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Key messages

- In **Question 1(c)** candidates should be encouraged to link their points explicitly to details in the source before briefly unpacking the point using their wider knowledge.
- In answers with banded marking criteria, candidates should be encouraged to make distinct points, rather than putting points together. A useful way of doing this is to enumerate, for example, 'firstly… secondly …', etc.
- In **Questions 2(a)** and **3(a)** some of the candidate responses used 'textbook' style definitions, possibly as a result of created glossaries of key terms – this is a good strategy for achieving up both marks for this type of question.
- In questions requiring good quality development of points and arguments – namely **questions parts (f)** and **(g)** in the methods section, and **question parts (d)** and **(e)** in the option section – candidates should be encouraged to practice 'unpacking' their points in paragraphs that include explanation and examples.

General comments

In general, candidate responses showed that the question paper was accessible, and many responses showed good sociological knowledge and skills across the different sections. Candidates were well prepared for questions relating to the strengths and limitations of research methods and data. The source material was understood by most of the candidates, though identifying problems with the validity of the statistics was less well done. In both option sections, many of the candidate responses showed sound exam technique in terms of writing the correct number of points with the required development. Some of the more successful responses were of an excellent quality with extensive development. Where candidate responses achieved in the lower mark ranges, this was often due to brief responses, which did not make enough points or develop points sufficiently to achieve in the higher mark bands.

Section A

Question 1

(a)   Candidates answered this question well. Most of the responses achieved full marks.

(b)   Many of the candidate responses achieved full marks for this question. A range of primary methods were identified. Occasionally candidate responses identified only one primary method, or incorrectly identified qualitative or quantitative data, or a type of sampling as a primary method.

(c)   This question had mixed responses. Candidate responses which achieved the highest marks drew both of their points directly from the source. For example, it was adapted or that the data only ran until 2016. The responses then unpacked these points through description, for example, that the adapted data could have been incomplete or changed, hence lowering accuracy and validity. Responses that were less successful either did not describe the identified point or focused on issues such as representativeness and generalisability, often with no detail given.

(d)   This question was answered well overall with many candidate responses identifying and describing two strengths of using closed questions in research. The more successful answers focused on the fact that closed questions generate quantitative data, which allow for comparisons and/or for easy analysis by conversion to graphs and charts. The less successful responses only made one point, or made points that were not fully relevant to the question, such as the issues of ethics or representativeness. Some of the candidate responses which used reliability as a point did not

achieve the second mark as they defined reliability with no link to closed questions. A few candidate responses confused closed questions with questionnaires and, hence, focused on issues such as issues to do with a lack of bias. A minority unsuccessfully linked closed questions with qualitative data.

(e) The question about the strengths and limitations of group interviews generally produced good responses from most of the candidates. The most successful answers described strengths, such as that it saves time and cost for researchers who can interview multiple people at once, and that it generates qualitative data. Limitations included references to the possibility of socially desirable answers, the difficulty of handling the interview, and the possibility of the interviewer effect or bias. Answers that achieved lower marks were sometimes vague in terms of pinpointing strengths and limitations, for example, simply stating 'cost'. Other candidate responses were confused in their descriptions, for example, linking the ability of gaining several opinions at once with representativeness.

(f) This question required candidates to explain why research data may be negatively affected by the interviewer effect. Candidate responses which achieved marks in the top mark band made at least three well developed conceptual points. On the whole, candidate responses showed a good knowledge of issues such as bias and how the social characteristics of the interviewer may affect respondents, linking to issues such as validity. Whilst most of the candidate responses achieved marks for identifying correct points, some were too brief and only partially developed. Many of the candidate responses achieved marks in the middle bands because they often described the interviewer effect, only partially addressing the 'why' element in the question. A number of candidate responses made reference to the Hawthorne effect which is a problem for observations and experiments rather than interviews.

(g) In this question, many of the candidate responses showed a sound knowledge of interpretivism and its strengths and weaknesses as an approach to research. Candidate responses which were the most successful identified and developed a range of points both for and against the view, drawing on sociological concepts consistently. Many illustrated the usefulness of interpretivism by references to its ability to yield qualitative data via methods such as unstructured interviews and participant observation. The most frequent evaluation points referred to positivism and the benefits of associated methods, such as structured interviews, statistics and questionnaires. An effective and evaluative conclusion at the end was needed to achieve full marks and a few candidate responses achieved this by giving a thoughtful and reflective summary. A few candidate responses included tangential material criticising positivist methods, which was not required by the question. A few candidate responses argued for a triangulation of approaches as a 'best fit' solution, sometimes putting this inside their conclusion when it could be used as an evaluation point in itself. Candidate responses which achieved lower marks either did not make enough points and/or only partially developed their points. Very few responses gave one-sided answers and there were few list-like answers.

Section B

Question 2

(a) Many of the candidate responses described the meaning of the term 'social construction' well, linking it to the idea that phenomena that are socially constructed are not the products of 'nature' but of social processes. A few candidate responses gave examples such as childhood. The more successful candidate responses often gave vague definitions or confused social construction with social characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or social class.

(b) Some good answers were seen in response to this question describing how religion controls via rules and regulations, for example, the 10 commandments, or through fear of ostracism. Answers which achieved maximum marks made their point clearly and then gave brief extra information, most frequently through an example from a religion. Other candidate responses achieved marks by referring to socialisation into core religious values by religious leaders and family. Candidate responses which achieved fewer marks often identified a point but then did not develop the idea.

(c) This question was challenging as it asked candidates to focus on how norms vary within a multicultural society. The most successful responses made references to specific norms that vary between different ethnic groups within a society, for example, looking at norms around eating and clothing/appearance or behavioural expectations. Candidate responses which achieved in the

middle mark band usually made fewer than three developed points. A few candidate responses focused on drawing comparisons between societies, which were not creditworthy.

