SOCIOLOGY

| Paper 0495/01 |
| Paper 1 |

General comments

The overall standard of performance was of a similar standard to that achieved for this paper in other recent exam sessions and the paper differentiated effectively between candidates. A pleasingly high number of candidates achieved marks of 45 and above and fewer candidates (when compared to last summer's exam) were not suited to entry. However, some candidates appeared ill-equipped with the relevant subject content needed to achieve success.

Section A, **Questions 1** and **2** Family proved most popular, with **Section D**, Mass Media proving least popular and least well answered.

A small number of candidates continue to ignore the rubric and answer all the questions, albeit rather sketchily.

Too many candidates wrote too much for parts **A** and **B** and not enough for parts **C** and **D**. some candidates wasted time in copying out the question, whilst others used too much anecdotal 'evidence' as opposed to research evidence. There was, however, some very good use of local experience/evidence.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a)   Reasonably well answered, although some candidates failed to include the socially prescribed contribution of a social institution, therefore gaining just 1 of a possible 2 marks.

(b)   Many candidates wrote about 'roles' rather than functions.

(c)   As in part **b** candidates confused 'roles' and 'functions'.

(d)   Many candidates discussed the decline of the family, failing to recognise the opposing debate i.e. the continued importance of primary functions. Some candidates wrote about the decline in marriage rather than the decline of the family.

Question 2

(a)   Most candidates were able to answer this question, although some failed to include the 'legal' element or the 'termination' element, therefore gaining only 1 of a possible 2 marks.

(b)   Most candidates were able to identify and describe one form of marital breakdown other than divorce. Some candidates gave answers such as 'death of a partner' or 'partner working away', which are not forms of marital breakdown in a sociological sense.

(c)   This part question was well answered on the whole, although some candidates wrote about reasons for marital breakdown without offering corresponding evidence.

(d)   Less well answered part of the question. Many candidates focused their response on the individual rather than society or concentrated on the negative effects, omitting possible positive effects for society.

Question 3

(a)   Reasonably well answered, some candidates confused the term *hidden curriculum* with *informal education.*

(b)   Well answered, most candidates were able to describe two examples of how schools reinforce gender roles.

(c)   Many responses failed to describe the effects of the *self-fulfilling prophecy* i.e. in terms of the individual accepting or rejecting the label and acting accordingly.

(d)   This part of the question had been well covered by many of centres, but very few candidates offered an assessment.

Question 4

(a)   Reasonably well answered, although some candidates confused *formal education* with *informal education.*

(b)   Well answered on the whole but again some candidates confused *formal* and *informal education.*

(c)   Candidates offered a good range of problems facing children from poor families. The stronger candidates offered factors relating to both school and home background.

(d)   Less well answered part of the question with few candidates able to discuss *compensatory education* in a sociological way.

Question 5

(a)   This question was answered well by most candidates.

(b)   Most candidates were able to describe two reasons why some crimes are never reported to the police.

(c)   Many answers concentrated on certain types of criminals rather than types of crimes.

(d)   Many candidates assumed that victim studies and self report studies are carried out by the police and some failed to make a distinction between the two types of studies. Very little assessment was offered.

Question 6

(a)   Well answered on the whole, although some candidates wrote about deviancy rather than crime.

(b)   This part of the question was well answered by most candidates.

(c)   Interpretation of inner-city life varied greatly, with many writing in terms of a cultural and moral vacuum, where police fear to tread.

(d)   There was a lot of repetition of material from part **c**, with little in the way of assessment.

Question 7

(a)   Few candidates were able to give an appropriate definition of *bias.*

(b)   There were few good answers to this question.

(c)   Many answers were based on common sense, with few candidates offering sound sociological knowledge and understanding.

(d)   Good answers offered a balanced account of the debate between pluralists and Marxists and at the top of the band there were some attempts to assess the 'how far' part of the question.

Question 8

(a)   Most candidates were unable to give a sociological definition of the term *lifestyle*.

(b)   Answers tended to be commonsensical rather than sociological.

(c)   This part of the question was not well answered by most candidates. Very few discussed role-models or style-leaders in relation to advertising.

(d)   Reasonably well answered, although many candidates focused too narrowly on television and advertising rather than the mass media as a whole.

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General comments

The standard of the answers overall was pleasingly high. Most of the candidates demonstrated a sound knowledge of the relevant sociological material. However, some candidates seemed poorly prepared for the examination and relied mainly on assertion and general knowledge in answering the questions. It should be emphasised that answers lacking references to relevant sociological concepts and studies achieve very few marks.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Most of the candidates were able to achieve full marks by providing a satisfactory definition of the term 'traditional society'.

