

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/12
Paper 12

Key Messages

- Candidates need to distinguish between the command words for each question, very often candidates were unable to differentiate between explain 'how' and explain 'why'
- Candidates need to have a sound recall of key terms to enable them to access the questions
- Candidates were generally better prepared for questions related to Section B of unit 1 of the syllabus than they were for Section A of Unit 1.

General Comments

Some responses demonstrated very good recall of key terms.

The skills required for successful answers in Question 1 could be improved on. Typically, the ability for candidates to apply sociological knowledge to the key terms in the syllabus could be improved.

Candidates generally performed very well on questions which required them to know about the strengths and limitations of research methods but less well on questions which required knowledge of sociological theory. For example, candidates frequently scored highly on question 1e.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) The most successful answers to this question were able to identify the artificial environment of the laboratory as likely to impact on validity. Others were aware that participants in laboratory experiments would change their behaviour e.g. because they knew they are participating in an experiment. Alternatively, candidates were able to suggest that the participants may give answers that they consider socially acceptable. Some candidates found this question difficult to access because they did not fully grasp the term 'valid'. It was common for candidates to suggest other problems with laboratory experiments that did not relate to validity.
- (b) Generally candidates answered this question very well identifying sociological research methods and the best responses selected a method that was appropriate for the type of research e.g. researching behaviour. Some candidates discussed sampling, which is not a method to use to research behaviour.
- (c) Candidates who produced the best responses to this question considered the unethical nature of the experiment in respect of the psychological, rather than physical harm, done to the 'teachers' in the research. Most responses demonstrated sociological knowledge to interpreting Source A. Some candidates did misread Source A assuming that the participants had been physically harmed. Another common misinterpretation was that all participants had given informed consent. Candidates should be reminded to show their understanding of the source by selecting material which is relevant to their response and supports their argument.

- (d) Generally candidates were able to answer this question well. Most candidates wrote about experiments producing reliable data. Alternately candidates wrote about field experiments producing valid data. Less successful responses were those where candidates did not distinguish correctly between 'valid' and 'reliable'.
- (e) There were many successful answers to this question. The most successful responses were those where candidates structured their answers carefully clearly indicating the strengths and limitations of positivist methods of research. Less successful responses confused positivists with the word 'positive' which they used in a common sense way. Candidates should be reminded of the need to take care to distinguish between quantitative and qualitative research methods.
- (f) Excellent candidate responses to this question showed an awareness of the term 'triangulation' and related it to methodological pluralism, demonstrating its purpose of improving both the reliability and validity of the research. Less successful responses were unfamiliar with the key term 'triangulation' which they believed related to research using three people rather than three methods.
- (g) Better responses to this question were able to talk in detail about various sociological perspectives. These responses highlighted that the perspective would determine the researcher's interests e.g. feminists would be interested in patriarchal views. Candidates should be reminded that they need to present a valid counter argument. A suitable counter argument, which was well made by some candidates, was that the availability of research funding often shapes research more than any other factors. Some better responses, taking a cue from the previous question, discussed methodological pluralism as an influence. These responses showed awareness that triangulation is widely used to prevent researchers facing criticism from academic peers.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Most responses provided at least a partial definition of this term, frequently answers highlighted that feral children are not socialised. Answers often lacked clarity because they did not make clear that the lack of socialisation resulted in unhuman 'wild' behaviour.
- (b) Most answers were able to identify two things learnt during primary socialisation but few were able to describe them. Candidates should be reminded that they need to describe not explain the social feature they have identified. For example in relation to learning to walk a description would include how this happened rather than why it happened.
- (c) Most candidate responses focused on learning social expectations of gender roles. These answers highlighted processes like canalisation and manipulation, whilst this was acceptable in part, better responses looked beyond the role of the family and considered the role of other agencies of socialisation e.g. education.
- (d) Better responses to this question were able to show the link between socialisation and social conformity. There was a tendency to focus on either the functionalist argument with reference to social harmony or inadequate socialisation leading to deviant behaviour. Weaker responses focused on only part of the question without any reference to social conformity.
- (e) On the whole responses showed an awareness of the 'nature v nurture' debate. Most were able to offer at least a basic outline to the arguments. Better answers supported their arguments using evidence from socio-biologists and cross cultural comparison like the work of Margret Mead.

