

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12 Research Methods, Identity and Inequality

Key messages

- In **Questions 1 (a)(ii)** and **(a)(iii)** the same technique should be used for answering both questions. Firstly, identify an element from *within the source itself* and, secondly, *clearly* explain why it is useful (**1(a)(ii)**) or problematic (**1(a)(iii)**) for studying or understanding *the topic in the question*. When using words like validity, representativeness or reliability ensure these are explained fully by reference to the source material.
- In **Question 1 (e)** candidates should try to describe their chosen methods *in some detail*. This may mean, for example, specifying the type of questions to be used or exactly how an observation will be conducted.
- In **Questions 1 (b)** and option **Question (b)**, where candidates are asked to identify/state something or to give examples, an extended response is not required. A word/phrase or sentence will suffice.
- In extended **Questions 1 (d)** and option **Questions 2** and **3 (e)** and **(f)** it is helpful if arguments are written in paragraph form. Within each paragraph the point should be developed by reference to explanation and evidence. The development of points can include examples, sociological studies, sociological theory or empirical evidence such as statistics.
- **Questions 1 (b), 1 (c), and 1 (d)** all require knowledge of the specific strengths and limitations of named research methods and approaches. Avoid making generic points which could apply to almost any research method or approach. Similarly, answers that assert that a research method is *cheap* or *expensive* or *time-consuming* are often best avoided as they can be hard to develop and contextualise.

General comments

This was the first November assessment opportunity for the revised 2025 syllabus. Candidate responses showed that they had a good grasp of the demands of both the content of the new syllabus and the new assessment structure. Candidates appeared to benefit from the new guidance given in the bulleted instructions in **Questions 1 (d), 1 (e)** and option **Questions (e) and (f)**. All candidates completed the compulsory **Question 1** on Research Methods. Candidates then answered one of the optional questions, with approximately three quarters of the cohort answering **Question 2** on Identity: Self and Society and a third opting to answer **Question 3** on Social Stratification and Inequality. Candidates were able to utilise different skills, such as analysing and evaluating source material, defining sociological concepts, designing and justifying a research design and explaining and evaluating sociological views or arguments. Overall, some good quality responses were in evidence across all sections of the paper, demonstrating a positive engagement with the questions and the three assessment objectives. There were relatively few no responses or timing issues and almost no rubric errors.

Question 1 'Research Methods' proved to be a good test of candidates' knowledge of key research concepts and methods. Analysis and interpretation of the source material was generally good. There was a good level of engagement and understanding of the source material on women's experiences of paid work and the strengths and weaknesses of the methodology used in the study. Responses showed a good knowledge of secondary evidence (**1b**), but a less confident grasp of triangulation (**1 (a)(ii)**), non-participant observation (**1c**) and random sampling (**1d**). The research plan **Question (1e)** tested candidates' knowledge and understanding of research methods and sampling choices. Here many candidate responses made clear and confident use of methodological terms, though chosen methods and sampling could be described in more detail in some candidate answers.

The 'Identity: Self and Society Culture' option was more popular than 'Social Stratification and Inequality'. In both option questions most candidates showed sound and, in a few cases, excellent knowledge and understanding of the key theories, concepts and arguments within the topics. New aspects of the syllabus

were generally well understood, including digital surveillance, the digital self and feminist criticisms of equality legislation. Several questions proved challenging, notably the idea of society as a social construction and how identity can be positively affected by global culture. Some responses showed real insight and sophistication in their grasp of the question and handling of sociological evidence. In terms of quality, some candidates were well organised and marshalled evidence very effectively in option **Question (e)**, and very few engaged in evaluation which is not required by these questions. In option **Question (f)**, most essay responses had the required range but some fell short due to insufficient sociological development. A number of the extended responses to option **Questions (e) and (f)** were also not organised into paragraphs and tended towards the narrative and description, thereby only achieving limited marks. There were few list-like and/or one-sided answers.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 Research Methods

