Marxist ideas about schools brainwashing working class children into false consciousness so that they move smoothly from school into being a docile workforce for the capitalist elite. In evaluation, some candidates argued that some of these agents can be ineffective. For example, dysfunctional families may inadequately socialise their children or children may rebel at school and join an 'anti-school subculture,' showing how teachers and school systems can be ineffective in producing conformity. Another approach seen was to argue that formal agencies of social control are far more effective because they offer more serious, and potentially life-changing, sanctions that deter people from non-conforming social behaviours. Discussion of the police and the court system were common in this regard. Most responses seen were in band 2 (5 – 8 marks) or 3 (9 – 12 marks) showing a range of points which were often simply descriptive and/or narrowly focused on sanctions.

Section C: Social Inequality

Question 3

- (a) Many candidates answered the definitional question on 'equal opportunities' well. Successful responses described people receiving the same or fair chances in society. Some responses offered an example such as legislation against gender, ethnicity or other discrimination or universal and free education. Answers which only scored 1 mark may have referred to fairness or a similar idea but repeated either the term 'equal' or the term 'opportunities.' A few answers showed a lack of understanding or were too vague to credit.

- (b) There was a mixed response to the question which asked candidates to describe two examples of patriarchy in society. A broad range of successful points were seen. Some wrote about patriarchy in the family in terms of domestic violence, the triple shift and power, decision-making and authority being linked with males. Other points focused on male dominance in the public sphere of politics, where most leaders are male, and the workplace where males occupy the most important positions and women experience the glass ceiling and lower pay for similar work to males. A few responses showed no creditworthy knowledge of what patriarchy is.
- (c) This 6-mark question asked candidates to explain how poverty affects individuals. To achieve 5-6 marks candidates needed to describe three points. Most candidates were able to identify some impacts of poverty, often listing points such as a lack of basic necessities, and the impact on individual's health, education and job prospects. Other common points included the psychological effects of poverty, such as the development of a culture of poverty and its associated values such as fatalism, which often leads to a poverty trap and even a cycle of poverty for individuals and their families. A few candidates made successful links to sociological theory using perspectives such as Marxism, most commonly. A number of responses presented generic, common-sense arguments, such as 'no food or housing' that were not sufficiently developed and/or sociologically engaged to score higher than band 1 or the bottom end of band 2. A few responses focused more on reasons for poverty rather than its effects.
- (d) The 8-mark question asked candidates to explain why ageism affects the elderly. It proved challenging for many candidates. The best answers discussed how the elderly may be seen as a burden to their families and society in general, as well as the inequalities they may face in the workplace, for example being forced to retire or facing discrimination by employers in terms of promotion. A few points focused in on derogatory representations and labelling of the elderly in the media. Some candidates misunderstood the term 'ageism' (discrimination on the basis of age), interpreting it to mean simply 'ageing.' Thus, many responses described problems faced by the elderly due to the ageing process, such as health and physical deterioration, rather than ageism specifically. A few responses focused points on ageism against younger people which could not be credited. Many responses did not develop their points sufficiently and/or provided answers which lacked range/clarity and thus did not score higher than band 2.
- (e) The essay question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which social classes are changing in modern industrial society. As with **Question 3(d)**, many responses misinterpreted the question, with discussions focusing on people being able to change their social class, i.e. social mobility, rather than whether the social classes themselves are changing. For this reason, many of the arguments put forward could only be given partial credit. The best answers discussed the changes in the upper and, more commonly, in the middle and working class through evidence for embourgeoisement and proletarianization. Some responses also focused on the existence of the underclass, using their point either to show a change (e.g. a growth in the underclass) or to suggest that as poverty continues, there is no real change. Both approaches were creditable if clearly argued and applied. Another successful approach was to use postmodernism to argue that classes are becoming less distinct or even disappearing. Evaluation, where present, tended to be more effective, with many using the Marxist argument that the upper class or bourgeoisie still wield the most economic and political power due to the very nature of capitalism. Less successful answers tended to be both brief, sometimes confused and lacked sociological development, often achieving marks in band 1 or the lower end of band 2. Overall, very few responses scored in band 4 or the top of band 3, largely as a result of misunderstanding the demands of the question.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/22
Paper 22