(d) This question asked candidates to explain why research on feral children provides evidence for the importance of nurture. Candidate responses indicated that the question was fairly accessible and drew a variety of points. Some of the candidate responses explained how a lack of primary socialisation can have devastating consequences, focusing on little or no ability to communicate, walk on all fours, or follow accepted social norms. Others answer were organised around useful examples, such as Genie Wylie, Oxana Malaya and Rochom P'ngieng, which allowed them to differentiate between children who were the victims of neglect and those who were to some extent socialised by animals. Candidate responses which achieved the highest marks developed at least three good quality points, including sociological language. Candidate responses which achieved fewer marks often left points only partially developed in terms of the way in which their evidence represents the importance of nurture.

(e) This question focused on the extent to which the media is the most effective agency of secondary socialisation. The most successful responses gave a range of well-developed and conceptual arguments. Common points for the view included the importance of role models, including some interesting references to social media influencers, media representations of gender and media manipulation by governments and big companies. Arguments 'against' mainly focused on the efficacy of other secondary agents, notably education, peers, and religion, although a few candidate responses argued that the media is not widely consumed everywhere or by all age groups in the same way. Answers that were less successful made two or three arguments which were often only partially developed. A small number of candidate responses referenced the family which was not creditworthy. Conclusions, where present, often made a judgement but this was not always well justified using the evidence from answers.

Section C

Question 3

(a) Many of the candidate responses achieved both marks for this question when asked to describe an open society, referring to the ability to move up or down or be socially mobile in a stratified society. A few answers showed confusion or vagueness, for example, linking the idea to equal rights or the freedom to move in and out of a country.

(b) This question was generally well answered, and many of the candidate responses achieved full marks. Correct answers included work and wages, stocks and shares, or income from property. Some of the candidate responses only achieved half of the marks available as they simply listed two correct sources with no subsequent description.

(c) This question was generally answered well, with some of the candidate responses showing a clear grasp of how the life chances of women differ from those of men. The most successful responses focused on prejudice and discrimination linked to the workplace, but health inequalities and the sexual division of labour also featured regularly. Some responses did not give enough range to achieve the higher band marks and achieved limited marks due to a lack of development. The most successful candidate responses focused on making at least three appropriate, developed points. A minority of candidate responses were less successful because responses were short, only partially developed and/or did not to contrast the life chances of women with men.

(d) This question allowed candidate responses to showcase some of the impressive knowledge about ethnic inequality. High achieving answers made several well developed and conceptual points. Common points included labelling in schools, institutional racism, workplace discrimination, and scapegoating in the media. Candidate responses which achieved mid-range marks often made only two points, one of which was only partially developed.

(e) Some powerful arguments were seen in response to this question by a few candidates who were very well equipped to deal with a debate about the extent to which the culture of poverty explains inequality in modern industrial society. The most successful answers focused on values such as immediate gratification and fatalism, along with the idea of welfare dependency and showing how these link to social inequality. A popular approach in evaluation was to adopt a more structuralist approach and focus on social barriers, such as employment. Most of the conclusions were often summative rather than reflectively weighing up the evidence given. However, many of the

candidate responses made good use of theory, particularly the New Right and Marxism. Ultimately, marks achieved were usually linked to the number of points and the quality of development. A few candidate responses showed a confused understanding of the culture of poverty.

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Key messages

- In **Question 1(a)** candidates should be encouraged to identify points directly from the source and avoid describing or explaining them.
- In **Question 1(c)** candidates should be encouraged to consider the origins and the date of the research summary in **Source A** if the question asks to consider how valid the material is.
- In **question parts (d)** more marks are available than for **parts (c)**, and so candidates should be encouraged to develop points in more detail and with sociological concepts to achieve top band.
- Candidates should be encouraged to avoid lengthy introductions and definitions at the start of their responses.

General comments

In general candidate responses showed that most of the questions in this question paper were accessible. The responses demonstrated the knowledge and skills across the different sections. In section one many of the candidate responses were successful in answering the questions linked to the key strengths and limitations of sociological approaches, methods and data. Some of the candidate responses showed that identifying and describing problems with the validity of the source material was challenging and candidates should be encouraged to further practice answering these types of questions. In both option sections many candidate responses demonstrated a generally sound knowledge of the topics and key sociological ideas. Some of the candidate responses were able to use evidence and develop points in a sophisticated way. Where candidate responses achieved in the lower mark ranges this was often due to brief responses which did not make enough points or did not develop points sufficiently to achieve in the higher mark bands. Very few candidate responses indicated that candidates ran out of time or show rubric errors.

Section A

Question 1

(a) Many candidate responses achieved both marks on this question. However, some of the candidate responses complicated their answers and made calculations or gave broad conclusions. This question simply asked candidates to identify two results and there were multiple results to choose from in the source. Very few responses only gave one answer.

(b) Most of the candidate responses gained both marks for this question and identified two primary methods. A minority of responses made references to qualitative/quantitative data or sampling methods, which were not creditworthy.

(c) Many candidate responses showed that this question was challenging for them. The question asked candidates to describe two problems with the validity of the data in the Source A. Many candidate responses focused on the sample sizes or the fact that the sample only came from the United States, and, hence, discussed issues to do with representativeness and generalisability. Those responses that interpreted content analysis as inherently quantitative and lacking in detail, often made the point without reference back to the source material. However, most of the candidate responses achieved some marks and frequent creditworthy answers were linked to possible bias, the source being outdated and the source being adapted.

(d) Responses to this question were mixed, with a very few candidate responses achieving full marks. Many responses defined quota sampling in an 'introduction' but did not describe strengths well. Some of the candidate responses did not show the knowledge of what quota sample was and gave

generic and frequently incorrect answers. Others identified two strengths of quota sampling but did not develop the description. Many of the candidate responses referred to 'time saving' and 'easier' in a basic way with no further development.

(e)   In this question candidates were asked to describe two strengths and two weaknesses of non-participant observation. A common misconception seen in many of the candidate responses were that non-participant means that the researcher is always covert or is not present. This may sometimes be the case, but candidate responses which used these points needed to contextualise their remarks. Relatively few candidate responses focused on the non-participant aspect – the researcher is watching but not joining in – and, as a result, few achieved maximum marks. Candidate responses which did achieve high marks discussed strengths such as that it allows the researcher to avoid potential danger, for example, in research on gangs, or that it is easier to record results. Limitations included the inability to understand the action from an insider's point of view or that if a researcher is taking part there may be an observer effect on the sample.

