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 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. 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, a number of responses to this part lacked focus and development. It is important to illustrate the part **(d)** answers with specific examples to illustrate points made. 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 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) Most candidates were able to define the three terms effectively, though some candidates failed to include refer to government in reference to official statistics. A number of candidates tended to confuse the terms reliability and validity.

(b) This question was well answered and many candidates gained full marks.

(c) Most candidates achieved good marks, many citing cost and ease of access as an advantage and identifying the issue of accuracy as a disadvantage.

(d) A number of candidates were unable to identify the advantages of collecting primary data clearly. Many discussed the reliability and validity of primary research, but failed to discuss issues such as the flexibility and clear objectives that would be apparent in first-hand research.

(e) This question was well done with most candidates identifying the unique qualities of historical documents. The difficulty in checking the validity of historical sources was often rightly identified as a weakness. Some candidates used the issue of documents being out of date as a disadvantage which gained no marks.

(f) Generally, this question was well done with candidates identifying a range of issues such as the time and cost saving of the use of official statistics. Many saw the lack of validity and the superficial nature of statistics as limitations. Many answers were well supported with references to the limitations of crime and unemployment statistics. Relatively few candidates misunderstood the way official statistics are used by researchers.

Section B

Question 2

(a)   Most candidates were able to define the term successfully.

(b)   The majority of candidates handled the question effectively, identifying two agencies of socialisation with a description, scoring full marks.

(c)   This question was generally well done with many answers providing detailed and wide-ranging responses that discussed parental, educational and media issues on their influence on gender role socialisation. Relatively few candidates misunderstood the question. These candidates tended to describe gender roles rather than the way they are acquired.

(d)   This question was generally well done with many candidates providing good accounts of socialisation and feral children. However, relatively few discussed the role of genetic factors or inheritance.

Question 3

(a)   Relatively few candidates were able to identify 'social order' fully to achieve both marks. A number of answers tended to focus on the means by which social control is established.

(b)   This question was well done with most candidates effectively describing informal and formal controls. Most answers were well illustrated.

(c)   This question was well attempted with many responses outlining both formal and informal means of control. Many answers were well illustrated. Some candidates effectively pointed out that formal means of social control appear to be more important in modern industrial societies.

(d)   This was not particularly well done with few candidates able to provide specific examples of how the wealthy are more likely to benefit from the rule of law. The better answers provided a theoretical framework alluding to Marxist and functionalist explanations, but many of these answers tended to provide a description of each theory rather than relate the theory to the issue raised in the question.

Section C

Question 4

(a)   Most candidates were able to define the term effectively and gained both marks.

(b)   Many candidates were able to identify two ways that ethnic minorities were discriminated against. Issues such as pay, promotion, and housing were popular topics.

(c)   This question was well answered with many candidates presenting a range of factors which focused on the lack of educational opportunities and the experience of racism suffered by many ethnic minorities. The best answers were well illustrated.

(d)   Most candidates provided effective accounts of the ways a poor background disadvantages an individual. Answers included educational, health and employment opportunities. However, relatively few candidates provided an assessment, commenting on the ladders out of poverty that are available to the poor.

Question 5

(a)   Most answers were able to describe the term effectively.

(b)   There were a range of responses to this question. There were a number of good answers that identified examples of government policies such as progressive taxation and the introduction of inheritance tax. Others discussed the availability of free education for the poor to ensure that they were equipped in the labour market. However, a number of candidates misunderstood the question and included unrealistic actions government could take.

(c) There were many good answers to this question. Many candidates were able to describe the cycle of deprivation with varying degrees of detail and were awarded accordingly.

(d) This was generally well done with the best answers outlining a number of factors such as: inheritance of wealth, business contacts, scarce skills, investment opportunities for the wealthy and the ability to exploit their workforce. However, few candidates address the issue of mobility. Few answers showed knowledge of the ways individuals from more modest backgrounds can enter the wealthier sections of society, or how the wealthy can experience downward mobility**.**

Section D

Question 6

(a) Most candidates were able to identify the term effectively and achieved two marks.