Key messages

- Candidates do not need to write an introductory paragraph in any of the questions, responses should focus on the question from the beginning to maximise marks.
- Many candidates do not write in paragraphs, making it difficult for Examiners to differentiate between points and award for range. It would be beneficial for candidates to write in paragraph form, particularly in the banded **Questions (c), (d) and (e)**.
- On definitional questions avoid repeating the term being defined e.g. IQ tests in **Question 2(a)**.
- Some responses for **Questions (b) and (c)** are overly long. Responses here can be quite short – particularly **(b)** – perhaps a couple of sentences per point. A couple of words, however, does not meet the requirement to ‘describe’ in **(b)** questions or to explain in **(c)** questions. Understanding the requirements of the command words used is crucial to candidate success and something that can be practised by centres and candidates.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read, and then reread, the question before attempting to answer to avoid losing marks and not focusing on the specifics of the question. For example, in **Question 1(e)** the question required candidates to discuss whether women’s roles *in the family* had changed, rather than whether they had changed in wider society and some candidates missed this aspect. Similarly in **Question 4(d)** many candidates did not notice ‘the news’ as a key aspect of the question.
- In questions asking about social change of some kind, candidates are advised not to spend too long talking about the past in a descriptive way, e.g. in **Questions 1(c), 1(e) and 2(c)**.
- Points in **Questions (d) and (e)** should be developed more fully, sociologically evidenced and always be in paragraphs. These questions are looking for depth, detail and complexity in the responses.
- Candidates should demonstrate their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. This approach allowed a lot of candidates to achieve good marks in this examination series. Some candidates could only score lower marks as their answers tended to be based on common sense rather than Sociology.

General comments

In general, candidates showed a good knowledge of the subject matter, often integrating sociological conceptuality and, in many cases, a range of theory into their answers. **Family** and **Education** were the most popular questions followed by **Crime, deviance and social control**. Rubric errors were minimal and most candidates appeared to manage their time well.

Many candidates used relevant contemporary, global and localised examples alongside the more traditional ‘textbook’ evidence to justify and substantiate several of the points made. This demonstrated both sociological knowledge and the ability to apply sociological concepts and theory to the real world. Few rubric errors were seen this examination session, allowing most candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number, or incorrectly numbered, their answers. Candidates should be aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

In the **part (a)** question, candidates should include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a useful way of adding a second element to an answer and are thus to be encouraged.

Part (b) needs **two** distinctly different points with some development – candidates should separate these and label them clearly.

In **part (c)** questions, candidates should make sure there are more than two sociological points made, evidenced and developed.

For **part (d)**, candidates should adopt the same approach as for **(c)** but develop ideas further, consider more range and ensure concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts, development, quality of response and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** question.

In terms of the 15 mark **part (e)** question, candidates should organise their answers into paragraphs and develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant. Clear signalling of the points and the arguments that are being used to support (i.e. for or against) is also good practice. Responses should aim to include three developed points for and three developed points against the claim in the question. There also needs to be a well-focused conclusion that makes a supported judgement on the claim in the question. Each point made should be directly focused upon what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates are choosing to answer the 15-mark questions first to make sure that they do not run out of time, this worked well for several candidates but ultimately this is the candidates' own decision to make.

The majority of candidates answered **Questions 1** (Family) and **2** (Education). Fewer candidates answered **Question 3** (Crime and deviance) and only a very small number tackled **Question 4** (Media). The optionality choices were less pronounced in the 0495 variant than in 2251.