(f)   Candidate responses which showed the knowledge of what a case study was, often also achieved at least the middle mark band marks for this question. Though relatively few responses made three well developed conceptual points. Answers which achieved high marks included links to the high level of detail due to intense concentration on one event or social phenomena, the ability to mix and triangulate methods, or the validity achieved when conducting research in a naturalistic environment. Some of the candidate responses made good use of Goldthorpe's study 'The Affluent Worker' or case studies of gangs. Many of the candidate responses were generalised in their approach, sometimes showing confusion of what a case study may involve but managed to achieve some marks. The unsuccessful answers confused case study with pilot study or secondary data.

(g)   In this long response question most of the candidate responses showed a sound knowledge of various types of interview and their strengths and weaknesses. The most successful candidate responses identified and developed a range of points both, for and against the view, drawing on sociological concepts consistently. An effective and evaluative conclusion at the end was needed to achieve full marks, and a few candidate responses achieved this by giving a thoughtful and reflective summary. The more successful candidate responses were also well linked with validity as per the instruction in the question. Candidate responses which achieved middle mark band often confined the discussion to the pros and cons of interview types, without focusing on the validity aspect at times. The most successful responses incorporated theory and developed interpretivist ideas to good effect. Popular points focused on the strengths of unstructured interviews in terms of flexibility, qualitative data, rapport and empathy. Some of the candidate responses discussed the advantage of having an interviewer present to clarify and prompt. In terms of evaluation candidate responses often advocated the strength of participant observation in giving more valid data. Some of the candidate responses chose to use the strengths of positivist methods to evaluate the validity of interviews, which was more difficult to do but sometimes worked well when linked to the objectivity and neutrality of positivist researchers, which is likely to minimise researcher bias and effects. A minority of candidate responses offered a critique of the positivist methods, which was unnecessary and did not achieve marks.

Section B

Question 2

(a)   This question asked candidates to define the term 'role'. It was well answered, and many responses achieved both marks for discussing it as a part that individuals play in society, often referring to examples such as 'father', 'housewife', etc.

(b)   Many of the candidate responses showed a good knowledge of feral children often achieving full marks. Some of the responses did not show an understanding of what a feral child is and answered in terms of deviance. Some of the candidate responses wrote more than is necessary for a 'describe' question and showed their knowledge with examples from real life and fictional books such the Jungle Book.

(c)   This question asked candidates to explain how individuals are socialised into an ethnic identity, and candidate responses indicated that this question was challenging. Many of the responses focused on socialisation in general and made creditworthy points, but often did not apply this to ethnic identity, which was often simply linked to the end of other points. Candidate responses which

achieved higher marks discussed techniques, such as role-modelling, imitation, peer pressure and religious teachings, and linked them to food, festivals, clothing and language in terms of how they express ethnic identity. In general, however, candidate responses showed that it was difficult to apply socialisation techniques to ethnic identity.

(d) Many of the candidate responses showed an understanding of the idea of social construction and applied it to old age. Responses which achieved the highest mark band made excellent points about differing retirement ages across cultures, different perceptions of old age across time and also different perceptions and media stereotyping of old age within societies. Many of the candidate responses identified norms associated with age, but frequently did not link them to being a social construct. Some of the candidate responses gave different points together, making it difficult to award marks to discrete points. The less successful candidate responses often described aspects of being old. A minority of candidate responses misunderstood the question and focused on children and youths and, therefore, achieved no marks.

(e) In assessing the extent to which education is the most effective agent of social control many candidate responses showed a very good knowledge and understanding of a variety of both, informal and formal, control techniques. Sociological theory and a wide range of concepts were seen, such as the hidden curriculum, sanctions, peer pressure, as well as formal techniques such as arrest and imprisonment. Many of the responses showed knowledge of several points both 'for' and 'against', giving a wide range of points. A few answers focused more on socialisation rather than social control. However, well-constructed arguments on both sides were seen, with a significant number of candidate responses distinguishing between formal and informal social control and effectively contrasting school with family, peers and the state. Answers that were less successful often made two or three arguments which were only partially developed. Conclusions, where present, often made a judgement, but this was not always well justified using the evidence from answers.

Section C

Question 3

(a) Many of the candidate responses answered this question well and achieved both marks for defining relative poverty, often referencing being able to afford basic necessities but being poorer than neighbours or others in society. A few candidate responses mistakenly described absolute instead of relative poverty and a few used the word 'relative' to refer to the family and, therefore, their answers did not achieve the mark.

(b) This question was very accessible and most of the candidate responses achieved marks by describing two ways in which status can be achieved. A small number of responses focused on ascribed rather than achieved status. The most common responses identified hard work, employment, education and marriage. A very small number of responses identified correct points but then did not describe them, thus achieving partial marks.

(c) Candidate responses generally showed a good knowledge of how traditional male roles have changed in modern societies. The most successful responses developed three of more discrete points and included concepts in each point. There were references to the breadwinner, the new man, emotional roles, changing work patterns, symmetrical families and conjugal roles. There were also some interesting cultural differences identified with some of the candidate responses depicting men and women working together at home and this being changed by industrialisation as men left the home to become the breadwinner. Some of the candidate responses did not achieve the top band as they did not identify the 'change' element of the question. Some of the responses focused on feminism and changes to women's role. The less successful answers did not achieve the higher mark band and wrote a long description of traditional male roles which had only limited relevance. Answers which achieved lower marks often were more common-sense rather than sociological, though most of the candidate responses recognised changes, despite it being in a basic way.

(d) This was the most challenging question for the candidates in this section. The most successful answers often compared the way different countries defined or measured poverty and made comparative statements about different types of poverty. Many of the responses were vague and not well linked to why poverty may be difficult to define, for example, discussing the difference between absolute and relative poverty but then not linking this back to the question. Other

responses focused on the causes of poverty, with discussion of the culture of poverty, the poverty trap and the poverty cycle, without a focus on definition.