Section C

Question 3

- (a) Most answers were able to provide a partial response to this question, recognising that slaves were property but candidates did not always highlight that slaves had no freedom. Good definitions suggested that slavery is where people were exploited by the rich.
- (b) Most responses to this question were able to identify examples of social inequality. The most popular response focused on gender inequality or those linked to closed systems of stratification like caste or apartheid.
- (c) There were many excellent responses to this question which focused on the inequalities that individuals from minority ethnic groups might experience in health, employment and education. Better answers highlighted how access to good education might be limited due to teachers from the majority ethnic group labelling students. Alternatively, candidates discussed how employers fail to promote and select member of minority ethnic groups to some jobs.
- (d) This question was generally answered very well. Many responses included reference to a range of factors in modern industrial societies that are viewed as reasons why poverty has not been eliminated. Responses included; reference to welfare dependency, culture of poverty, poverty trap, the new right perspective. Some answers offered an equally valid response that looked at global poverty in the context of corruption and over population. Most candidates were able to offer a range of sociological factors in their response. Where responses were less successful it was because they focused on a single factor like lack of education or the answer focused on defining poverty.
- (e) Generally this question was answered successfully. Candidates were very familiar with the key term 'social mobility' and had no issues accessing the question. Many described a number of processes through which upward mobility occurs. Less successful responses were those where there was no attempt at a counter argument. The best responses contrasted the opportunities for mobility in an open society against those in a closed society, whilst also highlighting that discrimination and lack of opportunity for some social groups created barriers to mobility.

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Paper 2251/13
Paper 13

Key Messages

- Many candidates showed an excellent grasp of key concepts like socialisation
- Candidates need to have a good grasp of key terms to help them access the questions
- Candidates should be encouraged to make use of **Source A** where the question requires them to do so
- On the whole candidates were better prepared for the questions which focused on methods than they were for questions which focused on theory

General Comments

Many candidates' responses showed good sociological knowledge, however some candidates need to improve the way that they apply their sociological knowledge. Candidates frequently had the knowledge to give a definition of a key term but then seemed unable to link the definition to the question requirements. For example in question 2e, the terms 'rewards' and 'sanctions' were often accurately defined, but answers tended to generalise without application of the knowledge.

Also responses suggest candidates' find the application of their knowledge to interpreting and evaluating secondary data very difficult. Responses to questions which asked about the strengths and limitations of research methods were much stronger than responses to questions where candidates had to show an understanding of sociological theory.

Comments on Specific Questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidate responses showed the ability to identify appropriate research methods. The most frequent and accurate responses given were 'unstructured interviews' and 'observation'. Candidates may still receive full marks for writing extensive answers to this question but they need to understand that an extensive response is not required.
- (b) Responses to this question mostly focused on the value of secondary data for its depth and detail. Others focused on the cost relative to doing your own primary research. Candidates could have improved their responses by considering the value of personal documents for their validity.
- (c) Better answers were able to consider the subjective nature of a diary entry. Candidates were able to correctly identify the phrase 'planning to let anyone else read it' as evidence that the author of the source may have indulged in distortion and fantasy and that this would make the source invalid. Candidates can improve their response to this question by making clear reference to Source A to support their comments.
- (d) Most candidates had good knowledge of this topic. Responses showed a good understanding of qualitative methods. Good answers were characterised by clear use of sociological terms associated with qualitative methods e.g. establishing verstehen. Responses were less clear where candidates showed confusion about the difference between qualitative and quantitative.