- (a) (i) An excellent response here with almost all the candidates identifying (unstructured) interviews and (online) questionnaires as research methods used in the study. A few candidates incorrectly identified triangulation or qualitative/quantitative data as research methods (triangulation being an approach).
- (ii) This question required candidates to use information in Source A to explain two reasons why triangulation was a useful approach for studying women's experiences of paid work. Few candidates scored more than two marks. Many responses did engage with the source and presented at least one identified and/or developed point to show why triangulation was useful. Points seen included the fact that the data gained was both qualitative and quantitative, that the weaknesses of one method could be offset by the strengths of another, that two methods were used, namely questionnaires and unstructured interviews, or that triangulation enabled some measure of validity and reliability in data gathered. However, few answers properly explained more than one of these points. Instead, candidates frequently made one point about questionnaires and a second point about unstructured interviews which, taken separately, are not properly focused on *triangulation* which involves a *combination* of research methods. To be given full credit *each* point needed to focus on triangulation. Other responses only referred to information from the source without development or offering vague explanations that could not be credited, e.g. the data is valid/easy to understand, etc.
- (iii) This question required candidates to use information in Source A to explain three problems with the research for studying women's experiences of paid work. A wide range of answers were possible, and answers could be fairly concise. Overall the response to this question was stronger than that for 1 (a)(ii). Commonly seen answers identified issues with the sample size of only 219 online questionnaires and only 15 interviewed, the fact that the researchers were male, the age group of the women being researched was confined to 35 – 55, the fact that the women were from the same Ghanaian university and worked the same professions and, finally, that the study took place in 2017. As with 1 (a)(ii) any of these points by themselves would be awarded one mark. To achieve the second mark the candidate needed to unpack or develop the explanation in terms of why this aspect of the research is not useful for studying the topic. Successful responses unpacked potential problems; for example by arguing that the sample size is too small to represent all working women or that male researchers interviewing females could result in women giving socially desirable answers which would then lack validity. A few answers did not link points to the source and were generic.
- (b) The majority of candidates scored full marks by giving two correct examples of secondary evidence. The most common answers included: official/non-official statistics, personal documents such as diaries, letters, historical documents, digital sources such as websites and social media and media content e.g. newspaper articles. There were some incorrect responses to the question, e.g. quantitative/qualitative data or primary methods such as questionnaires. A few answers used phrases such as media or the internet which were too vague to credit as secondary evidence.
- (c) In this question candidates were asked to explain one strength and one limitation of non-participant observation. Most responses did not achieve more than half marks and many scored no marks. The main issue was the conflation of non-participant observation with covert observation. Not taking an active part in an observation was frequently presumed to *mean the same thing* as covert observation, when in fact non-participant observation may be done overtly as well as covertly.

Candidates who recognised this and who explicitly stated that *if* the observation is done covertly, the Hawthorne Effect could be avoided, were given credit. Ultimately the question is about *non-participant* observation and answers needed to focus upon the consequences of the researcher not being part of the group under study and doing activities with them. In terms of the limitations of the method, some candidates identified that non-participant observation can be low in validity because it yields limited qualitative data and researchers cannot go in-depth or achieve *verstehen* due to not being a part of group activities. Creditworthy strengths included the idea that such observations can be set up in naturalistic settings where people are likely to behave as normal, the covert/overt nature of participant observations; that researchers can take notes easily because they are not participating or can review material again if cameras are used.

