

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 2251/01

Paper 1

General comments

Candidates generally 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 the 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. 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 a particular 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 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 re-iterated 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) and attempt to answer the specific question set in part (d). Candidates should be aware that credit is particularly gained from including supporting examples and knowledge of theoretical approaches. Candidates would greatly benefit from regular practice at these longer responses.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates were able to define the three terms effectively.
- (b) This question was generally well answered with most candidates demonstrating a clear understanding of the differences between the two types of interview.
- (c) This question was generally well answered with most candidates able to identify two reasons.
- (d) The responses for these questions were less effective, with many candidates writing of the increased data a group interview would elicit, without addressing such issues as time and finance. Relatively few saw the importance of group dynamics as helping to produce more valid data.
- (e) This question was generally well answered with many candidates making reference to the conduct, ethnicity and gender of the researcher.
- (f) This question produced a wide range of responses. There were many very effective answers, but a significant number wrote generally about issues that tended to affect interviews in general. In addition, as reiterated in previous reports, candidates are reminded that in order to achieve the 2 marks for each strength and limitation, some attempt must be made to develop the idea made by a further explanatory comment or by providing an example.

Section B

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates were able to define the term successfully.
- (b) The majority of candidates handled the question effectively and scored full marks.
- (c) There were a wide range of responses to this question. A number of candidates failed to understand the reference to 'instinct' or 'nature'. However, there were some excellent responses which discussed the nature-nurture debate in some detail, referring to both cross cultural examples and a variety of sociological theories.
- (d) This question was poorly answered with few candidates addressing the specific issues raised in the question. Most candidates were able to achieve some marks by describing the process of socialisation, but relatively few were able to address the issue of the ability of an individual to break away from the constraints of their social backgrounds. Those candidates who did, managed to address the issues directly, and therefore tended to score highly.

Question 3

- (a) Most candidates provided a clear definition of social control.
- (b) This question was well answered with candidates able to provide two sources of informal control. Many mentioned the family, the hidden curriculum at school and the influence of the peer group as important sources of informal control.
- (c) This question produced a wide range of responses. Many candidates focused on growing crime rates experienced by modern industrial societies. More successful responses discussed a range of issues focusing on the decline of traditional mechanisms of informal social control, such as the decline of community and the family.
- (d) This also produced a wide range of responses. Some candidates showed that they were aware that social control was more beneficial for some groups, but provided a limited range of examples. More focused answers provided a range of examples citing 'white collar crime' as more likely to be ignored by the authorities. In addition, the best responses were able to provide a theoretical framework for their answers, making reference to Marxist and functionalist theories in an effective manner.

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 forms of stratification.
- (c) This question was generally well done, with the vast majority of candidates able to outline an account of exploitation. The most able candidates presented a detailed account which included a range of Marxist concepts.
- (d) Most candidates were able to achieve good marks as they had a clear understanding of how the class structure had changed in recent decades. There were some excellent responses which discussed bourgeoisie and proletarianisation and located them within a theoretical framework.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates were able to achieve 2 marks and describe the term effectively.
- (b) This question was generally well answered with candidates able to identify two forms of discrimination.

- (c) Most candidates were able to identify a number of factors that affected the perceptions of ethnic minorities. A number of responses were able to identify factors such as differences in culture and religion. Others went further and examined the way groups are negatively labelled and denied citizenship rights.
- (d) This question produced a range of responses. The majority of candidates were able to identify ways that minorities are discriminated against. These included such factors as discrimination in: housing education, employment opportunities, etc. However, relatively few answers demonstrated an awareness that these experiences varied for ethnic minorities. The most effective answers examined the improved performance of some groups in employment, education and the way they were integrated into society.

Section D

Question 6

- (a) Most candidates were able to define ruling elite with some degree of success.
- (b) This was generally well answered with candidates able to identify two ways in which violence is used by the state.
- (c) There were relatively few effective responses to this question. Those who attempted it focused on the issue that some groups were seen as political opponents to the regime, but failed to develop the idea with reference to specific examples. The best answers were able to do this and were able to make further reference to the fact that some groups were poorly educated and lacked an understanding of the political process. Others looked at discrimination against ethnic minorities effectively.
- (d) There were relatively few good answers to this question. The most effective responses tended to present a theoretical discussion focusing on Marxist, Elite and pluralist theories of power. However, most tended to give vague descriptions of the power of ruling elites, and did not attempt to assess the validity of these ideas.

Question 7

- (a) A significant number of candidates had only a moderate understanding of the term.
- (b) This question was well done with most candidates able to identify two ways individuals can participate in political activity
- (c) There was a range of responses to the question. A number of candidates were able to discuss a range of issues focusing on the importance of the democratic mandate and the importance of elections in providing opportunities for the electorate to remove governments. However, a number of answers were limited to a few comments about the individual's right to vote without discussing the deeper significance of elections.
- (d) Similarly, there was a range of responses to this question. There were some excellent responses that examined the importance of elections to the democratic process and were able to counter balance these comments with reference to how governments may not follow manifesto commitments, the dominance of elites and pressure groups in policy-making. More limited responses tended to focus on the ways government have to govern in order to win elections. An important point, but other issues tended to be neglected.

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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. Lack of clarity was a weakness for many candidates.

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. Once again many candidates failed to record the questions they had answered on the front page of their work, which can be frustrating for examiners.

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

Question 1

Parts (a) and (b) were generally well answered and most candidates knew a number of appropriate functions. However, very few seemed to know the 'loss of functions' argument needed for 1 (c). Many answers for 1 (d) were quite descriptive.

Question 2

Many candidates scored full marks for (a) and (b) but few really understood the issues behind (c).

Part (d) was reasonably well answered but few were able to go beyond the basic idea of family elders losing influence.

Question 3

Part (a) was rarely fully defined, most scored 1 mark for 'equal chances'.

Part (b) proved difficult for many candidates and concrete examples of equal treatment within the education system were rare.

Part (c) was well answered, although this was a question where 'common sense' ideas were relevant. Few candidates were able to provide much of a discussion. For part (d) most were able to recognise that opportunities have become more equal.

Question 4

Parts (a) and (b) were reasonably well answered with most candidates able to define the term 'hidden curriculum' and provide examples of how schools contribute to the socialisation of young children.

Part (c) was surprisingly poorly answered and few candidates had much idea about part (d). The concept of 'ethnicity' appeared to be poorly understood by many candidates.