- (e) Some of the responses to this question were excellent with strengths and limitations clearly identified and described. The most frequent accurate responses identified validity as a strength and lack of reliability as a weakness. Candidates need to clearly understand the difference between interpretivism and structuralism. Weaker responses focused too much on generic response about time and cost which lacked context and were therefore too vague.
- (f) Better responses understood that because of the unique nature of this type of data it is almost impossible to replicate. Few responses were able to develop why it was not possible to replicate the data, e.g. because it is impossible to reproduce the different variables. A few candidates did show an understanding that historical documents could not be replicated because you cannot go back in time but these responses failed to recognise that personal documents would have largely the same problems regardless of whether they were a week old or a hundred years old.
- (g) Better responses considered both qualitative and quantitative secondary data and recognised that to some extent the validity of the data was dependent on the type of data being considered. Many, taking their cue from **Source A**, contrasted personal documents with quantitative data like official crime statistics. Weaker responses failed to recognise the need for secondary data in research both in terms of comparative study and where researchers use prior research to help them with their own research projects.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Most responses to this question were able to offer an accurate definition e.g. the position someone holds in society.
- (b) Mostly this question was answered well. Often there were clear and well developed responses. Correct responses included: mother, father and pupil.
- (c) There were some strong responses to this question that focused on gender role socialisation. The best responses looked at socialisation into a range of roles by a range of agencies of socialisation. Weaker responses talked about socialisation in general without linking it to roles.
- (d) The best responses to this question considered a range of factors including: religion, tradition and sub-culture in shaping cultural diversity. Few responses to this question went beyond highlighting that culture is different in different parts of the world because socialisation is different.
- (e) There were many excellent responses to this question that contained detailed arguments on either side of the debate. In these response candidates explored both how social sanctions are applied to shape an individual's role and how other factors like socialisation encourage individuals to see their roles as 'natural'. Some weaker response focused on rewards and sanctions, demonstrating an awareness of what the terms meant without seeming to understand how rewards and sanctions reinforce social norms about roles. Others needed a more balanced argument in order to achieve high marks.

Section C

Question 3

- (a) Generally responses to this question were excellent although a minority did confuse ascribed and achieved status. Candidates need to be aware that ascribed status is the social position you are born in that (usually) cannot be changed.
- (b) There were many good answers to this question. Responses showed clear evidence of factors that would contribute to upward mobility and an improvement in status. Factors like marriage, hard work and talent were accurate responses that were commonly seen.
- (c) Better responses were aware that although ascribed status cannot usually be changed there are opportunities for change e.g. where legislation allowed for gender reassignment. Some were able to give examples like a slave being set free or legislative changes like the ending of apartheid. Many responses focused on upward mobility in general and as a result did not focus on ascribed status.
- (d) Many candidates understood the concept of segregation but were not able to articulate the idea of horizontal segregation. It is important that candidates understand that horizontal segregation refers to a situation where a workforce of a specific industry or sector is mostly made up of one particular gender or minority ethnic group.
- (e) Answers to this question showed a good understanding of the ways in which inequality and discrimination continue, despite legislation. Better answers gave examples of the law not being enforced, institutional racism and how discrimination was very difficult to prove particularly in the context of employment. Weaker responses were unable to give specific sociological examples to support their claims often talking vaguely about discrimination. Few responses offered a successful counter argument.

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Paper 2251/22
Paper 22

Key messages

A lot of excellent responses were seen during this marking session which showed clear engagement with sociological issues and contemporary debates. Topical and local examples were used alongside more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify points made. Theories and concepts were also well used by many candidates. No rubric errors were seen in the examination session which is excellent.

Ensure what is being written specifically addresses the issues raised in the question – candidates would not get marks for writing 'all that they know' on a topic area;

- Refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts where relevant, using sociological specific vocabulary, as this will raise the overall quality of the answer;
- Introductions and definitions at the beginning of **(c)**, **(d)** and **(e)** questions take up valuable time and do not gain specific marks;
- Some candidates struggled with questions when they did not recognise the key term in the question (e.g. status frustration in **3(e)**, vocationalism in **2(c)**). As these key terms in questions will always be from the syllabus, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these;
- Use the marks per question as guidance as to how much is to be written for a particular question. Some candidates were writing half a page for a part **(a)** question worth 2 marks and the same for a part **(e)** question worth 15;
- On part **(e)** questions ensure that candidates have a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. The response needs to include a range of points for each side that are well developed and evidence based, with a justified conclusion. One sided responses cannot get beyond band 2;
- In **(e)** questions, very good candidates often did not include a conclusion – they listed points for and against without attempting an overview or judgment. A conclusion is required in this essay style question in order to reach the highest marks available.