Comments on specific questions

Section A: Family

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates were able to achieve full marks on the definition of 'boomerang family'. Most successful answers referred to adult children who left the family and later returned, with some citing reasons such as financial issues, divorce or difficulties in finding a job etc. Some candidates did not understand the term and referred instead to unconnected ideas such as families that had split up, the cereal packet family or cohabiting families. It is essential that specification terms are fully understood by candidates.
- (b) Responses were generally good to this question asking candidates to describe two ways families can be negative for its members. A wide range of answers were credited, including references to domestic violence, child abuse/neglect, family conflict more broadly and dysfunctional families where children are not taught the appropriate norms and values. Weaker responses often left one or both points undeveloped or only offered one way.
- (c) The question on how family functions are changing drew a variable response. The most successful band 2 answers understood the idea of 'family function' and were able to describe changes such as the socialisation role switching more to kindergartens and schools, the care of the elderly now often being done by care homes and hospitals and the reproductive function now being affected by the rise of DINK families and new reproductive technologies. Some candidates focused their answers almost wholly on the changing roles of family members, such as the husband and wife, rather than functions of the family as an institution. Such points were often tangential to the question and these answers often scored in band 1. The importance of careful reading of the question cannot be reiterated strongly enough.
- (d) There was a mixed response to the question on why there has been a rise in the divorce rate in modern industrial societies. The best answers clearly focused on factors which have caused a *rise* in divorce, rather than generic factors which might lead to divorce such as infidelity or conflict in the relationship. Popular creditworthy answers included the idea of secularisation and/or more liberal social attitudes making divorce more socially acceptable, particularly for women, and changing divorce laws which have made divorce more accessible and perhaps cheaper than before. The best responses made three well developed points, with each point explaining why the rate may have changed i.e. risen, linking to a corresponding change in society. Less successful answers tended to focus on vague and/or generic reasons for divorce without linking these to the specific question about rising rates.
- (e) This 15 mark essay question required candidates to discuss the extent to which female roles in the family have changed. Many candidates were well prepared to discuss how women entering the workforce has resulted in changes to their role and position within the family. Some answers used

studies to very good effect. Common answers included women as sole breadwinners/matrifocal families, dual working families in which there now exist joint conjugal roles (Wilmott and Young) or even role reversal with women passing over their traditional childcare responsibilities to a 'househusband'. Others referred to the emergence of DINK families who choose not to have children and prioritise their careers and one another instead. The emergence of same-sex families in which female roles are more negotiated were also well discussed by some candidates. In evaluation, many made good use of Oakley's criticism of the idea that joint conjugal roles are now common when in reality many women still had a dual burden or even triple shift. The continued presence of patriarchy within the family was often explored via the idea that women are still expected to defer to men in the most important family decisions and women continuing to be seen as subordinate – through evidence of domestic violence for example. Another common point focused on the continuing socialisation of females and males into gender stereotypes within the family, in effect preparing females for a life of servitude. Many candidates made good use of concepts such as manipulation and canalisation. The best answers developed points in distinct paragraphs and drew upon sociological concepts consistently throughout. Less successful answers tended to be short and simple in nature with limited development. A few candidates oriented points towards males rather than females or discussed the changing role of women in society with little discussion of the family context and such responses rarely got out of band 1.

Section B: Education

Question 2

- (a) When defining 'IQ tests' many candidates were able to score both marks by referring to questions or an examination which aims to measure the intelligence quotient or level of a person's intelligence. Sometimes candidates simply repeated the word 'test' in the question and thus scored only one mark (partial) for successfully linking them to intelligence.
- (b) This 4 mark question asked candidates to describe two types of schools that select students. The most frequently seen responses identified clearly selective schools such as private, grammar, faith and single-sex schools. To achieve the second mark per point, candidates had to briefly describe their selective nature e.g. private schools select on the basis of the ability to pay fees and/or pass an interview, grammar schools select candidates via an entrance exam etc. A number of candidates used the term 'selective schools' to identify the type of school and while correctly describing how the students may be selected, such answers could not be awarded full marks as a particular type of school was not accurately stated. Some candidates wrongly identified state or comprehensive schools as selective which could not be credited.
- (c) The 6 mark question asked candidates to explain how schools socialise students and was answered well. Common answers included the teaching of skills and knowledge (via the official curriculum) in preparation for future job roles and the teaching of key social norms and values via the hidden curriculum. The latter also covered the use of social controls by teachers via positive and negative sanctions, again as a way of preparing children for acceptance of rules and laws in wider society. A few candidates made reference to the gendered curriculum. Many candidates gave good examples of the various sanctions used in schools and a few drew effectively on functionalist, Marxist and feminist theory. Answers that were less successful often did not fully develop points or focused on vague points linked to students being encouraged to bond or mix socially in class and at school events. Some candidates discussed students socialising rather than focusing on the sociological process of socialisation. Such answers could not move out of band 1.
- (d) The 8 mark question asks candidates to explain why students from some social classes achieve better examination results than students from other social classes. Most candidates, though not all, were able to focus their answers on a comparison of the educational experience of different named social classes such as the working/lower class as opposed to the middle/upper/higher class. In order to achieve full credit, points had to refer to *examination results or educational achievement* rather than simply discussing educational experiences, advantages and disadvantages. The most commonly seen points linked differences in access to educational materials or cultural capital, home factors such as a suitable quiet study space and linguistic factors such as the idea that middle class children achieve better results because they are able to use the elaborated code more effectively than working class children. In general, answers drew upon a good range of points. Whether an answer scored band 2 or band 3 depended on the quality of development of a minimum of three points as well as the level of conceptual engagement. Most candidates scored marks in band 2 (4 – 6 marks), often by making three or more points but with perhaps only partial