(e) This question was generally well answered. Candidate responses were usually linked to the number of points and the quality of development. Higher achieving answers engaged with the failures and successes of welfare states, gave a wide range of examples and used theories such as Marxism, feminist and functionalism in a sophisticated way. These were well-structured with points on both sides and a range of concepts. Welfare, education, equality acts, employment and taxes were all discussed 'for' and 'against', and there were localised examples given, which were interesting and relevant. Candidate responses which were less successful often focused on basic ideas of poverty and inequality, but the majority of candidate responses showed knowledge of what government measures were and gave some examples.

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Key messages

- In **Question 1(c)** candidates should be encouraged to link their points explicitly to details in the source before briefly unpacking the point using their wider knowledge.
- In answers with banded marking criteria, candidates should be encouraged to make distinct points, rather than putting points together. A useful way of doing this is to enumerate, for example, 'firstly… secondly …', etc.
- In **Questions 2(a)** and **3(a)** some of the candidate responses used 'textbook' style definitions, possibly as a result of created glossaries of key terms – this is a good strategy for achieving up both marks for this type of question.
- In questions requiring good quality development of points and arguments – namely **questions parts (f)** and **(g)** in the methods section, and **question parts (d)** and **(e)** in the option section – candidates should be encouraged to practice 'unpacking' their points in paragraphs that include explanation and examples.

General comments

In general, candidate responses showed that the question paper was accessible, and many responses showed good sociological knowledge and skills across the different sections. Candidates were well prepared for questions relating to the strengths and limitations of research methods and data. The source material was understood by most of the candidates, though identifying problems with the validity of the statistics was less well done. In both option sections, many of the candidate responses showed sound exam technique in terms of writing the correct number of points with the required development. Some of the more successful responses were of an excellent quality with extensive development. Where candidate responses achieved in the lower mark ranges, this was often due to brief responses, which did not make enough points or develop points sufficiently to achieve in the higher mark bands.

Section A

Question 1

(a) Candidates answered this question well. Most of the responses achieved full marks.

(b) Many of the candidate responses achieved full marks for this question. A range of primary methods were identified. Occasionally candidate responses identified only one primary method, or incorrectly identified qualitative or quantitative data, or a type of sampling as a primary method.

(c) This question had mixed responses. Candidate responses which achieved the highest marks drew both of their points directly from the source. For example, it was adapted or that the data only ran until 2016. The responses then unpacked these points through description, for example, that the adapted data could have been incomplete or changed, hence lowering accuracy and validity. Responses that were less successful either did not describe the identified point or focused on issues such as representativeness and generalisability, often with no detail given.

(d) This question was answered well overall with many candidate responses identifying and describing two strengths of using closed questions in research. The more successful answers focused on the fact that closed questions generate quantitative data, which allow for comparisons and/or for easy analysis by conversion to graphs and charts. The less successful responses only made one point, or made points that were not fully relevant to the question, such as the issues of ethics or representativeness. Some of the candidate responses which used reliability as a point did not

achieve the second mark as they defined reliability with no link to closed questions. A few candidate responses confused closed questions with questionnaires and, hence, focused on issues such as issues to do with a lack of bias. A minority unsuccessfully linked closed questions with qualitative data.

(e)   The question about the strengths and limitations of group interviews generally produced good responses from most of the candidates. The most successful answers described strengths, such as that it saves time and cost for researchers who can interview multiple people at once, and that it generates qualitative data. Limitations included references to the possibility of socially desirable answers, the difficulty of handling the interview, and the possibility of the interviewer effect or bias. Answers that achieved lower marks were sometimes vague in terms of pinpointing strengths and limitations, for example, simply stating 'cost'. Other candidate responses were confused in their descriptions, for example, linking the ability of gaining several opinions at once with representativeness.

(f)   This question required candidates to explain why research data may be negatively affected by the interviewer effect. Candidate responses which achieved marks in the top mark band made at least three well developed conceptual points. On the whole, candidate responses showed a good knowledge of issues such as bias and how the social characteristics of the interviewer may affect respondents, linking to issues such as validity. Whilst most of the candidate responses achieved marks for identifying correct points, some were too brief and only partially developed. Many of the candidate responses achieved marks in the middle bands because they often described the interviewer effect, only partially addressing the 'why' element in the question. A number of candidate responses made reference to the Hawthorne effect which is a problem for observations and experiments rather than interviews.

(g)   In this question, many of the candidate responses showed a sound knowledge of interpretivism and its strengths and weaknesses as an approach to research. Candidate responses which were the most successful identified and developed a range of points both for and against the view, drawing on sociological concepts consistently. Many illustrated the usefulness of interpretivism by references to its ability to yield qualitative data via methods such as unstructured interviews and participant observation. The most frequent evaluation points referred to positivism and the benefits of associated methods, such as structured interviews, statistics and questionnaires. An effective and evaluative conclusion at the end was needed to achieve full marks and a few candidate responses achieved this by giving a thoughtful and reflective summary. A few candidate responses included tangential material criticising positivist methods, which was not required by the question. A few candidate responses argued for a triangulation of approaches as a 'best fit' solution, sometimes putting this inside their conclusion when it could be used as an evaluation point in itself. Candidate responses which achieved lower marks either did not make enough points and/or only partially developed their points. Very few responses gave one-sided answers and there were few list-like answers.

Section B

Question 2

(a)   Many of the candidate responses described the meaning of the term 'social construction' well, linking it to the idea that phenomena that are socially constructed are not the products of 'nature' but of social processes. A few candidate responses gave examples such as childhood. The more successful candidate responses often gave vague definitions or confused social construction with social characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or social class.

(b)   Some good answers were seen in response to this question describing how religion controls via rules and regulations, for example, the 10 commandments, or through fear of ostracism. Answers which achieved maximum marks made their point clearly and then gave brief extra information, most frequently through an example from a religion. Other candidate responses achieved marks by referring to socialisation into core religious values by religious leaders and family. Candidate responses which achieved fewer marks often identified a point but then did not develop the idea.

(c)   This question was challenging as it asked candidates to focus on how norms vary within a multicultural society. The most successful responses made references to specific norms that vary between different ethnic groups within a society, for example, looking at norms around eating and clothing/appearance or behavioural expectations. Candidate responses which achieved in the

middle mark band usually made fewer than three developed points. A few candidate responses focused on drawing comparisons between societies, which were not creditworthy.