General comments

In general there appeared to be the full range of quality answers on the paper. In terms of the 15 mark part **(e)** question, candidates should be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully. Each point should aim to be directly focused upon what the question is asking and to engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. The better responses overall scored well on the 15 mark questions, which obviously helps to boost the overall marks on the paper.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – The Family

Question Comment

- (a) Many candidates correctly mentioned 'birth and death rates' etc. but often missed out the link to population; meaning only 1 mark was credited. There were quite a few 'no responses' to this question.
- (b) Candidates on the whole answered this well with the most common answers referring to secularisation, the growing independence of women or changes in the law making divorce more affordable / attainable. Some candidates referred to generic reasons for divorce, such as domestic violence, without reference to the reasons for a rise in rates.
- (c) The main points on this were the burden on the family linked to time and finances and conflict arising from differing norms and values between generations. There was also recognition of positive effects such as grandparents helping with childcare. A lot of candidates spent time defining what was meant by the term ageing population or describing effects on society rather than the family, which unfortunately were not creditable. Lack of conceptual engagement sometimes prevented candidates from gaining the full 6 marks.
- (d) On the whole this question was answered well with good development throughout. Many candidates often referred to the emancipation of women and career aspirations, nuclear families and their want to be more child centred, contraception and the availability of abortion. Some weaker answers were not about modern industrial societies.
- (e) Most candidates understood some reasons for and against the continued importance of marriage in society. A number offered a one sided view and several were quite short and list-like meaning that they could only access a limited number of marks. Weaker responses defined marriage and some candidates appeared to interpret the question as being about the family rather than marriage. Common evidence pro marriage were: custom and tradition, the founding of a family and gay marriage whilst high divorce rates, cohabitation and the growing independence of women featured highly on the counter side of the argument. A few candidates contextualised the debate between functionalist, new right and feminism, however neglected to write a conclusion or make a judgement which meant that they lost out on the highest marks available.

Question 2 – Education

Question Comment

- (a) Very few candidates were successful in defining IQ tests this term by making reference to the use of questions to measure intelligence, with many talking generally about knowledge rather than IQ tests.
- (b) This was answered well on the whole. Most candidates decided to link each point to a negative and positive influence which worked well when done properly; others were able to make two distinct points about a negative influence. Some answers did not make a clear enough link to achievement to gain both the marks for a 'way'.
- (c) This question was answered well by most candidates, with references being made to the working class, practical skills, future labour force and giving examples of jobs. Some candidates did describe all the different types of educational establishments or formal and informal education and lacked understanding of what vocationalism means. It was pleasing that some candidates were able to name vocational courses or institutions in their own countries.
- (d) Some good responses discussed cultural bias or certain parents getting their students to practice tests beforehand. Many candidates also wrote about students taking the test being nervous or ill or stressed. The use of sociological knowledge advantaged candidates who gained the highest marks.

- (e) Candidates answered this question very well discussing both sides of the argument. On one side, equalities in access to schools and subjects, equal treatment and positive discrimination and role models, and on the other, continuing problems holding back boys or girls. Weaker responses discussed the extent to which boys and girls took advantage of the opportunities, or by focusing too much on what happened in the past.