development in some points. Answers that scored in band 1 (1 – 3 marks) often only made one point or made several points but did not properly link them to different social classes or were non-sociological in their focus.

- (e) The 15 mark essay style question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which the functionalist view of education is correct. Most answers showed some knowledge of functionalism and its key ideas and theorists, and the best answers were well balanced with some complex theoretical sophistication. There were intelligent references to Durkheim's idea of education as the transmitter of norms and values leading to the value consensus needed for social stability. Other answers discussed Parsons' idea of schools as meritocracies and/or Davis and Moore's idea of role allocation and school's role in preparing children for the world of work through the teaching of knowledge and skills. In evaluation, many turned to Marxism and feminism for inspiration. Answers that used Marxist theory made use of ideas such as Bowles and Gintis' correspondence theory, Althusser's view of schools as the purveyors of capitalist ideologies and the socialisation of workers into docility and subservience to their future bourgeois masters. Those who argued from a feminist perspective drew attention to the persistence of a gendered curriculum and different teacher expectations for boys and girls. Most candidates were able to score in at least band 2, if not higher. Responses which scored less well tended to make fewer points with minimal development, often showing a weak or confused understanding of the functionalist view of education.

Section C: Crime, deviance and social control

Question 3

- (a) The majority of the candidates showed some understanding of the meaning of the term 'rehabilitation' and were able to gain partial or full marks. The strongest responses included two aspects— for example referring to the idea of someone undergoing a process of reform or re-socialisation as punishment for deviant or criminal behaviour. Weaker responses usually only included a partial element e.g. addiction treatments. A few candidates did not understand the term at all and so did not score any marks.
- (b) This question asked candidates to describe two limitations of official crime statistics and drew a good response from candidates. Commonly seen answers included the inability to uncover the dark figure of crime due to the failure of the public to report crimes for a variety of reasons. Some candidates used different reasons such as the shame attached to sexual crime and companies who do not report crimes by employees due to reputational damage. Others pointed out that the police sometimes do not record crimes, for example because it is seen as too trivial or there is little hope of catching the perpetrator. The other most common response was that official crime statistics come in the form of quantitative data which, whilst useful in discerning patterns, gives no understanding as to why some people commit crimes. Some candidates did less well on this question due to identifying correct points but not describing them.
- (c) This question required candidates to explain how informal agencies of social control make people conform. The best answers focused three or more points on different agencies such as the family, peers, education, media, workplace or religion. Candidates then needed to discuss examples of how these agencies achieve conformity via processes such as primary socialisation (family) or the hidden curriculum (education). An obvious route to take was to focus on positive and negative sanctions and many candidates did this successfully, often linking to the workplace or religion. Candidates who scored in band 1 tended to leave points undeveloped or made only one point or discussed formal agents of social control.
- (d) The question as to why community sentencing is an effective way of dealing with crime drew a mixed response. Some candidates clearly understood the term 'community sentencing' as non-custodial punishment and made reference to tasks such as cleaning graffiti, doing other work for the community, being subject to a curfew or wearing a tag. These types of sentences were then, in the best answers, discussed in terms of what made them effective, particularly in terms of rehabilitation and re-socialisation. Commonly seen responses included the idea that individuals serving such punishments were often highly visible (perhaps wearing distinctive clothing) which brought embarrassment and shame, or that offenders may learn new skills or feel a sense of responsibility after having repaired the damage they themselves had done. Whilst many candidates made multiple points, these were often only partially developed. A deeper sociological understanding is required in the (d) questions. Some candidates misunderstood the term

'community sentencing' and assumed it referred to sentences handed down by the community itself.