(d) This question asked candidates to explain why research on feral children provides evidence for the importance of nurture. Candidate responses indicated that the question was fairly accessible and drew a variety of points. Some of the candidate responses explained how a lack of primary socialisation can have devastating consequences, focusing on little or no ability to communicate, walk on all fours, or follow accepted social norms. Others answer were organised around useful examples, such as Genie Wylie, Oxana Malaya and Rochom P'ngieng, which allowed them to differentiate between children who were the victims of neglect and those who were to some extent socialised by animals. Candidate responses which achieved the highest marks developed at least three good quality points, including sociological language. Candidate responses which achieved fewer marks often left points only partially developed in terms of the way in which their evidence represents the importance of nurture.

(e) This question focused on the extent to which the media is the most effective agency of secondary socialisation. The most successful responses gave a range of well-developed and conceptual arguments. Common points for the view included the importance of role models, including some interesting references to social media influencers, media representations of gender and media manipulation by governments and big companies. Arguments 'against' mainly focused on the efficacy of other secondary agents, notably education, peers, and religion, although a few candidate responses argued that the media is not widely consumed everywhere or by all age groups in the same way. Answers that were less successful made two or three arguments which were often only partially developed. A small number of candidate responses referenced the family which was not creditworthy. Conclusions, where present, often made a judgement but this was not always well justified using the evidence from answers.

Section C

Question 3

(a) Many of the candidate responses achieved both marks for this question when asked to describe an open society, referring to the ability to move up or down or be socially mobile in a stratified society. A few answers showed confusion or vagueness, for example, linking the idea to equal rights or the freedom to move in and out of a country.

(b) This question was generally well answered, and many of the candidate responses achieved full marks. Correct answers included work and wages, stocks and shares, or income from property. Some of the candidate responses only achieved half of the marks available as they simply listed two correct sources with no subsequent description.

(c) This question was generally answered well, with some of the candidate responses showing a clear grasp of how the life chances of women differ from those of men. The most successful responses focused on prejudice and discrimination linked to the workplace, but health inequalities and the sexual division of labour also featured regularly. Some responses did not give enough range to achieve the higher band marks and achieved limited marks due to a lack of development. The most successful candidate responses focused on making at least three appropriate, developed points. A minority of candidate responses were less successful because responses were short, only partially developed and/or did not to contrast the life chances of women with men.

(d) This question allowed candidate responses to showcase some of the impressive knowledge about ethnic inequality. High achieving answers made several well developed and conceptual points. Common points included labelling in schools, institutional racism, workplace discrimination, and scapegoating in the media. Candidate responses which achieved mid-range marks often made only two points, one of which was only partially developed.

(e) Some powerful arguments were seen in response to this question by a few candidates who were very well equipped to deal with a debate about the extent to which the culture of poverty explains inequality in modern industrial society. The most successful answers focused on values such as immediate gratification and fatalism, along with the idea of welfare dependency and showing how these link to social inequality. A popular approach in evaluation was to adopt a more structuralist approach and focus on social barriers, such as employment. Most of the conclusions were often summative rather than reflectively weighing up the evidence given. However, many of the

candidate responses made good use of theory, particularly the New Right and Marxism. Ultimately, marks achieved were usually linked to the number of points and the quality of development. A few candidate responses showed a confused understanding of the culture of poverty.

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Key messages

- Centres should encourage candidates to read questions carefully and understand the significance of the terms used. This is particularly relevant to **Question 1(d)**.

- Most of the candidate responses showed an understanding that **part (e)** questions require a debate – 'for' and 'against', with a conclusion. There were fewer one-sided **part (e)** responses than in the past sessions. However, some of the more successful candidates on the 'against' side identified all alternatives to the theory or viewed the question in a juxtaposed way. Candidates should be advised to counter the points on the 'for' side and specifically address the question asked.

- Some candidate responses repeated questions in the opening paragraph or included definitions or historical context before addressing the question. This may help candidates to prepare to answer the question, but is unlikely to gain any marks and might result in timing issues by the end of the question paper.

- Candidates should be encouraged to show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. Some candidates expressed ideas without explicitly doing this.

- Candidates should be encouraged to think about what the questions are asking and plan answers to those specific questions in their designated 15 minutes of reading time. This is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidates remain focused on the specific demands of the question.

- Some candidates did not use paragraphs in the longer responses, which made it difficult for examiners to see where points begin and end. The 'point per paragraph' structure is thus recommended. Centres should encourage candidates to develop discrete essay writing skills and techniques to help them answer the **part (e)** questions.

- Many candidates who did not show an understanding of the key term in the question (e.g. alternatives to the family, meritocracy, sociological explanations, postmodernists etc.), could not access the question. As the key terms in the questions are drawn directly from the syllabus, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these during their examination preparation. Some candidates did not achieve any marks at all for some of the questions because of this issue.

- Candidates should be encouraged to use the marks per question as guidance for how much is to be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. For example, candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question worth 6 marks as for a **part (e)** question worth 15 marks. Candidates should be encouraged to manage their time to maximise the marks achieved.

- Understanding of the command words are crucial. In the **part (b)** questions, for example, some responses were insufficiently developed (the command word is 'describe'), and some candidates did not achieve full marks even though some relevant knowledge was shown.

General comments

Section A (Family) was the most popular option, followed by *Section B* (Education) and *Section C* (Crime). The least popular option was *Section D* (Media).

Relevant contemporary, global and localised examples were well used alongside the more traditional

'textbook' examples to justify and substantiate several of the points made. These were all duly credited.

Very few rubric errors were seen in the examination session, allowing most of the candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidate responses did not number or incorrectly numbered the answers, though, and therefore, centres should emphasise to candidates the importance of doing this diligently.

There was a good range of responses produced, with marks achieved across the full spread of marks available. In the **part (a)** questions, candidates include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a really useful way of adding a second element to an answer and should be encouraged. **Part (b)** questions require **two** distinctly different points – candidates should separate these and label them clearly. In **part (c)** questions candidates should make more than two sociological points: evidenced and developed. For **part (d)** questions candidates should adopt the same approach as for **part (c)** questions, but develop ideas further, consider more range and ensure that concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** questions. Candidates should be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant for the 15 mark **part (e)** questions. Candidates should aim to give three points 'for' and three points 'against' the claim in the question. A well-focused conclusion that makes a supported judgement on the claim in the question is also required. Each point should be directly focused on what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates chose to answer the 15 mark questions first to make sure that they do not run out of time – this approach worked well for several candidates.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Family

(a)   Many responses showed some understanding, referring to births or to pregnancies, but often in a way that could equally apply to a definition of a birth rate. A few responses gave an exact definition.