- (d) This essay-style question asked candidates to evaluate the view that random sampling is the best sampling technique to use in sociological research by developing at least two arguments for and two against. Most candidates provided a two-sided answer with the required range of points and came to a conclusion. The quality of arguments was variable and most candidates achieved marks in Level 1 or Level 2. Most answers scored in Level 2 (4 – 7 marks) due to some points being only partially, rather than fully, developed or explained. Most answers showed some understanding of the basics of random sampling in terms of techniques such as pulling names out of a hat and the idea that everyone has a chance of selection. Many then linked this to a lack of researcher bias. Many answers did not unpack a second strength if one was identified, instead often slipping into vague discussions about data gathered being somehow more valid. Candidates sometimes used the term ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’ in a generic manner when discussing random sampling. As a result, discussion often veered into data rather than focusing on the sampling and issues to do with representativeness, practicality, access to sample etc. The other most common strength seen was the fact that it is perhaps the easiest and most time efficient technique to use and hence convenient for researchers. In evaluation many pointed out that a key problem for random sampling is the fact that it is likely to be unrepresentative. Such answers often gave illustrations of samples that could over or under-represent certain social characteristics such as gender, social class, age and ethnic group. Alternative sampling techniques were used to good effect, especially stratified sampling and snowball sampling. Where candidates did less well, points lacked proper development.
- (e) The new research design question drew a varied response. The question required an explanation and rationale for two primary research methods, with sampling, and one source of secondary evidence for investigating why people migrate from one country to another. Many candidates followed this rubric explicitly. The first of the three criteria for which up to four marks are available was **Knowledge and understanding** of methods and evidence. Here successful answers provided detailed and accurate *descriptions* of the research methods chosen, with relevant sampling, along with a *description* of a suitable piece of secondary evidence. For example, describing the types and examples of questions to be asked in a questionnaire, the size of a sample and how access could be gained or exactly how an interview was to be conducted. Such descriptions integrated sociological concepts such as open/closed questions, a standardised approach, rapport, qualitative/quantitative data, probing etc. The second criterion was explaining **Reasons for choices**, in other words for explaining why a particular method or sample was chosen, including the use of appropriate terms such as reliability, validity, representativeness and generalisability. The final criterion was **Application to context** and again four marks were available for how well the candidate linked their research choices to the context of the topic of migration. Many responses had a clear structure with regular reference to the context of migration throughout as well as more description of the primary research methods and samples chosen. The best responses achieved three – four marks for each criterion, giving a clear and contextualized picture of their research choices and why they were appropriate, drawing upon evaluative terms such as validity, representativeness etc. This level of response also often gave examples of questions they would ask. Most candidates scored mid-range marks as not all research methods, evidence and sampling choices were fully described and justified. Some answers used triangulation as a primary method when it is better seen as an approach which utilises different primary methods rather than a primary method per se. Sampling was also sometimes only stated or even overlooked, even by candidates whose responses were strong elsewhere. Some justifications of research methods were also generic. For example, interviews were used ‘*to get a deep insight*’ and many candidates proffered key evaluative concepts without demonstrating clear knowledge, for example simply adding ‘*this will gain validity and reliability*’. Answers scoring in Levels 1 and 2 often stated primary methods with no real description or proper justification for their use. A few responses included development of points about the weaknesses of chosen methods which was not creditworthy.

Candidates should be encouraged to concentrate their efforts on explaining how they would use their methods and why they are appropriate.

Question 2 Identity: self and society

- (a) (i) The definitional question on 'role' drew a good response. The majority of the responses demonstrated some understanding of the term. The best answers described a role in terms of expected behaviours that are linked to a particular status in society. Others talked about a role as a part that people play in society which drew one mark and many candidates then added an example for their second mark, such as the role of mother or breadwinner. A few answers were too vague to achieve credit.
- (ii) The majority of candidates scored full marks for their definition of the term 'digital surveillance'. Successful answers offered two creditable elements, most frequently describing digital surveillance as a form of monitoring or observation of people through cameras/CCTV or online. Others described it as a form of social control used by authorities such as governments and police to track people's behaviours. Answers that scored only one mark often defined surveillance but lacked an unpacking of the digital aspect.
- (b) This question asked candidates to give two examples of youth sub-cultures. It drew a mixed response. Candidates who scored both marks gave named examples such as the classic goth, punk or skinhead sub-cultures. Others gave more modern examples such as Gyarū or K-poppers. More generic answers such as anti-school sub-cultures were also accepted. Answers which achieved no credit tended to describe an aspect of youth-subculture, such as fashion sense or a liking for a brand of music, rather than giving an example.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain three ways identity can be positively affected by global culture. The best answers gave three developed points explaining how examples such as common foods, globally popular fashion/clothing styles or global media enhanced people's identity in terms of self-expression, interests or ability to join and connect with others in different places. Others discussed the emergence of cultural hybrids as a response to global influences or the idea of an emerging common value consensus on key issues across the world. Some candidates linked their points to multiculturalism within a society, rather than global culture, while others gave vague responses to the question. Some candidates identified correct points but did not show how a person's identity is positively affected.
- (d) This question asked candidates to explain three ways individuals may create an online digital self. Popular correct answers identified the creation of personal profiles (including fakes), personas and avatars on social media, posting videos or the creation of vlogs/blogs online. Answers which did not score any marks commonly outlined reasons *why* individuals create an online digital self rather than *how*. For example, discussing how some individuals are insecure about an aspect of their identity and want to join with other like-minded individuals, without reference to how they do this online.
- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss the view that society is a social construction. It drew a mixed response. In their answer candidates were asked to include at least three developed points with evidence for the view. This is not a question where candidates are expected to engage in evaluation, unlike **Questions 1 (d)** and option **Question (f)** where there is a specific instruction to create arguments for and against. In terms of the content this is really a question about the idea that society is something created and maintained by human beings through their social activities rather than something that is a universal and unchanging given. Successful answers focused on ideas such as that cultures differ cross-culturally or that norms and values change over time or according to situation, showing that society is not something fixed but something created by people differently across space and time. Other successful answers homed in on social characteristics such as age identity which has changed across time (Aries) or gender identity which has to be taught through the processes of socialisation and social control (Oakley), showing that society and its structures are not biological givens but have to be built and maintained. Less successful responses discussed a wide range of aspects of society and socialisation without such clear focus on the question set, describing society rather than arguing whether it is constructed. A few answers showed no understanding of the idea of social construction.
- (f) In this question candidates were asked to evaluate the view that the family is the most effective agency of socialisation. It proved to be generally accessible for the majority, with the quality of