Question 3 – Crime and Deviance

Question Comment

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the term, inadequate socialisation. They made references to not being fully or properly socialised, with better candidates linking the term to the process of learning norms and values and possibly the tendency towards deviant or criminal values.
- (b) Many candidates were able to make one point about young people and crime or deviance, but not two. A minority were aware, for example, of rising crime rates among older people in some countries. The idea that older people usually commit less crime is perhaps one that more candidates might have been expected to make.
- (c) This was answered well, with many candidates able to make and develop points about gender and crime rates, the chivalry thesis, masculinity, 'ladette' culture, differences in socialisation between the genders and differences in social control and opportunity.
- (d) Most candidates showed some sociological knowledge and understanding of why primary socialisation may cause some people to commit crime. Inadequate socialisation and imitation of parents who acted as criminal role models were common issues raised by candidates across all mark bands.
- (e) When this question was answered well candidates made links to poverty, material deprivation, anomie, labelling leading to self-fulfilling prophecy and biological reasons for committing crime. It was however clear that many struggled with what the question was about, and there were answers that tried to list every possible cause of crime or one in detail (such as Merton's strain theory) or were generally about why people commit crime.

Question 4 – Media

Question Comment

- (a) Most candidates understood this well enough to get both marks. Some candidates were able to refer simply to the public or audience and pick up a mark.
- (b) Responses linked to the elderly not being tech-savvy were quite popular. Candidates typically saw it in terms of one aspect they had been taught (e.g. age) and therefore found it difficult to identify a second example. Few candidates successfully answered this question as they misunderstood what was meant by the 'digital divide'.
- (c) Most candidates were able to explain some differences between new media and traditional media. Common responses included interactivity and the new media being very fast in reaching a wide, global audience.
- (d) Many responses gave a sound summary of why advertising has an important role to play *in the media industry*. Some simply discussed the advantages of advertising whilst others discussed advertising as a source of income for media organisations.
- (e) There were some very good answers from candidates with a strong understanding of Marxist and pluralist views on the role of owners; using concepts such as agenda setting and gate keeping and some good applications of knowledge about media in the candidates' own countries.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/23
Paper 23

Key messages

A lot of excellent responses were seen during this marking session which showed clear engagement with sociological issues and contemporary debates. Topical and local examples were used alongside more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify points made. Theories and concepts were also well used by many candidates. No rubric errors were seen in the examination session which is excellent.

- Ensure what is being written specifically addresses the issues raised in the question – candidates would not get marks for writing 'all that they know' on a topic area;
- Refer to sociological terminology, theory and concepts where relevant, using sociological specific vocabulary, as this will raise the overall quality of the answer;
- Introductions and definitions at the beginning of **(c)**, **(d)** and **(e)** questions take up valuable time and do not gain specific marks;
- Some candidates struggled with questions when they did not recognise the key term in the question (e.g. status frustration in **3(e)**, vocationalism in **2(c)**). As these key terms in questions will always be from the syllabus, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these. Some students failed to get any marks for some questions because of this.
- Use the marks per question as guidance as to how much is to be written for a particular question. Some candidates were writing half a page for a part **(a)** question worth 2 marks and the same for a part **(e)** question worth 15;
- On part **(e)** questions ensure that candidates have a balanced argument that considers both sides of the debate. The response needs to include a range of points for each side that are well developed and evidence based, with a justified conclusion. One sided responses cannot get beyond band 2;
- In **(e)** questions, very good candidates often did not include a conclusion – they listed points for and against without attempting an overview or judgment. A conclusion is required in this essay style question in order to reach the highest marks available.

General comments

In general there appeared to be the full range of quality of answers on the paper. In terms of the 15 mark part **(e)** question, candidates should be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully. Each point should aim to be directly focused upon what the question is asking and to engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. The better responses overall scored well on the 15 mark questions, which obviously helps to boost the overall marks on the paper.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1 – The Family

Question Comment

- (a)** Many candidates were able to answer this question successfully with the better responses ensuring that they clarified that the work being completed was for paid employment.

