

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/01

Paper 1

General comments

Candidates appeared well prepared for the examination and there were a number of excellent scripts from a range of Centres. The paper appeared to differentiate effectively with a majority of candidates gaining a high number of marks in the early parts of questions. Most candidates were able to answer **Question 1**, appearing suitably prepared for the compulsory question. However, a number of candidates lost marks by neglecting to develop their ideas. Candidates need to provide a couple of sentences to elaborate on the point they are making. It is disappointing to see many candidates failing to gain marks because of the lack of development in their answers. As with previous sittings of the examination, **Questions 2, 3 and 4** remained the most popular questions. The problem for many candidates remains the ability to spend sufficient time on parts **(c)** and **(d)** of questions. This is particularly a problem in part **(d)** responses where some candidates failed to produce a detailed answer. In addition, many responses to this part lacked focus and development. However, there were an increasing number of candidates who demonstrated an excellent conceptual understanding and were able to support their answers with theoretical references, relevant data and contemporary examples. Candidates would benefit greatly from regular practice at these longer responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a)** Candidates were well prepared for the question and were able to define the terms effectively, though a number of candidates found some difficulty defining 'reliability.'
- (b)** Many candidates were able to point out the differences between participant and non-participant observation gaining full marks.
- (c)** This was generally well done with the majority of candidates being able to see that the main advantage of overt observation was the degree of openness in such studies which may lead to greater co-operation with participants and more valid data. Most candidates identified an observer effect as the main disadvantage of such studies.
- (d)** The majority of candidates who understood the term 'covert' were able to identify two difficulties. Most candidates focused on the difficulty of gaining access to the group and many also commented on the difficulty of recording data. A number of candidates misunderstood the term.
- (e)** This was generally well answered with candidates identifying the major difficulties as becoming accepted as a member of the group and the problems of recording data when researching in a covert manner. Many also discussed the difficulty of remaining neutral when writing up data. Relatively few candidates failed to understand the question.
- (f)** This question was poorly done with a significant number appearing too unclear about qualitative data. Those candidates that understood the term tended to make some relevant points but failed to develop them. However, there were a number of very good responses that achieved 6 or more marks.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) The term 'values' was generally well answered with answers providing clear definitions.
- (b) Many candidates were able to identify two agencies that helped individuals learn norms and values, but a number of candidates failed to develop their answers sufficiently to gain full marks.
- (c) This was generally well answered with most candidates being able to provide a sound explanation regarding the importance of socialisation. Many answers contrasted the lives of feral children with individuals who had experienced more typical patterns of socialisation.
- (d) Few responses managed to score very high marks. Many candidates tended to discuss some of the values that people shared providing a number of basic examples. Better scripts also pointed out that there were examples of sub-cultures which indeed shared some values but not others. However, relatively few developed these points effectively. Few answers commented on multiculturalism or religious pluralism, or ethnic differences as examples of potential sources of conflict in society.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates were able to define 'social control' clearly enough to achieve 2 marks.
- (b) Most candidates were able to describe two ways adults and children are treated differently. Many focused on the special protection children are given and the fact they have a compulsory period of education.
- (c) This was generally well answered with many candidates outlining a range of both formal and informal means of controlling children.
- (d) This question elicited a wide range of responses. The most effective answers commented on social class, gender experiences and cultural differences. The most effective answers focused on the varying life experiences of children from different social classes, genders and discussed how the nature of childhood was culturally defined. A number of responses were able to provide suitable examples to illustrate points made. However, a number of answers were poorly planned and focused on one or two areas of the question, often making simplistic points without supporting examples.

Section C

Question 4

- (a) This question was very well answered with many candidates achieving 2 marks.
- (b) This question was poorly done with many candidates lacking an understanding of 'professional groups'. However, those that had an understanding of the term tended to score highly.
- (c) This question produced a wide range of responses. Some answers had a narrow focus and discussed the lack of educational opportunities available to the working class. Better responses examined a wider range of issues discussing the lack of cultural capital and material resources as major factors in limiting social mobility.
- (d) The question was generally well answered with many candidates being able to explain how social class background might affect life chances in terms of education, careers and health. However, relatively few discussed the extent to which class background has an effect on life experiences. Few discussed any evidence that suggested social mobility was a possibility in modern industrial societies.

Question 5

- (a) The majority of answers were able to define the term effectively.
- (b) This question was well answered with many candidates gaining full marks. A number of candidates discussed verbal appellation and canalisation which showed a sound sociological understanding.
- (c) A significant number of candidates appeared to misread the question and wrote about the lack of career options that were available to women. However, there were some very good responses which focused on a range of issues discussing the lack of encouragement girls tended to have regarding careers. In addition, some made reference to the narrower career options girls are more likely to accept and experience.
- (d) This question produced a wide range of responses. There were a number of answers that listed the ways women were disadvantaged in terms of employment, family duties and their general position in society, but failed to make an assessment of the statement. Scripts that achieved high marks also discussed the improved career positions of women and the growth of more egalitarian relationships.