- (e) Most candidates were able to produce several points on each side of the debate about the extent to which masculinity is the best explanation for crime. On the 'for' side, common points were the linkage between hegemonic masculinity and violent crimes, the idea that boys are socialised to value toughness and struggle to deal with emotions like anger, which can spill out in violent criminal acts. Some candidates discussed how this could lead to domestic violence or other misogynistic crimes. Other candidates made reference to the link between masculinity and the breadwinner role and argued that when males cannot fulfil this role, they may turn to crime to provide for their family. In evaluation, there were very good opportunities for candidates to demonstrate a wide and detailed knowledge of competing explanations for crime. These included labelling theory, Cohen's concept of status frustration, Merton's strain theory and Cloward and Ohlin's illegitimate opportunity theory. Other candidates argued that some strains of masculinity actually prevented crime, such as the urge to protect those weaker and vulnerable members of society. Also popular were discussions of age, ethnicity and social class factors as better explanations for criminal behaviour. In general, most candidates wrote a simple conclusion and were able to score marks in at least band two, if not band three.

Section D: Media

Question 4

- (a) This definitional question asked candidates to describe what is meant by the term 'sensationalism'. Relatively few candidates gained both marks. Examiners were able to reward references to the idea that media stories can be exaggerated or written in a way to excite and attract audiences. Candidates were often limited to one mark for expressing part of the definition. A few responses showed no understanding of the term or left the question unanswered.
- (b) This question asked candidates to describe two media stereotypes of young people. It proved to be a relatively accessible question with popular answers including young people being represented negatively as immature and irresponsible, rebellious and deviant, the latter often being described via gangs or youth sub-cultures. A few responses featured stereotypes of children as innocent and in need of protection. In general, few candidates gave media-based examples, simply citing general social stereotypes rather than those found online or in TV or film. Those who scored less well tended to give vague descriptions or left identified points undeveloped.
- (c) The question on how the media is controlled drew the full range of answers in terms of quality. The best answers made three developed points in three separate paragraphs, often starting with a clear identification of processes such as censorship or propaganda, or groups such as governments, media conglomerates or others involved in the day to day control of media. Some interesting examples were seen of the use of political propaganda or state control of media in countries such as North Korea where the internet is tightly controlled as a form of social control of the population. A few candidates referenced Marxist theory and the role of the media in promoting capitalist ideologies, or the view that consumers now exert some control due to greater interactivity of new media and the emergence of phenomena such as citizen journalism. Candidates who had clearly studied the media topic were often able to show good conceptual knowledge. Less successful responses generally made few points and did not explain them in any level of detail.
- (d) The question on why bias in the news might affect powerful groups proved a challenge for some candidates. Powerful groups discussed were males, the rich/bourgeoisie, governments or the ethnic majority. Many candidates were not able to do this clearly and instead spoke in generic terms about 'powerful groups'. This was still credited but it was often hard to evidence range. Creditworthy points seen included the ability of powerful groups to shape how they themselves are represented in news stories, i.e. in positive terms which bolstered their power. Others looked at how media owners or governments (in state-controlled news outlets) may seek to portray their adversaries in negative terms. References were made to strategies such as media-fuelled exaggeration, moral panics, stereotypes and scandals as ways that powerful groups can boost their own power. The vast majority of answers scored in band 2 with weaker responses making fewer developed points.
- (e) The essay style question focused on the extent to which the media has been changed by the creation of the internet. Some very good responses were seen where candidates showcased some

impressive knowledge, particularly of new and social media. A common point seen was the gradual replacement of traditional media by new media such as podcasts, social media, vlogs and blogs etc. Other points included the greater accessibility of products such as news online, the explosion of interactivity that has taken place via citizen journalism and social networks, and the now more pluralistic and democratic media environments where different voices and perspectives flourish. In evaluation, many responses focused on the idea that the censorship and propaganda remained pervasive features of the media landscape, that those who control the media can still influence and bias content or even spread fake news. Some responses pointed out that due to the digital divide, there remains a market for old media. As with other media questions, those who knew their material performed very well and were able to achieve marks towards the top of band 3 or even band 4. Less successful responses were typically short, perhaps only making one or two vague points.