(b) Almost all of the candidates achieved full marks by describing two functions of the family.

(c) Weak answers discussed changes in family roles rather than focusing on the way functions have changed. Good answers identified several ways in which family functions have changed and linked this clearly to the process of modernisation.

(d) Weak answers relied on assertion rather than sociological knowledge and reasoning. Better answers discussed the significance of the family, changes such as the rising divorce rate, loss of family functions, and the decline in first marriages.

Question 2

(a) Most candidates recognised that monogamy refers to the marriage of one man to one woman. A few candidates confused the term with polygamy.

(b) Some candidates clearly lacked an understanding of the term 'polygamy'. Good answers identified two relevant reasons why polygamy exists in some societies and described each reason in the requisite detail.

(c) Quite a few candidates confused the reference to declining first marriages with the notion of the rising divorce rate. Good answers focused squarely on the issue of why, in many modern societies, more people apparently are choosing not to marry or delay marriage until a later age.

(d) Good answers identified a range of evidence purportedly supporting the idea that marriage is less important than it used to be and subjected this material to critical scrutiny. Weaker answers were often confined to a few simple points about the rising divorce rate.

Question 3

(a) Some candidates confused the term 'informal education' with the hidden curriculum. Good answers note that informal education takes place within the wider community, not in schools and colleges.

(b) Most of the candidates were able to describe adequately two functions performed by schools apart from preparing young people for work.

(c) Some candidates struggled to identify relevant reasons why skills are learned mainly through informal education in less industrialised societies. Good answers discussed three or four possible reasons, such as the people being too poor to afford schooling, rural communities possibly having no need for formal education, and the influence of repressive political regimes fearing the introduction of mass education schemes in some countries.

(d) Good answers described several ways in which schools prepare young people for work. At the top of the mark range, the responses also provided an assessment of how far schools contribute to preparing young people for work.

Question 4

(a) Some candidates confused the term 'ethnic minority' with the idea of an underclass or impoverished group within the population. Good answers noted that the term refers to a group of people who share a common culture that is different from that of the majority of society.

(b) Almost all of the candidates described adequately two ways in which home background may influence a child's chances of being successful at school.

(c) Good answers considered both the positive and the negative aspects of peer group influence in the context of educational achievement. A few candidates appeared not to have heard of the term 'peer group'.

(d) Good answers discussed a range of factors that may influence the educational performance of ethnic minority groups, including the process of labelling, the hidden curriculum, community and home background, and cultural capital explanations.

Question 5

(a) The candidates defined the term well.

(b) Most of the candidates understood the difference between formal and informal social control.

(c) Good answers described a range of mechanisms that may be used to achieve social control in tribal societies, such as ritual, intermarriage, ostracism, religion, and publicly voiced complaints.

(d) Weak answers were confined to a few simple points about where power lies in society. Better answers often approached the question by discussing the Marxist versus pluralist views of social control.

Question 6

(a) Most candidates recognised that juvenile delinquency refers to crimes committed by young people, usually under the age of 18.

(b) Most of the candidates were able to identify two reasons why rates of juvenile delinquency are much higher in inner city areas.

(c) Good answers discussed several reasons why young working class males are responsible for a high proportion of the recorded crime in modern societies. Candidates impressed the Examiners particularly by considering the possibility that the prevalence of young working class males in the crime figures may, in part, be a function of the way in which the law enforcement agencies operate.

(d) Good answers offered a solid critique of official crime statistics, explaining why the figures may be misleading and unreliable. Some candidates also impressed by considering ways in which the crime statistics may still be useful in sociological research despite their limitations.

Question 7

(a) The term was well defined by almost all of the candidates.

(b) Good answers referred to forms of communication such as religious instruction, works of art, face-to-face communication, and official messengers.

(c) Weak answers offered a few simple points about how the mass media influence behaviour in general. Better answers focused on the specific ways in which the media may influence young people.

(d) Good answers demonstrated knowledge of relevant sociological theories, including the hypodermic syringe model, the audience selection model, and the cultural effects approach.

Question 8

(a) Newsworthiness refers to the criteria used by journalists to decide what information and events are worth reporting in the news. A lot of the candidates struggled to define the term.

(b) Most of the candidates were able to describe adequately two factors that influence the content of the news apart from the concept of newsworthiness.

(c) Good answers discussed several reasons why news reports may contain bias, covering both the internal processes of newsgathering and external influences such as political interference and the demands of advertisers.

(d) Weak answers offered a few basic points about the supposed power of the media. Better answers focused on the extent to which the media are able to change and shape political attitudes specifically. The pluralist versus Marxist debate featured to good effect in some answers.