

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/01

Paper 1

General comments

There was a range of responses from candidates though generally the overall standard of answers had seemed to have improved. The paper appeared to differentiate effectively between candidates. Most candidates were able to respond successfully to **Question 1** appearing well prepared for the compulsory question. Performance was more variable on others. The problem for many candidates remains the disproportionate amount of time that is spent on parts **a** and **b** at the expense of the latter parts of the question. This is particularly a problem in part **d** responses, where some candidates failed to produce a developed answer. In addition, many responses to this part lacked focus and development. However, there were a growing number of candidates who demonstrated an excellent conceptual understanding and were able to support their answers with relevant data and contemporary examples.

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.

Finally, candidates need to try to support their answers in part **c** questions and attempt to answer the specific question set in part **d** questions. Candidates would benefit greatly from regular practice at these longer responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates scored well on this question though a significant number did not have a clear understanding of 'objectivity'.
- (b) This question was well answered with the majority of candidates having a clear understanding of the differences between 'overt' and 'covert'.
- (c) This was generally well answered with candidates making relevant points. Weaker scripts were able to identify one difficulty.
- (d) There were many candidates who achieved full marks on this question, but a minority did not have a clear understanding of 'ethically acceptable'.
- (e) Similarly, this question was generally well answered with candidates having a clear understanding of the difficulties of recording observational data.
- (f) This question produced a wide range of responses. Many candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of quantitative data. However, a number focused on quantitative **research** rather than **data** and failed to develop the points they were making by not including some development or providing an example to support their ideas.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) The majority of candidates gained two marks.
- (b) Most candidates were able to clearly distinguish between primary and secondary socialisation.
- (c) This question was generally well answered with the better responses examining how a range of agents of socialisation help children to interact effectively. Weaker responses focused solely on the role of parents.
- (d) A wide range of responses were produced with the more able candidates outlining a balanced discussion which looked at the influence of heredity as well as socialisation.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates scored two marks.
- (b) This question was well answered with candidates clearly understanding the changing roles of children over time.
- (c) There were a range of responses to this question. Many answers provided a simplistic account of how the elderly were mistreated in Industrial societies. Better responses tended to provide a more sophisticated account of life for the elderly in modern societies.
- (d) There was a wide range of responses with the more effective answers focusing on specific rights of children and the dangers and difficulties they encountered. Weaker responses tended to focus on the protection children were afforded but failed to provide specific examples.

Question 4

- (a) This question was well answered with most students achieving both marks.
- (b) This question was well answered with the vast majority of candidates able to provide at least one reason.
- (c) This question was generally well answered with many candidates identifying a range of factors that limited women's ability to be socially mobile.
- (d) This question was less well done. Few answers were able to identify legislation in any detail. Similarly, answers focused on issues other than work based inequalities. However, there were some excellent responses which identified specific legislation and discussed its limitations in some detail.

Question 5

- (a) Many candidates were able to explain the term successfully and achieved two marks.
- (b) A well answered question with many candidates gaining full marks.
- (c) This question attracted a wide range of responses. Weaker candidates tended to focus on the prestige of these professions where better answers were able to identify a range of explanations discussing, for example: the skill of the professional, an extended period of training and referred to the factors of supply and demand in affecting rewards.
- (d) This was generally poorly answered. Weaker responses looked at importance of achievement in modern societies and commented on the end of privilege. There was little reference to examples to illustrate these changes. Better responses provided a balanced to their discussion, pointing out that privilege still existed but relatively few provided examples beyond the anecdotal.

Question 6

- (a) This was well answered with many candidates achieving full marks.
- (b) Most candidates gained marks but some described political parties rather than outlining their function.
- (c) This question was generally well answered with many candidates were able to distinguish between democratic and authoritarian systems. The level of detail given provided the discriminating factor in the level of their mark.
- (d) This question provided a wide range of responses. Weaker answers tended to provide a list of ways of political participation. Better responses were able to engage with the question and explain how some groups had more power. The best answers were able to provide theoretical explanations which focused on pluralist and Marxist views of power.

Question 7

- (a) Most candidates were able to achieve both marks.
- (b) This question was well answered with the majority of candidates able to identify two other influences on voting behaviour.
- (c) This question generally, was poorly done with most answers focusing on the role of the press as providing propaganda. More perceptive answers commented on how the media was manipulated by politicians and discussed the importance of how the media provide an image of politicians which it sustains over a prolonged period of time.
- (d) This was generally well answered with many responses showing an understanding of class dealignment and the changing nature of the class structure. However, a minority of answers were able to discuss the continued importance of class as a determinant of voting behaviour.

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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.

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 found frustrating.

Questions on the mass media were, in general, less well answered than other questions on the paper.