Section D

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates were able to offer a definition that enabled them to achieve 2 marks.
- (b) This was generally well answered with candidates describing a range of methods such as lobbying of parliament, using protests, employing the mass media, etc.
- (c) This question produced a wide range of answers. Some were very limited, tending to discuss one way the electorate can participate in the political process. Others produced list-like answers and did not develop their points. A number produced a wide range of activities the electorate can participate in.
- (d) Answers tended to be narrow in range, outlining the nature of the elite, but without really attempting to explain how these groups are able to exert influence. Some candidates did not really understand the reference to Marxism and wrote in vague terms. The best responses outlined the means by which the elite exert influence and then presented a counter-argument which discussed pluralist ideas and gave examples of the way governments have to have a dialogue with pressure groups and the electorate. However, this type of response was relatively rare.

Question 7

- (a) Most candidates were able to achieve 2 marks.
- (b) This was generally not well answered with many answers repeating the same point, but referring to a different form of media. Candidates who achieved 4 marks tended to discuss party policies and the images of leaders that are presented by the media.
- (c) Answers generally lacked range. Many responses discussed the importance of family background and focused on how family members tended to maintain their party allegiance. Better responses also discussed the neighbourhood effect and the way a person's occupation may be an important influence in determining voting behaviour.
- (d) This question produced a wide range of responses. Better answers produced a wide range of factors that influence voting behaviour and discussed how some factors had become more important in recent years such as: important issues, images of party leaders and the record of governments. However, a number of responses were limited in range and failed to address the issues raised specifically in the question.

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Paper 2251/02

Paper 2

General Comments

The overall performance of candidates this session was diverse: 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. Many answers at this end of the spectrum relied on common sense and over generalisation. Lack of clarity was a weakness for many candidates.

Most candidates offered appropriate length answers and shortage of time did not appear to be a problem.

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. A few candidates wasted valuable time writing out the questions before answering. Candidates are advised to record the questions they have answered on the front page of their work.

Questions on the mass media were, in general, less popular and less well answered than other questions on the paper. In order of popularity, candidates' answers were as follows: family, education, crime and deviance, mass media.

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates scored 1 of the possible 2 marks for this question, most were unable to link expected behaviour with status.
- (b) Mostly well answered, although there appeared to be some confusion over the terms 'role' and 'function'.
- (c) A reasonably well answered question, with the better answers focusing on 'democratisation' and the concept of 'childhood'.
- (d) Stronger candidates were able to provide a well informed account of the relevant debates. However, at the other end of the scale answers tended to be rather dated.

Question 2

- (a) Most gained full marks, however some candidates failed to link both termination and legislation.
- (b) Well answered on the whole, although some candidates are still citing 'death' as a form of marital breakdown.
- (c) Some good answers here at one end of the scale, but some candidates cited alcohol, domestic violence and teenage pregnancy as reasons for rising divorce rates, rather than 'recent' changes such as, growing independence of women, secularisation, legal changes and changing social attitudes.
- (d) Many understood this question but ignored the 'institution' aspect and discussed the decline in families rather than marriages; however there were also some good attempts at evaluation/assessment.

Question 3

- (a) This question was not well answered and few candidates were able to correctly define 'stereotyping'.
- (b) Most candidates were able to provide two reasons why girls are now outperforming boys in some subjects but many were undeveloped.
- (c) Candidates appeared to find this question difficult and few were able to go beyond: girls do home economics and boys do woodwork. Better answers included parental and teacher attitudes, gender stereotyped career advice, peer pressure and gender socialisation.
- (d) A reasonably well answered question, the better ones recognising recent changes in the treatment of gender issues in schools.

Question 4

- (a) Many candidates gained full marks here, although some defined the 'hidden curriculum' rather than 'informal education'.
- (b) Most were able to offer two ways in which the formal education system helps to prepare young people for earning a living. Examples included qualifications and certificates, respect for authority and learning appropriate values and attitudes.
- (c) Some very good answers here offering several relevant functions, although some candidates were unable to distinguish between different functions.
- (d) Many candidates appeared to misunderstand the term 'social groups' and few discussed issues of class, gender or ethnicity.

Question 5

- (a) A generally well answered question.
- (b) Most candidates were able to suggest reasonable differences, although some failed to link their example to a particular culture.
- (c) Again the term 'social groups' appeared to be problematic for many candidates. Few mentioned, for example, ethnic minorities or young working class males.
- (d) Many candidates gave a reasonable account of the labelling theory but few linked this directly to deviance.

Question 6

- (a) Reasonably well answered by most candidates.
- (b) Most candidates were able to offer relevant examples of formal social control, e.g. the police or courts, some however lacked development.
- (c) Generally well answered with candidates citing tradition, religion and intermarriage as forms of informal social control.
- (d) Some good answers here covering the Marxist and pluralist perspectives.

Question 7

- (a) A well answered question by those who chose it.
- (b) Most candidates were able to offer two examples, e.g. face to face communication; public meetings and works of art.
- (c) Well answered by most candidates, although some failed to focus on 'young people'.
- (d) Some repetition of (c) here but the better answers included explanations such as the hypodermic syringe model, the audience selection model and the cultural approach.

Question 8

- (a) Most candidates were able to define the term 'bias'.
- (b) Candidates found this question problematic with only a few able to provide examples of how selective reporting may lead to bias and distortion in news reports.
- (c) Some good suggestions were made by candidates at the top end of the mark scheme, e.g. writing letters of complaint to the newspaper, setting up pressure groups and complaining to government and regulatory bodies. At the other end of the spectrum answers were commonsensical.
- (d) This was answered reasonably well by candidates who chose this question. However, many candidates failed to address the 'to what extent' aspect of the question and only a few candidates achieved full marks.