www.dynamicpapers.com

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12
Paper 12

Key messages

Candidates should:
- read questions carefully to understand their meaning and the meaning of the key words within them
- include at least two theories or specific sociological references in longer answers
- plan essays to ensure the correct focus on the question as set.

General comments

Nearly all candidates were able to answer both sections of the paper fully. Many responses were detailed, making specific references to sociological evidence. In order to improve, candidates should try to include more reference to theory and sociological studies. Evidence of concepts and contemporary society was generally good. There were no rubric errors.

There was evidence of poor time management in the answers of some candidates with some very detailed over lengthy answers to **Questions (1)(a)** and **(b)** and then rushed and incomplete essays. Candidates should plan to use their time in proportion to the marks to be awarded for each question. Questions requiring a definition should be short and focussed. It is worth noting that when there is evidence of planning in essays they are generally more successful than those without.

Candidates who were secure in their understanding of the key words in questions were able to answer them comprehensively but some candidates misinterpreted the question(s) and this was reflected in their answer. Answers which used the key words form the question generally displayed a more secure understanding of the meaning of the question.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

(a) Most candidates had a clear understanding of kinship as relationships based on biology, affinity or law. Some very knowledgeable answers went on to include examples of each which were not needed for full marks. Common errors were to only refer to biology but then to use different terms to describe it such as blood with no other details, resulting in a partial definition. Others described relationships which were not examples of kinship or described roles and what families do. Some answers were very long.

(b) There was evidence of the misreading of this question with many answers describing conjugal roles with no reference to parenting. Another common error was to describe how parents behave in one society without comparing to another society. Others answers described one situation, e.g. segregated and joint conjugal roles and how they influence parenting but offered no second example. Others described how the experience of childhood is different in different cultures with no mention of parenting. As a contrast to this, other answers described how the experience of childhood is different in different cultures with no mention of parenting, showing a basic misreading of the question. A less common error was to try and use the data in the stem to answer the question in terms of culture but with no relevant knowledge relating to the question. A number of candidates offered two appropriate examples such as a comparison of Asian and Western childrearing practices, and nurturing as compared to nurtured parents.

© 2019

(c) There were many detailed answers giving a range of reasons why societies have become more child-centred, the best of which made use of many studies such as those of Aries, Postman, Fionda and Robertson. These included the effects of education and religion, the changing status of children and the impact of the withdrawal of children form the workplace. Again there was evidence of misreading of the question as candidates who had sociological knowledge described the effects rather than the causes of child-centred societies, described how children spend their time or gave long descriptions of socialisation. A less common error was to describe in detail what non child-centred societies are like.

(d) This was generally a well-answered question with most candidates outlining how social class can influence the experience of childhood from both an economic and a cultural viewpoint. A number of successful responses went on to contrast this to the effects of gender and ethnicity on childhood experiences with a few also describing different family practices, culture as distinct from ethnicity, age and even technology and the concept of the toxic childhood. Some excellent answers also developed the Marxist view that social class is the most significant social division in predicting life chances such as the experience of childhood. A common error was to confuse socialisation with the experience of childhood, demonstrating a need to have a sound grasp of concepts. A very small number of answers rejected social class as a prime factor in favour of similarities to be found in childhood in different societies such as caring and the dark side of the family. It is worth noting that factors such as class, gender and ethnicity were seen as separate and very few considered the effect of for example being working class, female and black on the experience of childhood. .

Section B

Question 2

The majority of candidates had a sound understanding of the functions of the family and were able to describe these from the viewpoint of Marxists, functionalists and feminists. A few also introduced postmodern ideas about the functions of the family. Most candidates outlined the Marxist view posed by the question and the best responses evaluated this view directly using other theories. In order to improve performance, candidates should support their argument with sociological evidence. A common error was to answer on the topic rather than the question asked, this was probably the result of misreading the question. This was done by trying to define what the family is, debating the universal dominance of the nuclear family, explaining why families are dysfunctional or by making no reference to the reproduction of the work force throughout the answer. Candidates should be encouraged to use the key terms in the question in their answer to ensure they keep a focus on the correct material. A very small number of candidates misread the question as *reproduction* being the most important function of the family and not the *reproduction of the workforce*.

Question 3

The most successful candidates produced sophisticated answers discussing many reasons why the divorce rate has increased in modern industrial societies. The best of these assessed whether it was the employment of females which had brought this about or if other factors may have had more influence. Good use of concepts such as stigma and secularisation was made, as well as position of dual income families but less reference was made to theory and theorists. Very few candidates referred to the possibilities of escape from marriage caused by divorce reform legislation. There was excellent use made of the different feminist theories. Many candidates had a very good understanding of these theories and what they have to say about the position of women in society but limited their answers by not linking this information to divorce. Some answers were limited by not considering divorce at all but just describing the position of women in marriage/society or by comparing the social situation of married and unmarried women.