(b) This question was not particularly well done. Most candidates could define 'power' successfully, but most answers only gave a partial definition of 'authority'. Answers tended to focus on the willingness of individuals to accept the influence of people in authority, rather that writing about issues of legitimacy that individuals with authority possess.

(c) This question was reasonably well done with answers focusing on campaigning and the use of the media. The best answers were able to comment on the use of opinion polls and the targeting of key areas.

(d) Most answers were able to describe a range of strategies pressure groups employ which included reference to providing expert advice and the ability to campaign for their causes. The best answers distinguished the difference between 'insider' and 'outsider' groups.

Question 7

(a) Most candidates had a clear understanding of the term and achieved two marks.

(b) This question was well done with the majority of candidates able to comment on issues such as family background, geographical factors and class background. Answers were often well explained and were awarded full marks.

(c) This question was generally well done with candidates presenting a range of issues. Answers usually focused on the media's reporting on party policies and the importance of the television coverage of elections campaigns in particular. The more perceptive responses commented on the long-term effect of the media in the formation of party allegiance and were aware of the importance of media ownership and their party affiliation.

(d) This question elicited a range of responses. Weaker answers tended to accept that the traditional links between social class and party allegiance. However, there were a pleasing number of responses that were aware of the increase in issue voting and commented on class de-alignment. The best answers were able to highlight the changes to the class structure in some detail.

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General comments

The standard this session was generally good in comparison with other sessions. Some candidates had clearly absorbed a good understanding of sociological concepts, although few were able to name key studies. Very few problems with the rubric, although where this occurred they tended to be by Centre. Some candidates are continuing to write out the questions before answering which wastes valuable time. A minor problem was the few candidates who did not write question numbers along with their answers, leaving the Examiner to guess which questions had been attempted. On the whole most candidates answered the required three questions giving each an equal amount of time.

Many candidates had considerable in depth knowledge and understanding of topic areas and were able to offer assessment, and occasionally appropriate theory and evaluation. However, some candidates offered largely descriptive answers based purely on commonsense rather than any real sociological knowledge.

Most candidates understood the rubric and answered the required three questions, however a few candidates are still attempting to answer more than three questions and in one or two cases answered eight questions. Most candidates gave appropriate length answers based on the number of marks allocated to each question, whilst some offered overly long answers that left them short of time for the remainder of the paper.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Many candidates defined segregated conjugal roles rather than unequal partners.

(b) Candidates were generally able to identify two appropriate factors that have led to men and women sharing more tasks in the home, although few were developed in any depth and most candidates gained just 2 out of the possible 4 marks.

(c) A reasonably well answered question saw candidates citing problems such as, for example: lack of economic power; opposition from other family members; negative attitudes and values in the wider society; indifference or opposition from their partner, struggling against their own gender socialisation. Some of the better answers also included reference to inequality faced by other female members of the family such as daughters.

(d) This question more often than not was a re-run of **(c)**. Some of the stronger candidates were able to demonstrate in depth understanding of sociological theory, citing Young and Wilmott and feminist approaches to the notion of the symmetrical family.

Question 2

(a) Many candidates offered an appropriate definition of the term monogamy, although some candidates were unable to distinguish between monogamy and serial monogamy.

(b) Many candidates gave undeveloped response such as, religion or tradition without further explanation which gained them only 2 of the possible 4 marks.

(c) This question was a problem for many candidates who confused the decline in first marriages with reasons for the breakdown in first marriages. Some of the better answers talked about the cost of weddings, the declining influence in religion and the increase in cohabitation.

(d) A reasonably well answered question which included reference to the continuing importance of marriage in many cultures and the number of couples cohabiting who later go on to get married. Few candidates however looked at both sides of the debate and offered very little assessment.

Question 3

(a) A surprising number of candidates appeared unclear about the term innate intelligence, few included reference to genetically determined or inherited intelligence.

(b) Answers varied in quality, and many candidates were only able to offer one factor that may influence a person's level of intelligence. Possible answers include, for example: genetic inheritance; family background and type and organisation of schools.

