

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/01

Paper 1

General comments

Generally, the overall standard of scripts appeared to have improved compared to previous years. The paper seemed to differentiate effectively between candidates. Most candidates were able to respond successfully to **Question 1** appearing well prepared for the compulsory question. There were many excellent responses with a significant number gaining maximum marks. Performance was more variable on other questions. It was pleasing to note that part (d) responses showed evidence of more developed answers. A growing number of candidates demonstrated an excellent conceptual understanding and were able to support their answers with relevant data and contemporary examples. Poorer responses to this part tended to lack focus and failed to produce specific examples to support the valid points they were making.

Similarly, candidates need to try to support their answers in part c with relevant examples. Candidates would benefit greatly from regular practice at part c and d questions which require longer responses.

Finally, a relatively small number of candidates continued to ignore the rubric and answer all the questions on the paper, but this number appears to be decreasing. As reiterated in previous reports, candidates are far more likely to succeed by answering the specified number of questions thoroughly.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) The majority of candidates were able to provide clear explanations of all three terms gaining maximum marks.
- (b) This question was well done with many candidates achieving 4 marks. Many showed a clear understanding of the limitations of closed questions in particular.
- (c) Most candidates were able to identify two sampling strategies, though some were not able to provide a sufficiently clear explanation of how these strategies are carried out.
- (d) This question was well done with many answers focusing on the dynamic nature of interviews which creates more valid qualitative data. Some candidates wrote about qualitative methods rather than data.
- (e) This question was generally well done with most responses showing a clear understanding of the question was well done by most candidates. Many answers gave relevant strengths and weaknesses and made a clear attempt to explain their points.
- (f) This question was very well done with the majority of candidates scoring highly. Many were able to identify key strengths and limitations.

Section B**Question 2**

- (a) The majority of candidates gained two marks, providing a clear definition.
- (b) Most candidates were able to provide two ways of learning about society. Many outlined explanations in terms of various agencies of socialisation.
- (c) This question was generally well answered with the better responses examining how a range of agencies of socialisation help children to interact effectively. Weaker responses focused solely on the role of parents. More developed responses sought to explain the importance of a range of factors.
- (d) A wide range of responses were produced with the more able candidates outlining a balanced discussion which focused on both the importance of socialisation to the individual and society. Weaker responses tended to neglect the issue of the importance of socialisation on society.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates scored two marks, providing a clear definition.
- (b) This question was well answered with candidates clearly understanding different types of informal controls, providing effective examples.
- (c) This question was well answered. Most candidates were able to outline the variety of formal controls in modern industrial societies. Many outlined the role of the legal system and the police. Some answers went further, examining forms of control within Schools and the role of the army in social control.
- (d) There was a wide range of responses with the more effective answers focusing on how powerful members of society tend to have greater benefits from social control and provided specific examples. The best responses introduced Marxist and functionalist views on the issue of how the powerful benefit from social control.

Section C**Question 4**

- (a) Most candidates were able to explain the term successfully, achieving 2 marks.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to identify two ways women are disadvantaged by society. However, a number of candidates concentrated on outlining the ways women were disadvantaged at work.
- (c) This question was generally well done with the vast majority of candidates able to outline a range of explanations focusing on male employer discrimination, women's family commitments and the lack of training opportunities for women which limits promotion opportunities.
- (d) Most candidates were able to achieve good marks as they had a clear understanding of how women remain disadvantaged in various societies. There were a number of very impressive answers which were wide-ranging focusing on both the improvements in women's lives and also looking at the sociological evidence that suggests female opportunities remain limited by their family roles.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates were able to achieve 2 marks and described the term effectively.
- (b) This question was generally well answered. Candidates discussed a range of factors which included the lack of education, training opportunities and the lack of welfare services provided by the state.

- (c) Most candidates were able to identify a number of factors and scored high marks. Limited responses focused on the importance of training and education. More developed responses discussed the importance of migration, good fortune and marriage.
- (d) This question produced a range of responses. The majority of candidates were able to identify ways that life style contributed to an individual's poverty. Weaker responses tended to be limited anecdotal accounts of feckless attitudes and lifestyles. Better answers were able to explain how individuals may become trapped into poverty by a cycle of deprivation and face forces outside of the individual's control.

Section D

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates were able to define the term effectively gaining marks if they made reference to representation or participation of the electorate in the election of a government.
- (b) This was generally well answered with candidates able to identify two functions effectively.
- (c) There were many good responses to this answer. Most candidates were able to outline a range of ways pressure groups exert influence. The best answers were able in addition to discuss the close link some groups had with government departments and provided examples to illustrate their ideas.
- (d) There were few good answers to this question. The most effective responses tended to present a theoretical discussion focusing on Marxist, and pluralist theories of power, linking the discussion to the variety of ways individuals could have an influence on the decision-making process. Weaker answers tended to list the ways an individual could have influence but did not engage with the question.

Question 7

- (a) A significant number of candidates had only a moderate understanding of the term, some describing political indoctrination, rather socialisation.
- (b) This question was well done with most candidates able to identify two ways individuals can form their political views.
- (c) There was a range of responses to the question. A number of answers focused on the relationship between certain parties and a specific social class. The best responses were able to discuss the decline of class allegiance to specific parties and were awarded high marks for these observations.
- (d) This question was generally well answered. There were some excellent responses that examined a wide range of factors such as social class, geographical location and party images. The better answers were able to discuss class de-alignment and the increased importance of party policies and images.