(b)   This was a generally well answered question with the most common responses being joint/shared and segregated conjugal roles. Many responses briefly stated what roles women and men traditionally had without naming them and so did not achieve the second mark for each point.

(c)   Industrialisation was interpreted by some candidate responses as a historical process now ended, and by some as happening now in parts of the world. Credit was given for both approaches. Many responses referred to changes from one type of family to others, to changes in gender roles (usually women working and so leading to dual worker families) and to changes in family size and in the status of children.

(d)   There were some successful responses to this question. Many candidates misinterpreted the question as being about alternative types of family rather than alternatives **to** the family, and so wrote about cohabitation, single parent families, reconstituted families, etc. The most successful answers considered ideas about communes, shared households and single person households. These were explained with ideas such as the changing roles and status of women, geographical mobility, individualism and the cost of living. Some correct responses such as communes were mentioned, and a few responses focused only on alternatives to the family.

(e)   Some candidate responses interpreted the feminist view of the family as being a criticism of the traditional nuclear family, others – as changes to the family advocated by feminists and now to some extent achieved. Credit was given for both approaches. There were some thoughtful developed conclusions which reached a judgement and achieved full marks.

Section B

Question 2

Education

(a)   Most candidates responded to this question by referring to government running and financing schools.

(b)   Some candidates misinterpreted the question and gave factors external to school as their answers (for example, material or cultural deprivation). Successful responses were often based on teacher attitudes and friendship groups.

(c)   Many responses made useful distinctions between formal and informal control, and between positive and negative sanctions, which enabled them to make several valid points. A few candidate responses did not gain marks by discussing the social control of young people by their parents or other agencies external to schools.

(d)   Many responses made some relevant points while they did not use sociological concepts to help explain them. Some points made, such as the claims that boys are less mature than girls, or that boys play sport more that they study, were not irrelevant but showed limited sociological insight and thus could not score in the top band. The most successful responses also considered sociological ideas such as the anti-school sub-culture, culture of masculinity, laddish behaviour, crisis of masculinity and teacher labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy.

(e)   Candidate responses showed that the term 'meritocracy' was sometimes not well understood. Quite a few responses argued that obstacles faced by the working class, or minority ethnic groups, were evidence of meritocracy rather than its absence. Private education example was used well in this answer. However, most of the responses recognised the need to put forward arguments and evidence both 'for' and 'against', there were very few one-sided answers.

Section C

Question 3

Crime, deviance and social control

(a)   Most of the candidate responses responded to this question well, referring to observation, monitoring, use of security cameras or the aim of preventing crime.

(b)   Overall, this question was answered well, although there were a few candidate responses that did not show an understanding of what the question was asking and wrote generically about trends in crime. Many successful responses were about material deprivation, labelling theory or masculinity.

(c)   Answers to this question often showed some good understanding, making points about incapacitation, rehabilitation, deterrence and other ways punishment can reduce crime. Specific examples of punishment were also used well. This was a well answered question overall.

(d)   This was generally a well answered question with many candidate responses making serval points, such as fear of reprisal, lack of confidence in the police, sensitivity of some crimes and not wanting the offender to be punished. This was a question where the sociological concepts were perhaps less obvious than in some other questions, but candidates should be encouraged to demonstrate their sociological knowledge whenever possible. Candidates could discuss here why white collar and corporate crimes are often not reported. Concepts such as the dark figure and the hidden figure were well applied alongside cybercrime examples.

(e)   This question produced some good responses. For support of the view in the question, some candidate responses focused on why young people commit more crime than other age groups, while others considered the young, working age adults and older people in turn. For the 'against' side some candidate responses discussed other possible factors and reasons (e.g. gender, ethnicity and social class) in a list like manner, demonstrating some good knowledge, but without fully focusing on the question.

Section D

Question 4

<u>Media</u>

(a)　　　This question was answered with an example, such as blogging or email, alongside the idea of the new media being a two-way process. The idea of consumers also being producers was well applied.

(b)　　　This was a well answered question with most of the candidates clearly describing two stereotypical representations of men in the media. Common examples were males as the breadwinner/provider, the hero figure and being unemotional/work not home centred.

(c)　　　This question was answered well by the candidates who studied the media topic and showed a clear understanding of what postmodernism is. The more successful responses linked their points to consumer choice, globality, citizen journalism, diversity and the possibilities for more independent/niche producers.

(d)　　　This question was well answered, and candidate produced both simple and highly sociological responses. Violence was the focus of majority of the responses and common themes seen were imitation and role modelling. The hypodermic syringe model was also used well.

(e)　　　Responses to this question generated some generic and some very sociological answers. Some responses showed no relevant knowledge of what the term 'gatekeeper' means. The more successful answers pitted owners, government, editors and journalists against the audience, new media and advertising. Some knowledge of media effects theories was also shown. Examples relating to censorship were well used and applied.

SOCIOLOGY

Key messages

- Candidate responses to **Questions 1(c)**, **2(c)** and **3(b)** indicated that candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully and understand the significance of terms used.

- Most of the candidate responses showed an understanding that **part (e)** questions require a debate – 'for' and 'against', with a conclusion. There were fewer one-sided **part (e)** responses than in the past sessions. However, some of the more successful candidates discussed all the alternatives to the theory on the 'against' side, or viewed the question in a juxtaposed way. Instead candidates should be encouraged to counter the points on the 'for' side and specifically address the question asked.

- Some candidate responses repeated questions in their opening paragraph or included definitions or historical context before starting to address the question. This may help candidates to prepare to answer the question, but is unlikely to gain any marks and often result in timing issues at the end of the question paper.

- Candidates should be encouraged to show their sociological knowledge by using terms, concepts, studies and theories whenever possible. Many candidates expressed ideas without explicitly doing this.