(c) A reasonably well answered question in which candidates identified some of the problems there are in using IQ tests for example: different rates of development in children: bias in the way tests are constructed and the difficulty of defining intelligence.

(d) Another generally well answered question in which candidates identified factors that may influence educational achievement including, for example: home background, class culture, schooling, peer group, gender, ethnicity and community influences. A few of the better answers attempted to reach a balanced and well-reasoned conclusion.

Question 4

(a) Many candidates were unable to offer a clear definition of the official curriculum whereas some offered a partial definition which showed some understanding gaining them 1 mark out of a possible 2.

(b) This was well answered by most candidates who demonstrated appropriate sociological knowledge of gender roles and how the hidden curriculum may influence them.

(c) The concept of the self fulfilling prophecy was not well understood by many candidates and few made reference to Rosanthal and Jacobson's study. Fewer still made any attempt at criticism.

(d) Some good answers here, although few made reference to Bowles and Gintis or the correspondence principle. Better answers assessed both sides of the debate from a functionalist and Marxist perspective.

Question 5

(a) Most candidates were able to offer a correct definition of the term subculture, although some went into far too much detail when 'a culture within the mainstream culture' was all that was required.

(b) Well answered on the whole with many full explanations using appropriate examples, the more popular ones being the media and the peer group.

(c) Many candidates struggled with this question with many drifting into a description of different subcultures rather than concentrating on the possible threat to dominant society.

(d) Another question that many found difficult, struggling with the concept of 'modern' society underpinning the growth of subcultures. Few mentioned increasing affluence of young people or the effects of the mass media.

Question 6

(a) Most candidates were able to offer an appropriate definition of ethnic minorities.

(b) A well answered question citing poverty and unemployment, increased opportunity and police stereotyping as possible reasons why many young criminals come from ethnic minority groups.

(c) This question appeared to take a lot of candidates by surprise and the obvious points of family and career responsibilities were sometimes overlooked. Relevant factors include, for example: family responsibilities; more mature; less exposed to negative peer group influences; prosecution and punishment has acted as a deterrent; rehabilitation; etc.

(d) This question was on the whole well answered with many different reasons why women appear to commit fewer crimes than men cited. Examples are differences in the treatment of female suspects and the way law enforcement agencies view female crime. The idea of women being too frail and weak to be criminals was unfortunately common with many answers consisting of anecdotes with no real sociological insight.

Question 7

(a) Many candidates appeared confused by the term mass communication , often defining mass media instead.

(b) This question was misunderstood by many candidates and few were able to offer two well developed reasons why children may be influenced by the images and messages presented on television. Relevant reasons include, for example: impressionable age group; a lot of television is directed towards influencing children; peer group pressure may support the influence of television; other sources of information and ideas may be less accessible to children.

(c) This was not a well answered question on the whole as the threat aspect was often not addressed. Good answers highlighted the importance of television as an influence on political debate and decision making in democratic societies. The potential for bias and manipulation by powerful media moguls, links between owners and political parties were also explored.

(d) Reasonably well answered explanations included: the hypodermic syringe model; audience selection model; and the cultural approach, which sees the media as creating a culture or climate of thought, within which people hold opinions. Reference was also made to fashion, dress style, music and celebrity role models. Few candidates offered adequate assessment.

Question 8

(a) Reasonably well answered with most candidates providing an adequate definition of the term agenda setting.

(b) A tendency toward commonsense answers was evident here with only a few candidates demonstrating sociological knowledge of concepts such as biased news reporting, or the use of opinion polls.

(c) Some rather vague responses were offered to this question with little mention of key terms and concepts. The better answers demonstrated a sound understanding of how journalists select and present the news.

(d) A reasonably well answered question with explanations including: the hypodermic syringe model; audience selection model; and the cultural approach, which sees the media as creating a culture or climate of thought, within which people hold opinions. Assessment was lacking in many answers and other influences on people's behaviour such as the peer group and the family were often ignored.