development being the chief discriminator in terms of marks awarded. The vast majority of responses gave three points for and three against; one-sided answers were rare. Stronger responses demonstrated a good understanding of concepts as well as theory and there was widespread use of postmodernism, functionalism (Parsons) and feminism (Oakley) as evidence. Popular arguments supporting the view drew on functionalist claims that socialisation and social control as social processes that are crucial for individual integration, the development of gender identity and wider social consensus and social cohesion. Some candidates used feminist arguments on socialisation into gender identity and Marxist ideas about socialisation into class identity as arguments for the view whilst others deployed them as arguments against. Both approaches were credited according to how the candidates utilised them. In evaluation most answers juxtaposed other agencies of socialisation such as peers, education, religion and workplace as equally or more effective than the family. Other answers gave a critique of the effectiveness of aspects of socialisation by the family, arguing for example that the family can be a site for abuse and neglect which can result in feral children and destructive social consequences. Others pointed to the fact that the core socialising functions of the family are now being done by other institutions such as nurseries thus showing the family to be less effective than in previous times. Most answers fell into Level 2 or 3 due to some points being only partially developed though range was generally solid and knowledge good. Most answers drew a conclusion which was most often a summary rather than a reasoned judgement based on the actual arguments presented.

Question 3 Social stratification and inequality

- (a) (i) The definitional question on the caste system proved difficult. Partial definitions often made reference to a hierarchy or being born into a status and many answers referenced India. The best answers defined the caste system as a closed system in which a person's status is ascribed at birth and/or cannot be changed.
- (ii) Relatively few candidates provided a clear and accurate definition of the term 'universal education'. Many described it vaguely as education that exists all around the globe. A large number of responses offered a partial definition, claiming that this is education 'for everyone' or people having access to education everywhere. Answers that achieved the second mark identified such access as regardless of background such as a person's social class, gender etc. A few answers defined universal education with reference to some characteristics such as being taught the syllabus which was not creditworthy.
- (b) This question required candidates to state two forms of wealth. Some candidate responses showed good knowledge. Common correct answers seen included property/houses, jewellery, shares and inherited money. Some responses identified social goods such as health or education or included explanations which were not creditworthy, while others confused wealth with income. Simply stating money was not sufficient to achieve credit.
- (c) This question asked candidates to explain three ways people can be affected by a lack of power. A wide range of answers were acceptable and, whilst reference to particular social groups was desirable, generic answers that talked about people who lack power in society were still able to achieve full marks provided they identified an effect and briefly but accurately developed it. So, stronger answers explained effects such as social exclusion, poor life chances in education and employment, being deprived of basic necessities and political marginalisation. The other approach was to focus on a particular social group such as the working class/underclass, women or minority ethnic groups and how these groups are impacted by a lack of power. There was some good reference to theory, especially Marxism and feminism. Weaker responses generally only offered undeveloped points.
- (d) This question asked candidates to explain three feminist criticisms of equality legislation. Some candidates gave three reasons why feminists criticise gender inequality in society rather than equality laws specifically. Such answers were limited to three marks as there was no mention of legislation. There were relatively few references to specific laws, such as the Equality Act or localised versions. Responses were often generic, with candidates referencing the phrase *equality legislation*; but if they then identified an issue with such legislation then full marks were still available. For example, some argued that the equality laws were not always followed by employers but in such cases, discrimination was difficult for women to prove.
- (e) This question asked candidates to discuss the view that societies are becoming more culturally diverse. Answers needed to include at least three developed points with evidence; no evaluation is

required. Whilst few candidates attained marks in Level 3, the majority of answers demonstrated some understanding of the demands of the question and scored marks in Level 2. Many responses were descriptive rather than analytical. The strongest answers linked cultural diversity to concrete examples such as social change, globalisation and migration. Whilst most candidates identified various correct examples like language, food, clothing, intermarriage etc. many points were only partially developed. A few answers made reference to the development of hybrid identities. After identifying correct factors the majority of points were not then fully developed with evidence and examples. Therefore, it was common that most marks were limited to Level 2.