Question 1

- (a) Many candidates answered the question with reference to the 'roles' within the family, which is fine provided that it is adequately explained. The idea of 'socially expected patterns of behaviour' appeared in only a few of the better answers.
- (b) Most candidates were able to provide two examples of how the roles of men and women within the family have changed. Good answers referred to the increase in the number of women in paid employment, more sharing of household tasks and more men staying at home to look after young children.
- (c) This question was less well answered by many candidates. The better answers included differences in dress, expected behaviour patterns between boys and girls, different methods of discipline and levels of protectiveness.
- (d) Most candidates were able to offer a basic account of equality/inequality in the roles performed by men and women. Some candidates however, discussed equality/inequality in the work place rather than within the family.

Question 2

- (a) Reasonably well answered, although many candidates wrote about 'separation' rather than 'termination' in marriage. Some failed to mention the legal process involved in divorce.
- (b) Some candidates failed to provide examples and descriptions of marital breakdown, while others gave 'death of a partner, or one parent working away from home' both of which are not forms of marital breakdown.
- (c) A reasonably well answered question, good answers mentioned for example; legal changes, attitude changes, different expectations of marriage and the increasing independence of women.
- (d) Good answers examined both sides of the debate providing points for and against the decline in the institution of marriage in modern industrial societies.

Question 3

- (a) Many candidates described gender equality/inequality rather than gender stereotyping.
- (b) Good answers included, changes in the curriculum and in teacher attitudes, more employment opportunities for women and the culture of masculinity among boys. Some candidates, however gave genetic differences and socialisation as reasons why girls now outperform boys in some subjects, which it can be argued have always existed
- (c) Basic answers covered only one or two factors in a limited way. Good answers explained more fully a wide range of relevant factors.
- (d) Good answers addressed the question directly referring to teacher expectations, uniforms, subject choices, discipline and punishments for bad behaviour. Weaker answers provided a few simple observations loosely linked to the question.

Question 4

- (a) Most candidates answered this question correctly. Many referred to the 'hidden curriculum' as informal education which is only 'one' example among many others.
- (b) Some candidates answered this question incorrectly by describing functions which prepare young people for work, rather than functions 'apart' from those which prepare young people for work. It should be stressed that all candidates read the questions carefully.
- (c) Good answers discussed a range of points including; teaching skills for work, providing qualifications and instilling appropriate values and attitudes. Answers at the top of the band referred to the 'hidden curriculum' and Marxist or functionalist ideas of the functions of education.
- (d) Basic answers concentrated on the wealthy being able to afford to pay for better or private education. The good answers made references to functional or Marxist theories.

Question 5

- (a) Generally well answered.
- (b) Most candidates were able to identify two groups in society who are likely to have the power to label others, for example, the media, police and judiciary, the rich and powerful and schools. Some candidates failed to explain how these groups label others as deviant.
- (c) This question was less well answered, many candidates discussed informal social controls in schools rather than in traditional societies.
- (d) Many candidates found this question difficult, offering only a very basic account of the labelling theory. Good answers were both knowledgeable and analytical in addressing the issues raised by the question.

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates were able to answer this question correctly, including in their answers the idea of government or court statistics.
- (b) Generally well answered providing examples such as, fear of reporting a crime/fear of reprisal, lack of a victim, incident considered too petty and police failure to investigate/prosecute.
- (c) Most candidates were able to discuss why some groups are more likely than others to appear in the crime statistics, citing ethnicity, gender and social class as contributing factors. Good answers included relevant theoretical material such as references to labelling, sub-cultural and Marxist theories.
- (d) Most candidates were able to make appropriate links between social inequality and crime. Good answers made references to the 'culture of poverty', labelling and deviancy amplification. Merton's theory of opportunity structure also appeared.

Question 7

- (a) This question was answered well by most candidates.
- (b) Most candidates were able to offer two ways in which ownership of the mass media may be a source of power, examples included; the ability to influence the outcome of elections, the economic importance of the media and the ideological and cultural influences exercised by the media.
- (c) This question proved difficult for many candidates. Good answers referred to the potential threat to democracy and the lack of opportunity for less privileged groups to express their views.
- (d) Again, candidates found this question difficult. Good answers discussed such factors as; constraints that limit the power of owners, for example; the autonomy of editors, the need to attract advertisers, government controls and public opinion/pressure group activity.

Question 8

- (a) Most candidates answered this question correctly, although some failed to include the idea of distorted or one-sided presentation of facts.
- (b) Many candidates described 'selective reporting' rather than providing examples of how 'selective reporting' may lead to bias.
- (c) Candidates found this question difficult, relying on basic observations and assertion. Good answers included; the directions of editors and owners, newsworthiness, and professional and practical constraints.
- (d) Another question which many candidates found difficult. Many provided only simple links to the question. Better answers provided descriptive accounts of ways in which the mass media may influence political attitudes and behaviour, for example through partisan reporting and the broadcasting of opinion polls.