- (b) Candidates on the whole answered this well with the most common answers referring to male breadwinners and female housewives. Some candidates, however did not focus on the word traditional in the question and so instead wrote about joint conjugal roles.
- (c) Many responses provided a good summary of 'child centredness' with candidates having a clear understanding of how this is applied to family life. Legislation, changing values and attitudes and media consumption were commonly seen responses. Lack of conceptual engagement sometimes prevented candidates from gaining the full 6 marks.
- (d) Many candidates answered this question well, often referring to the emancipation of women and the consequent need for childcare, financial and emotional support and primary socialisation. There was some good development of points seen here. Some weaker responses discussed families in the past instead of today.
- (e) Most candidates understood some reasons for and against the idea of changing family roles with most discussing both males and females. Some candidates also discussed the role of children and extended family members. Weaker responses offered a one sided view and several were quite short and list-like. Common evidence for changing roles were increasing family diversity, symmetrical families, career women, new men and child centredness whilst patriarchy, decision making, the dark side of the family and segregated conjugal roles featured highly on the against side. Feminism was the most frequently used theory and was often used well by candidates to substantiate points made. Some very good responses neglected to write a conclusion or make a judgement which meant that they lost out on the highest marks available.

Question 2 – Education

Question Comment

- (a) Most candidates recognized that comprehensive schools catered for all candidates with many mentioning different abilities. Better responses included the idea of it serving children from a local area.
- (b) This was answered very well on the whole with candidates referring to a wide range of schools and describing them accurately.
- (c) This question was accessible to most candidates. Better responses referred to specific types of schools such as selective and vocational in order to answer the question specifically rather than generally. It was pleasing that some candidates were able to refer to courses or institutions in their own countries as examples.
- (d) The best answers here wrote very well about, for example, cultural capital, material deprivation, parental attitudes, teacher labelling and language codes in their answers. It was generally answered well but some candidates wasted time evaluating the importance of social class for which no marks could be awarded.
- (e) This question produced a wide variety of responses. Those candidates that had a good sociologically understanding of setting and streaming, typically produced strong responses that engaged well conceptually and theoretically with, for example, Marxism, self-fulfilling prophecy, halo effect and cultural capital. Less successful responses referred instead to generic effects on educational achievement such as finances, type of school attended and the environment.

Question 3 – Crime and Deviance

Question Comment

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the term, deviancy amplification. They made references to sensationalised media reporting and/or a resulting increase in crime.
- (b) Many candidates were able to make points about strategies to prevent crime but a number failed to focus on the term 'policing' in the question and therefore could not be credited. The most commonly seen accurate answers were police surveillance, police presence on the streets and the power of arrest as a deterrent.
- (c) This question was answered well, with many candidates able to make and develop points about prison and the reduction in crime. The best responses engaged conceptually, referring to deterrence, rehabilitation and incarceration.
- (d) The best responses considered social class, power, money, invisibility and Marxist theory in their answers. Weaker responses discussed general reasons for the under-representation of some crimes on the official crime statistics. There was also not always a clear understanding of what was meant by the term 'white collar crime'.
- (e) Excellent responses made links to moral panics, folk devils, news values, bias and labelling in their answers that agreed with the claim. Typical against points looked at other agents of social control and their influence and the media not being as influential as this on the audience. The role of the new media was also often considered in better responses. Weaker responses lacked theoretical and conceptual engagement with this question resulting in a lot of mid-range answers being seen.

Question 4 – Media

Question Comment

- (a) Most candidates understood this question well referring to excitement or exaggeration.
- (b) Most candidates successfully answered this question and were able to give relevant and interesting examples to demonstrate understanding of the media being global today.
- (c) Most candidates were able to explain some ways the Government can censor media content. Weaker responses generalized rather than discussed specific examples and evidence. The better answers used sociological, topical and local examples to demonstrate what the Government could do.
- (d) Most candidates were able to answer the question well when good examples were chosen. Common responses included globalisation, immediacy, speed, ease, convergence, portability, social media and interactivity.
- (e) There were some very good answers from candidates with a strong understanding of Marxist and pluralist views on the debate about news bias. Some candidates also brought feminist theory into their answers. Often seen were concepts such as agenda setting, propaganda, news values and gate keeping with some good applications of knowledge about media in the candidates' own countries. Weaker responses were based on common sense and little insight into the wider sociological debate.