- (f) The essay-style question asked candidates to evaluate the view that the welfare state has failed to reduce poverty. As with **Question 2 (f)**, the guidance bullets in the question appeared to be helpful in making it clear that at least three arguments for and three against should be given with a conclusion offered at the end. Most candidates presented two-sided answers and offered a range of points. A wide range of responses were seen with more confident answers drawing on practical examples of welfare state failure such as a lack of resources, the Marxist argument that welfare fails to address the core inequalities bred in capitalism and other points noted the continued cycle of poverty and the culture of poverty. Discussions were often informed by theoretical criticisms from the New Right, especially when discussing dependency culture. A smaller number of strong responses also used feminist critiques of welfare to fully address gender inequalities. In evaluation, some responses showed good knowledge of Scandinavian-type welfare systems and the provision of pensions, housing or job support and national health systems. Few candidates provided the range of developed points needed to approach marks in Level 4. Less developed responses explained some key failures of welfare but did not develop points beyond common sense critiques echoing popular media stereotypes of dependency.

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Paper 2251/22 Family, Education and Crime
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Key messages

- Candidate knowledge of the limitations of theoretical perspectives could be improved, perhaps by getting students to draw up 'for and against' tables during preparation and revision.
- In **part (a)(i)** and **(ii)** of the questions candidates did not always include two separate elements, which prevents full marks being awarded.
- In **part (b)** some responses presented long paragraphs which were unnecessary.
- Candidates did not always develop their points in the **(c)**, **(d)**, **(e)** and **(f)** questions.
- In the **(e)** and **(f)** questions, some of the responses lacked range and/or were not sociologically engaged to a sufficient degree and therefore could gain marks in the highest level.
- In **part (e)** there is no requirement to evaluate, nor to provide a conclusion; candidates should focus only on providing three developed (i.e. evidenced) points for the view in the question.
- Some responses in the **(f)** questions were not organised into paragraphs and in some areas appeared confused and underdeveloped, and/or descriptive, lacking clarity and synthesis. There were also some list-like and/or one-sided answers that could not score higher than level 2. Most candidates, nonetheless, provided a judgement, mainly as a conclusion to their answer, although developed conclusions were rare.
- Knowledge of key concepts could be improved. Candidates need a good working knowledge of key terms and concepts within the specification and the topics.
- Time management should be better considered. The **(a)** and **(b)** questions are worth just two marks, as such there is no need for candidates to write lengthy paragraphs.
- Read the question carefully – this caused issues with a number of questions. For example, if the question asks for limitations of a theory, answers that simply describe the theory are unlikely to be credited. Another example would be if the question asks for positive views, raising negative issues will not be credited.
- Sociological theories – candidates are expected to have a good working knowledge of the main theoretical approaches in Sociology for Family, Education and Crime. The key aspects, ideas, strengths and weaknesses of each theory in relation to each topic need to be covered.
- Using distinct paragraphs for each point made – it is good practice for candidates to separate answers into clear paragraphs, making it obvious where one point ends and another begins. For example, using discourse markers such as, 'First', 'Second', 'On the other hand', etc.
- The **(f)** question is the only one which requires evaluation, a number of candidates were evaluating in **(c)**, **(d)** or **(e)** questions when this is not required. Such answers will never be credited.
- Candidates should develop their points further and demonstrate more sociological engagement, especially in the **(e)** and **(f)** parts of the questions.
- Candidates should avoid writing introductions and conclusions where they are not required. Introductions are never needed and conclusions only in the **(f)** questions.
- Generic, common-sense, list-like answers should be avoided.
- Candidates should be encouraged to read all questions carefully before starting to write and to make a short plan to best answer each essay question **(f)**; points should not be grouped together rather they should be separated and expanded on in turn.