- Candidates should be encouraged to think about what the questions are asking and plan answers to those specific questions in their designated 15 minutes of reading time – this is particularly important in the 15 mark essay questions to ensure that candidates remain focused on the specific demands of the question.

- Some candidate responses are not using paragraphs in the longer responses, making it difficult for examiners to see where points begin and end. The 'point per paragraph' structure is thus recommended. Centres should encourage candidates to develop discrete essay writing skills and techniques to help candidates answer the **part (e)** questions.

- Many candidate responses indicated that candidates who did not show an understanding of the key term in the question (e.g. demographic trends, linguistic influences, white-collar crime, digital divide, etc.), could not access the question. As the key terms in the questions will be drawn directly from the syllabus, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these terms during their examination preparation. Some candidates did not achieve any marks for some of the questions because of this issue.

- Candidates should be encouraged to use the marks per question as guidance for how much is to be written and how long should be spent on a particular question. Some candidates were writing as much for a **part (c)** question worth 6 marks as for a **part (e)** question worth 15. Candidates should be encouraged to manage their time to maximise the marks achieved.

- Understanding of the command words is crucial. In the **part (b)** questions, for example, some responses were insufficiently developed (command word is 'describe'), and the candidates did not achieve full marks even though some relevant knowledge was shown.

General comments

Section A (Family) was the most popular option, followed by *Section B* (Education) and *Section C* (Crime). The least popular option was *Section D* (Media).

Relevant contemporary, global and localised examples were used well alongside the more traditional 'textbook' examples in order to justify and substantiate several of the points made. These were all duly credited.

Very few rubric errors were seen in the examination session, allowing most of the candidates to maximise their chances of success. Some candidates did not number or incorrectly numbered their answers, though, and centres should encourage candidates to be aware of the importance of doing this diligently.

A good range of answers was produced, with marks achieved across the full spread of available marks. In the **part (a)** questions, candidates should be encouraged to include **two** separate elements in their definition. Examples can be a really useful way of adding a second element to an answer and should be encouraged. **Part (b)** requires **two** distinctly different points – candidates should separate these and label them clearly. In **part (c)** questions candidates should make more than two sociological points: evidenced and developed. For **part (d)** candidates should adopt the same approach as for **part (c)**, but develop ideas further, consider more range, and ensure concepts/theory/studies are used appropriately. Concepts and explicit sociological engagement tend to be the key differentiator between a **part (c)** and a **part (d)** questions. Candidates should be encouraged to organise their answers into paragraphs and to develop each idea fully using theory, studies, examples and/or concepts wherever relevant for the15 mark **part (e)** questions. Candidates should aim to give three points 'for' and three points 'against' the claim in the question. A well focused conclusion that makes a supported judgement on the claim in the question is also required. Each point should be directly focused on what the question is asking and should engage sociologically and conceptually wherever possible. Some candidates chose to answer the 15 mark questions first, to make sure that they do not run out of time – this approach worked well for several candidates this session.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

Family

(a) Most of the candidates answered the question correctly, linking the term 'reconstituted family' to remarriage and then divorce/death. Some responses did not make clear, or any, links to the formation of a new family, and therefore presented partial definitions. Terms like 'step-family', 'step-father' or 'step-siblings' were also mentioned, and some candidates referred to 'blended' family.

(b) Some candidate responses did not show an understanding of the term 'demographic trends'. Several candidate responses mentioned birth/death rates, but did not give a trend or link to how it affected family life. Many responses discussed divorce/family types, however, these answers were not creditable. Those candidates who showed an understanding of the term 'demographic trends', also achieved full marks.

(c) Many successful, sociologically engaged responses to this question were seen, and, consequently, many candidates achieved high marks. Many candidates linked changes in family functions to other institutions/agencies performing these functions instead. Some candidates, however, lacked focus as their responses were more about changes in gender roles than changing family functions. While some of the responses did provide links to family functions, others did not, and, therefore, received low or no marks.

(d) Some excellent answers were seen to this question with a good use of key concepts and studies. The responses were wide ranging and focused on why conjugal roles had changed. Common responses included references to feminism, dual worker families, changes in the definition of masculinity, the privatisation of the nuclear family and/or the importance of labour-saving devices. Many responses also discussed family diversity, particularly same-sex families and lone parents. Weaker responses described traditional roles instead of discussing the reasons for change.

(e) Overall, majority of the candidates gave balanced answers, offering a range of valid arguments for both sides of the debate. To argue for family life being negative for its members, majority of responses discussed domestic violence, child neglect and abuse and/or empty-shell marriages, where the most successful responses provided developed points with clear links to the question. For evaluation, many candidate responses talked about child-centeredness, emotional and

financial support and/or socialisation, among other factors, with many responses referring to functionalism. The more successful responses made clear references to other sociological perspectives, such as the New Right, Marxism and feminism. Weaker responses were typically not organised into paragraphs, offering undeveloped or underdeveloped points as well as generic arguments. Many responses with valid conclusions reached Band 3 and some reached Band 4. Some of the most successful responses presented a developed judgment.

Section B

Question 2

Education

(a) Majority of the candidates answered this question correctly linking the term to punishment and deterrence, frequently citing examples of a sanction such as detention or exclusion.

(b) Most of the candidate responses correctly identified and developed two relevant points, referring mainly to male and female subject choices, differences in gender socialisation, teacher expectations and role models. Some responses did not link gender expectations to subject choice and therefore achieved marks for identification only.

(c) There were some very successful responses to this question, making references to Bernstein's restricted and elaborate codes, language issues of ethnic minority groups, and different dialects that may influence educational achievement. A few responses also discussed bilingualism as an asset to educational achievement. The weaker responses provided little sociological engagement, presenting more generic answers, while a few candidates misunderstood the question, and focused on various home factors that may impact educational achievement instead not linguistic ones specifically.

(d) Majority of the candidate responses provided a range of valid reasons to explain why material factors can influence educational success. Common points made included overcrowded homes and inadequate diets, candidates not being able to afford extra resources and private teachers, and working class candidates having to combine part-time jobs with studying at school. The more successful responses demonstrated a high level of sociological knowledge and understanding, often referring to Marxist theory, while the weaker ones offered generic and/or vague responses.