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Paper 2251/02

Paper 2

General Comments.

The overall level of performance for the majority of candidates was pleasingly high. Many candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the relevant sociological material. However, at the other end of the scale some candidates appeared poorly prepared for the examination, offering little or no knowledge of the relevant sociological theories and studies.

This paper presented candidates with a similar level of challenge as previous papers and there was no overall increase in difficulty.

As usual there were a few rubric errors with some candidates answering all of the questions on the paper rather than just the required three.

Many candidates failed to record the questions they had answered on the front page of their work, which many Examiners find frustrating. Questions on the family were most popular whilst questions on the mass media were, in general, least popular. When **Questions 7 or 8** were tackled they tended to be less well answered. The problem appeared to be a lack of understanding of key concepts such as 'news values' and 'newsworthiness'.

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to define the term 'nuclear family' some however failed to include the idea of the family 'living together under the same roof'.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to identify and describe two other types of family unit. A few identified but failed to describe the family type, whilst others gave answers such as; polygamy and monogamy which are types of relationships rather than family units.
- (c) This part of the question was less well answered and many candidates failed to mention points such as; tradition and religious influences, lack of state welfare for parents in their old age, children as an economic asset and high infant mortality rates.
- (d) Some candidates gave a one sided answer rather than a balanced assessment and only a few candidates successfully managed to answer the 'how far' part of the question.

Question 2

- (a) Largely well answered, although to gain the full 2 marks candidates were required to mention both the termination of a marriage and the legal aspect of divorce.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify and describe two other forms of marriage apart from divorce. Some candidates gave 'death of a partner' as one part of their answer, which is not a form of marital breakdown.
- (c) Explanations for the rising divorce rate included, the increasing independence of women, legal changes, changes in attitudes and expectations and growing secularisation, which are all acceptable. Some candidates focused on increasing violence as a reason for rising divorce rates, which, without the evidence to back this up, is debateable.
- (d) A reasonably well answered question in which many candidates were able to provide a sound account of the symmetrical family thesis.

Question 3

- (a) Most were able to define the term 'gender', although some gave answers, which referred to genetics.
- (b) A well answered question.
- (c) Some weaker answers here in which few candidates recognised that there have been recent changes in the treatment of gender issues within the education system.
- (d) Some focused and relevant answers here detailing several factors on why girls now outperform boys. Few candidates included reasons why boys are 'failing' alongside the reasons for girl's improvement.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates were able to define the term 'ethnic minority' although some failed to explain the 'minority' part clearly.
- (b) A well answered question, which included both cultural and material deprivation.
- (c) Many candidates were familiar with the concept of the 'peer group' and were able to suggest both positive and negative influences on the educational achievement of young people.
- (d) A less well understood part of the question in which some candidates explained reasons for educational underachievement in general, rather than concentrating on ethnic minorities. Poor responses indicated misunderstanding of the nature of educational advantage and disadvantage.

Question 5

- (a) The term deviant, defining 'crime' as opposed to 'deviance', confused a few candidates.
- (b) Many candidates correctly identified groups such as young males or ethnic minorities, few mentioned gender or social class.
- (c) Some candidates found this part of the question difficult. There were some very able candidates who broadened their response to include an explanation from their own cultural understanding of 'powerful groups'.
- (d) Many candidates were able to offer a balanced response which demonstrated their understanding of sociological concepts and the possible consequences of 'labelling'. Fewer candidates made reference, implicit or explicit, to the idea of deviancy amplification.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates were able to define the term 'dark figure' and only a few demonstrated a limited understanding of the term in relation to crime statistics.
- (b) A well answered question, many with very full explanations offered. A few candidates however, identified but failed to describe reasons why people fail to report crimes to the police.
- (c) Some candidates were clear on the concept of 'white collar crime' and the reasons it often goes unrecorded. Many however seemed confused by the concept and were unable to offer sociological insight in respect of white-collar crime.
- (d) Many answers focused on fear and corruption as possible reasons for police influence on official crime statistics. The better answers included other influences on crime statistics, for example stereotyping and labelling.

Question 7

- (a) Definitions varied in quality, many candidates were able to offer a reasonable response in the context of the term 'stereotyping.'
- (b) A reasonably well-answered question with most candidates referring to gender and racial stereotypes used by the media. Poorer responses were quasi commonsensical answers.
- (c) Many candidates used examples from their own experiences of gender related media activities. Few offered any real sociological insight, related theory or recent research.
- (d) This question was occasionally well answered, but many candidates did not make any specific reference to how the mass media influence the lifestyles of 'young people.'

Question 8

- (a) Candidates seemed confused concerning the term 'newsworthiness' but when understood a reasonable definition was given.
- (b) Many candidates seemed to misunderstand the question and few were able to offer relevant sociological factors that influence the content of the news.
- (c) Some candidates offered a good response using recent examples of political activities in their own societies. However, few referred to factors relating to the gathering and presenting of news or the influence of owners and editors.
- (d) The few candidates who answered well gave relevant sociological material drawing on references to studies of voting behaviour and the influence of opinion polls. A few made reference to theoretical debates such as pluralists and Marxist. The majority of candidates offered only commonsense answers based on experiences in their own societies.