General comments

- **Section A Family**, remained the most answered section, followed by **Section B Education**, and then **Section C Crime**.
- This was the first paper of the new specification to be sat in the November session.
- There were very few rubric errors seen this session.
- Generally, answers were well written, and candidates signposted their points using clear signal words, discourse markers and punctuation.
- The question that asked for 'limitations' (**2(e)**) caused some confusion, with candidates tending to write about Marxist views of education and not referencing any limitations/criticisms of the approach. This demonstrates the need for candidates to focus clearly on the specific demands of the question set and for the question style of 'limitations' to be explicitly addressed and taught within centres.
- Overall, there were some high-quality responses seen with candidates showing very good knowledge of the subject matter and successfully integrating sociological concepts and theory into their answers.
- In addition to sociological knowledge, many candidates used localised examples well as evidence for the arguments they were making.
- A few candidates did not number or incorrectly numbered their answers which causes difficulties for the examining team, and which runs the risk of candidates not receiving credit for what they have written. It is essential that this is improved.
- Candidates who performed well demonstrated a secure knowledge of sociological concepts and theories, with some reference to specific studies; answers were written in direct context of the question and there was good use of evidence to support answers. Some weaker answers to the essay questions were too short and lacking in evidence of knowledge, concepts and sociological studies. Responses need to include justified and developed conclusions, not just a re-stating of earlier points in a summative way.
- Time management was generally good, with a small number of candidates opting to answer the **(e)** and **(f)** questions first. Those candidates that did run out of time typically spent far too long on the lower tariff questions than the marks available would justify.

Comments on specific questions

Section A Family

Question 1

- (a) (i) The vast majority of candidates were familiar with the term 'empty-shell marriage', citing a breakdown in the relationship/lack of partner intimacy yet still living together most commonly to gain two marks. Some candidates gave a definition of empty nest family instead and thus were unable to be credited. This demonstrates the need to focus carefully on the terms in the definition questions.
- (ii) Most candidates gained some marks in their definition of 'gender role'. Successful answers described the term as behaviours or expectations that society has for males and females. Some candidates wrote a definition that repeated one or both of the terms in the question – gender and/or role. Many answers gained one mark (partial) by giving an appropriate example of a gender role, such as the male breadwinner or female housewife.
- (b) A large number of candidates stated two ways in which family life is changing. The most frequently cited responses referred to the replacement of the extended family by the nuclear family, the increasing rate of divorce and cohabitation, as well as changing conjugal roles. A smaller number of responses did not explicitly refer to changes, for example stating only 'divorce rates' which was too vague. A few candidates presented overly long answers/descriptions in one or even two paragraphs instead of just stating two ways, paying close attention to the command words is thus highly recommended.
- (c) Most candidates confidently described three types of family, apart from the nuclear family. It was perhaps the question that was answered best in the whole paper. Answers were usually concise but very accurate. Popular answers included the extended family (or versions of it), the reconstituted family or the lone-parent family. A small number of candidates did describe the nuclear family, showing they had not read the question properly. Other answers which did not

achieve full marks invariably either misnamed a type of family or gave an incorrect description of the type named.

- (d) This question asked for a description of three feminist criticisms of the nuclear family difficult. The most successful answers focused on issues such as the unequal division of labour in the household with the concepts of the dual burden and triple shift featuring prominently. Candidates also discussed male power over decision-making in the home and domestic violence perpetrated upon women and children by men. A few responses did not show an understanding of the feminist viewpoint; for example, discussing positive aspects of nuclear families or simply describing aspects of the nuclear family instead of focusing on its limitations for women.
- (e) Although many candidates provided sufficient sociological knowledge to place their answers in Level two, few candidates scored in the top level, mainly because points were not fully developed in terms of providing explicit links to the question. A number of answers discussed why women chose not to have children at all, rather than later in life or made this link implicit and therefore such points could not be fully credited. Candidates most commonly referred to women having a better education and wanting careers and women having more freedom to choose their life paths and/or marry later as well as women preferring to be financially stable before opting for children. Some candidates gave strong sociological points, for example, identifying the impact of secularisation in society, easing the pressure to marry early and become mothers or the impact of feminism upon women, creating a desire for financial independence along with more freedom in their younger years. Many answers often resorted to common-sense points about women wanting to enjoy themselves, protect their body and beauty or wait to make sure their partner was reliable before thinking about children. The more successful responses presented clear links to women then choosing to have children later in life and the reasons for this. The weaker responses did not make the connection or were did not support knowledge with appropriate sociological material, or both.
- (f) A range of responses were seen for this question. Most candidates used the functionalist approach (or concepts from it) to answer the question with examples of essential functions and then used the Marxist, feminist and changing functions for their arguments against. Many candidates discussed functions such as socialisation, care/support, reproduction and economics and used patriarchy, consumerism and reproduction of the workforce against. Arguments against the view commonly referred to dysfunctional families, often discussed in terms of the dark side of the family and violence, abuse and the neglect of children. Others drew upon Marxist theory arguing that the family basically serves the needs of capitalism and reproduces a willing docile workforce ripe for exploitation by the bourgeoisie. Another prominent approach was to show that the functions of the family such as socialisation of children and care of the elderly is now done by other social institutions such as schools and residential care homes for the elderly. Most candidates gave both sides of the debate with varying success in terms of conceptuality, evidence and development. Many candidates utilised a wide range of concepts within this answer. Evaluation was sometimes limited to criticisms of the family in general rather than focusing on the specifics of the question and identifying why the family might not be providing essential functions anymore. Most candidates attempted to sum up their arguments in a conclusion with the best conclusions reviewing, reflecting and coming to a reasoned judgement based on the evidence presented. The main discriminator in terms of the level awarded was the amount and quality of evidence used to support points made.