(e) Most of the candidates interpreted the question correctly, making points 'for' and 'against' private education and challenging the functionalist view that education is meritocratic, thus providing balanced answers. Many candidate responses outlined the functionalist view of education, while evaluating it with alternative explanations, with the stronger responses linking these with Marxism and, some, with feminism. Majority of the responses included points such as private education not being able to be afforded by all, private schools offering better opportunities, more resources and better teachers and facilities, as well as top universities preferring candidates from private schools. The weaker responses presented some undeveloped and/or underdeveloped points and some responses made little or no reference to theory or to meritocracy. Many candidate responses did not show an understanding of what was meant by the term 'private education'.

Section C

Question 3

Crime, deviance and social control

(a) The majority of candidates achieved at least one mark for this question, but many did not give enough detail to achieve two marks. A group of friends was a common partial response. The most successful responses most often linked the 'peer group' to a group of people of similar age and status.

(b) While some responses correctly described two policing strategies aimed at reducing crime, others described those used by courts or other institutions instead. Some responses were vague and could not be credited fully or at all. Out of the correct policing strategies discussed, the most common ones were surveillance, police targeting, arrest and police presence in public places.

(c) Overall, this question was answered fairly well, and candidate responses showed knowledge and understanding of white-collar crime. Some of the common points made were that such crimes were often ignored by the police/courts, that they were not perceived as serious, and that they were frequently dealt with inside the company with white-collar criminals being more knowledgeable when negotiating the justice system. While many of the responses offered developed points, the weaker ones were generic, and did not adequately focus on the 'how' part of the question.

(d) Candidate responses showed a good understanding of different reasons why a lack of opportunity may lead to crime. This lack of opportunity was principally connected to unemployment and discrimination/marginalisation of ethnic minorities and working class people and, in some cases, to a lack of educational opportunities. The more successful responses outlined Cohen's status frustration and Merton's strain theory, while the weaker ones offered generic information with limited sociological engagement.

(e) Most of the candidate responses presented reasons for supporting the argument that inadequate socialisation can explain criminal behaviour. References were mainly made to improper socialisation by family and other institutions, hence not knowing or conforming to the accepted norms and values. The more successful responses then linked this clearly to criminal conduct. Other candidate responses discussed much crime being motivated by financial gain, lack of opportunity, masculinity and status frustration. Evaluation was often stronger than the 'for' side of the debate which was often less well developed/explained. The most successful responses made clear references to theory and perspectives, such as Marxism, functionalism or Cohen's status frustration, with the majority offering more general, hence somewhat less sociologically engaged, responses.

Section D

Question 4

<u>Media</u>

(a) Most of the candidates achieved at least one mark for this question, and many candidates achieved two marks. The more successful responses showed a clear understanding of the term and gave an example of a group it applied to. For example, the term was defined correctly as a social group that is not represented/under-represented in the media with the example of ethnic minorities or women.

(b) While some responses were rather vague about how media violence affected societal violence, others were successful in describing clear ways. Common responses described imitation, glamourising violence, hypodermic syringe model and role modelling.

(c) The question was answered well overall, with candidate responses outlining a range of different ways in which the working class are represented in the media. References were made to them being portrayed as scroungers, unskilled and living in poverty, criminals, etc. More positive representations were also credited such as the supportive working class community and being hard working. Some of the most successful responses made references to GUMG research and Marxism.

(d) Most of the candidate responses showed a correct understanding of the term 'digital divide' and discussed it with links to age, class and/or location. Other responses, however, misinterpreted the question explaining how there were differing views presented in the new media. Such answers did not achieve any marks or achieved marks in the lowest band, as they were generally incorrect and were not answering the question set.

(e) Some candidate responses showed understanding of the debate within the question and the Marxist view of the media, evaluating it with pluralist and postmodernist theories. The more successful responses discussed a range of points on both sides developing them well with examples. Weaker responses, lacked range and clarity, hence presenting limited knowledge of the Marxist and other perspectives' views of the media, and/or providing undeveloped and/or underdeveloped points.

SOCIOLOGY

Key messages

- Centres should encourage candidates to read questions carefully and understand the significance of the terms used. This is particularly relevant to **Question 1(d)**.

- Most of the candidate responses showed an understanding that **part (e)** questions require a debate – 'for' and 'against', with a conclusion. There were fewer one-sided **part (e)** responses than in the past sessions. However, some of the more successful candidates on the 'against' side identified all alternatives to the theory or viewed the question in a juxtaposed way. Candidates should be advised to counter the points on the 'for' side and specifically address the question asked.

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- Many candidates who did not show an understanding of the key term in the question (e.g. alternatives to the family, meritocracy, sociological explanations, postmodernists etc.), could not access the question. As the key terms in the questions are drawn directly from the syllabus, it is essential that candidates become familiar with all of these during their examination preparation. Some candidates did not achieve any marks at all for some of the questions because of this issue.

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General comments

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Comments on specific questions

Section A

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Section B

Question 2

<u>Education</u>

(a) Most candidates responded to this question by referring to government running and financing schools.

(b) Some candidates misinterpreted the question and gave factors external to school as their answers (for example, material or cultural deprivation). Successful responses were often based on teacher attitudes and friendship groups.

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Section D

Question 4

<u>Media</u>

(a) This question was answered with an example, such as blogging or email, alongside the idea of the new media being a two-way process. The idea of consumers also being producers was well applied.

(b) This was a well answered question with most of the candidates clearly describing two stereotypical representations of men in the media. Common examples were males as the breadwinner/provider, the hero figure and being unemotional/work not home centred.

(c) This question was answered well by the candidates who studied the media topic and showed a clear understanding of what postmodernism is. The more successful responses linked their points to consumer choice, globality, citizen journalism, diversity and the possibilities for more independent/niche producers.

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(e) Responses to this question generated some generic and some very sociological answers. Some responses showed no relevant knowledge of what the term 'gatekeeper' means. The more successful answers pitted owners, government, editors and journalists against the audience, new media and advertising. Some knowledge of media effects theories was also shown. Examples relating to censorship were well used and applied.