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SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/01

Paper 1

General comments

Many candidates produced work of a pleasingly high standard. They demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the relevant sociological concepts and ideas, and provided developed answers where required. Weaker candidates were usually able to display some appropriate knowledge, but generally failed to offer sufficient detail and illustration of points to merit high marks.

Questions 1, 2 and 4 were the most popular questions. There were relatively few answers to **Question 5**.

There were no common rubric errors. Some candidates answered more questions than required. Examiners would remind Centres that candidates generally penalise themselves by attempting to answer more questions than required.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) The term was accurately defined by most candidates. Some provided examples of functions only and so failed to gain full marks.
- (b) The basic functions - sexual, reproduction, child rearing, socialisation - and a range of other functions were identified by most candidates. List-like answers, however, were awarded no more than half marks.
- (c) Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation on modern family life.
- (d) Candidates who achieved high marks generally demonstrated a clear understanding that there are different interpretations of the significance of the rising divorce rate for the question of whether the family is in decline.

Question 2

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the term, but many were unable to define it with sufficient clarity to gain full marks.
- (b) Good answers identified a range of negative connotations that are often applied to certain minority ethnic groups by the dominant groups in society. Weaker answers offered only a few elementary points about ethnic minority groups, with little or no development.
- (c) Good answers identified a range of cultural, psychological and economic factors that lead to racism. Weak answers were limited to one or two assertions, with little or no sociological backing.
- (d) A range of appropriate social consequences were identified and explained in the better answers. Weaker answers were restricted to one or two basic points.

Question 3

- (a) The concept was understood by most of the candidates attempting this question, but some answers were too constricted to merit full marks; for example, bald statements such as 'unhappy at work' gained only one mark.
- (b) Well answered overall, with a range of advantages noted by most candidates.
- (c) Some answers failed entirely to make the link between the division of labour and alienation. Better responses referred to relevant factors, such as the workers' loss of control over the work process and the loss of traditional craft skills in the workplace.
- (d) Factors identified in good answers included, low wages, poor job conditions, and lack of authority and control in the workplace.

Question 4

- (a) Almost all of the candidates were able to define the term *formal social control* accurately.
- (b) Well answered overall, with references to a range of mechanisms for enforcing informal social controls in traditional societies.
- (c) Good answers often drew on the debate between Functionalist and Marxist sociologists, about who benefits from social order. Weaker answers relied on a few commonsense points.
- (d) There were a few very good answers that identified factors such as poverty and cultural differences as reasons why some individuals or groups may oppose the processes of social control. However, there were also many rather short and poorly formulated responses to this question.

Question 5

- (a) The term was well defined by most of the candidates.
- (b) The concepts of nepotism and elite status and networking were explored in the better answers.
- (c) Many of the answers to this question were rather brief and lacking in appropriate sociological insight. Good answers considered, among other things, the role of family and intermarriage in keeping control within elite groups.
- (d) The best answers focused on the debate between elite theory and democratic pluralism. Some candidates also made good use of Marxist theory in exploring the relevant issues.

Paper 0495/02

Paper 2

General comments

While the majority of candidates answered some questions very well, relatively few were able to maintain that standard of response throughout the paper. **Questions 3** and **9**, in particular, were poorly answered by many of the candidates. Knowledge of sampling was also rather limited in the majority of cases, so that candidates generally struggled with **Questions 7** and **8**.

There were no rubric errors and the candidates appeared to make good use of their time in answering all of the questions.

Comments on specific questions**Question 1**

Only about half of the candidates achieved full marks for this question by identifying all four countries in which more than one in twenty of the populations lacked adequate nutrition. Many answers identified only two or three of the correct countries and so gained half marks only.

Question 2

Most candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the difference between absolute and relative poverty.

Question 3

Candidates generally struggled to answer this question well. Good answers provided several well-conceived examples of how evidence about the number of poor people in a society may be affected by the way poverty is defined.

Question 4

Answers to this question fell between the extremes of being very good or very poor. Good answers demonstrated a sound understanding of what sociologists mean by validity and how it may be affected by the relationship between the researcher and the subjects of the research.

Question 5

A few candidates clearly misunderstood what is meant by secondary data. Mostly though, this question was answered very well. The best answers identified three possible causes of bias or inaccuracy and provided examples to develop each point.

Question 6

Most of the candidates were able to identify two advantages and two disadvantages of structural interviews.

Question 7

Some candidates clearly had no understanding of what is meant by a sample in the context of sociological research. Others correctly noted that a sample is necessary because it would usually be too expensive and impractical to study the whole population of subjects.

Question 8

Again, lack of understanding of what is meant by sampling was evident in many of the answers.

Question 9

There were quite a few inappropriate answers to this question that focused on the reasons why people are poor. Good answers concentrated on describing the type of evidence sociologists might use to test the claim in the stem of the question.

<p>Paper 0495/04 Alternative to Coursework</p>
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General comments

The standard of response overall was very pleasing. One factor discriminating between good answers and those that were less impressive, was the extent to which the points made by the candidate were suitably accurate and developed. Another discriminator was the quality of response to **Question 6**; while some of the answers were very short and poorly focused on the context of the question, others were well informed and systematic.

There were no rubric errors and the candidates appeared to make good use of their time in answering all of the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Virtually all of the candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of what is meant by a questionnaire.

Question 2

Most of the candidates were able to identify a range of relevant advantages and disadvantages and so achieved full marks.

Question 3

This was mostly answered very well, though some candidates struggled to identify relevant strategies.

Question 4

Some candidates clearly lacked knowledge of what is meant by sampling, in the context of sociological research. There were also many answers that gained only half of the marks due to the candidate identifying relevant points but failing to explain or develop them in sufficient detail.

Question 5

Most of the candidates were able to identify at least two or three sources of bias in structured interviews, and quite a few identified four separate sources by which they gained full marks.

Question 6

Good answers to this question provided a systematic account of the different stages and elements in constructing a research strategy. Moreover, the answer was developed appropriately in the context of studying role relationships within families. Weaker answers often left out important stages in the research process and/or failed to make links with the specific requirements of studying the family.