Section B Education

Question 2

- (a) (i) Many candidates did not gain full marks for this definition. The more successful answers used subjects and syllabus referring to the differences for males and females. Many partially defined the term by giving examples of gendered subjects such as science or maths for boys.
- (ii) This question was not answered well. Candidates often did not define what a sub-culture was or allude to its collective group nature, thus gaining only partial marks. Creditable elements included the idea of a group of students or learners who agree with and follow the norms and values of the school. Some answers gave examples such as students attending extra lessons and forming study groups to work together. Many responses defined anti-school sub-cultures instead of pro-school.
- (b) On the whole this question was not well answered, many responses demonstrated limited knowledge of what linguistic factors were and gave vague terms such as culture or hard work. For those candidates who successfully answered, the most commonly seen responses were, elaborated code, restricted code, ethnic minorities not understanding the host language and/or teachers' response to students using AAVE.
- (c) Overall, this question drew a mixed response with some candidates correctly identifying and explaining features of the official curriculum such as it being prescribed by the government, having a number of set subjects, requiring standardised testing, being taught by teachers/experts in a formal setting/classroom, etc. Others, however, referred to features of the hidden curriculum such as learning norms and values, socialisation, etc. which could not be credited.
- (d) In this question candidates were required to explain three ways education is meritocratic. It drew a generally positive response in terms of showing a good understanding of meritocracy in education. Commonly seen answers included the idea of education being free and universal, that schools practise equal opportunities in terms of social class, gender and ethnicity and that all students are taught the same content (national curriculum) and assessed in the same way via standardised testing. A few candidates made reference to compensatory education as a leveller and also the idea of setting and streaming to allow students to learn at their own pace and so flourish. Many answers linked these ideas to functionalism and the aim of enabling young people to experience social mobility. Similar to **part (c)** answers varied in length and sophistication, and it was quite possible to achieve full marks with a concise but clear explanation. Answers which scored fewer marks were usually quite vague and/or made fewer than the required number of points.
- (e) This question proved to be one of the most challenging on the examination paper and very few responses achieved marks in level three. The question asked candidates to discuss the limitations of the Marxist view of education. Many candidates simply described aspects of the Marxist view rather than focusing on the *limitations* of it and thus were not answering the question. It is crucial that candidates are prepared for the demands of the strengths/limitations style of question so that they are able to tackle these confidently. In those answers that did address the question, the most popular limitations discussed often focused on the feminist criticism that Marxist views of education ignore the impact of patriarchy and the role of education in reproducing harmful gender stereotypes or that Marxists fail to recognise the positive role played by education in allowing young working-class people to gain skills that enable them to achieve social mobility. Another common point argued that Marxists fail to take the full impact of ethnicity into account, particularly institutional racism in schools seen through the ethnocentric curriculum and teacher labelling. A few candidates argued that the Marxist view of education is overly deterministic in that working class children passively absorb capitalist norms and values taught to them encouraging them to see failure as their own fault whereas, in reality, many working-class children are able to see through the ideology and resist and rebel in school perhaps by forming an anti-school subculture.

- (f) There were some good responses seen to this question and many candidates provided a debate to evaluate the view that material factors have the most influence on educational achievement. Arguments for material factors frequently discussed material deprivation and poverty, referring to a lack of a quiet space to study, poor diet and/or lack of resources needed for school such as books, laptops etc. On the evaluation (against) side, responses commonly mentioned cultural deprivation/lack of cultural capital/social class, linguistic factors, gender and students' motivation/hard work. The more successful responses made use of sociological theory and studies, most often Marxism/Bourdieu, etc. A few candidates provided only brief list-like answers, sometimes leaning towards one side to the detriment of the other and so not achieving a balanced response. Following the question prompts as guidance should help to alleviate this issue in the future. The weaker answers were often not organised into paragraphs, offering undeveloped or underdeveloped points as well as common-sense arguments. Still, many responses reached level three, and some got into level four, with valid conclusions being drawn. Ultimately, it was a well answered question.

Section C Crime, Deviance and Social Control

Question 3

- (a) (i) Most responses scored one mark on this question, by stating how crimes were not reported to the police. However, the focus of the question was 'unrecorded crime', which few candidates defined correctly. Unrecorded crime is crime reported to the police but not recorded by them.
- (ii) Only a few candidates presented comprehensive definitions of the term 'expressive crime', citing offences involving emotions such as anger, frustration, etc. and referring to them being unplanned. These were sometimes substantiated with well-chosen examples of such crimes, e.g. vandalism, jealous revenge acts. Most often responses offered either partial or incorrect definitions.
- (b) This was a well answered question. A good number of candidates correctly stated two aims of punishment. Answers referred to deterrence, rehabilitation, prevention of the repetition of such crimes, justice being served, etc. Such conceptual terminology was not an expectation, and full marks could be achieved through phrases such as 'putting people off crime' or 'keeping the public safe'. However, large numbers of candidates were confident in their usage of the conceptual sociological terms.
- (c) Strain theory did not seem to be well known about by candidates. Those candidates who did have the knowledge produced some excellent responses, linking into the American dream, the mismatch between societal goals and the means of achieving them and the various subcultural responses, e.g. retreatism, as outlined by Merton. Such answers were uncommon however with many candidates leaving this question blank.
- (d) This question asked for three reasons why crimes are not always reported to the police. It proved to be an accessible question, and the vast majority of candidates scored well on it. Commonly seen reasons included the sensitivity of some crimes, trivial crimes, fear of retribution by the criminal and a mistrust of police who are likely to do nothing in certain communities. Low scoring answers often identified reasons but then did not offer any development of those given.
- (e) Many candidates did not attempt this question. Some candidates interpreted moral panic as an offender committing a crime impulsively and then experiencing panic afterwards. Better responses demonstrated an understanding of the concept and discussed media exaggeration and labelling as factors from a moral panic that could lead to crime. The best answers often focused on Cohen's famous study of the mods and the rockers and outlined aspects of that work. For example, some discussed the exaggeration of the initial deviance by the media or police and subsequent escalation of conflict between the sub-cultures. Others discussed the idea of symbolisation and the depiction of folk devils which may then influence agencies such as the police who crack down on their targets more easily by having a certain 'look' to guide them. A number of answers focused on the idea of deviancy amplification and the fact that media coverage of the mods and rockers then encouraged more young people to travel to seaside towns to join in the fights.
- (f) This essay question focused on the effectiveness of policing strategies in preventing crime. There were a number of high-level answers seen. On the 'for' side of the debate most candidates used the method of naming a police strategy, describing it and then elaborating on why it prevented crime and this worked well. For example, stop and search: police have a heavy police presence in

certain areas linked with crime, they stop and search a number of individuals, looking for drugs or weapons. Word gets around that this is happening so others in the area are deterred from committing crime. Other strategies that were commonly discussed included community policing, use of surveillance, military style policing and police use of fines. In evaluation, candidates used a number of different approaches, all of which were equally valid. Some took their 'for' points and explained why this strategy did not work, e.g. stop and search fails to prevent crime as resentment of police presence builds and certain groups feel that they are being unfairly targeted, this resentment can then result in more crime occurring such as rioting. Another approach was to consider that there were better ways to prevent crime, such as through informal agencies or through harsher punishments. Very few candidates referenced Marxist or feminist criticisms of policing strategies. As with the other essays on the examination paper, candidates made a good effort to conclude their arguments with some offering thoughtful summations on the basis of the evidence presented. Very few developed conclusions that made a reasoned judgement on the question were seen.