© 2019

www.dynamicpapers.com

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/22
Paper 22

Key messages

- Good answers showed sound knowledge and understanding of a range of sociological ideas, theories and concepts.
- Performance on ***Section A*** and ***Section B*** was evenly balanced.
- There was some misunderstanding of key methodological concepts, in particular, sampling.
- Low scoring answers were often overly descriptive and lacking empirical and theoretical depth.
- A number of essay responses were prone to listing points and juxtaposing theories.

General comments

The standard of response overall was good. High-scoring answers were characterised by good application of a range of relevant sociological evidence and theory. In ***Section A***, candidates were generally concise in their approach and this economy of effort meant that responses were generally well-focused on each question. This good time management also left candidates plenty of time for the essay question in ***Section B***. A number of key concepts, notably sampling, were not well understood. This meant that few candidates produced good responses to **Question 1(c)**. Validity was often applied with a lack of precision across a range of questions. This suggests that centres would benefit from careful revision of some of the key concepts in this unit, especially in relation to methodology. A great deal of evaluative content was in the form of juxtaposition. Those candidates who focused their attention on the wording of a question invariably produce assessment of higher quality.

Question 1

(a) The majority of candidates answered this question well and gained full marks. Those that scored one mark typically omitted explicit reference to the idea that replication led to identical or similar results. A minority of candidates confused reliability with validity.

(b) This question proved to be straightforward and most candidates were at least able to identify two factors; the most common factors were time and available funding, as well as theoretical perspective. Typically, these points were developed sufficiently to gain further marks.

(c) Few candidates answered this question successfully. Many candidates did not have a sufficient knowledge base to construct a convincing response. A number of candidates showed understanding of the concept of representativeness, and were able to offer descriptions of various sampling techniques, but few were able to link this effectively to the requirements of the question, i.e. the relationship between sampling and a particular research method, in this case social surveys. This led to many responses that were only partially focused on the question.

(d) Most candidates were able to identify a range of arguments against the use of quantitative data. Those that carefully linked their critique to the interpretivist perspective often produced some very competent answers. More limited responses did not apply their understanding of interpretivism to arguments against the use of quantitative methods, often focusing on general criticisms, which limited the number of marks awarded. Conversely, in a minority of cases candidates outlined their understanding of interpretivism but did not fully address the methodological side of the question. There was a notable tendency for candidates to provide incidental evaluation rather than producing distinct assessment points. They were not penalised for this but those that directly reflected on interpretivist arguments typically achieved a higher mark.

© 2019

Question 2

Of the two essay questions this one was more popular. Most candidates displayed sound knowledge of the topic area in general and an awareness that official statistics are an example of secondary data. A number of responses accepted the premise of the question and listed limitations of official statistics without seriously challenging the stated view. Better responses were able to identify both strengths and limitations although these were sometimes lacking in range or balance. Although many answers alluded to the theoretical element of the debate this was often not fully developed. A number of responses were content to discuss the question mainly in practical terms. Some responses shaped their answers in comparison to primary data, sometimes to good effect but often this led to a loss of direct focus on the question. The most successful responses directly addressed the idea that official statistics are of limited use and offered a balanced appraisal of their merits.

Question 3

Most candidates provided a good overview of structuralist approaches, typically functionalism, Marxism and feminism. Some focussed their attention on one of these but the majority highlighted the views of at least two. Those that framed their responses in relation to the debate between determinism and agency typically produced high quality responses. Moderate answers were often overly descriptive and content to outline and contrast functionalist and Marxist views with few direct links to the individual and society. With these sorts of response, evaluation was often either missing or by juxtaposition only. Interactionism and sometimes postmodernism were used as assessment tools, although candidates were generally less confident with this side of the argument. A number of candidates portrayed interactionism in a simplistic way, i.e. as a perspective that characterises individuals as possessing complete freedom of choice over their actions.

© 2019

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/32
Paper 32

Key messages

- Some excellent answers, full of sociological insight and mature analysis.
- Good answers combined detailed sociological understanding with sustained assessment.
- A few answers lacked references to relevant sociological concepts and theories.
- Further marks could be gained by using evidence from sociological studies to support key points.
- Some answers lacked focus on the key terms in the question.
- Some answers to the **(b)** questions were too descriptive.

General comments

There were some excellent answers that combined detailed sociological knowledge with thoughtful and well-informed analysis and evaluation. The best responses were tightly constructed in a way that demonstrated maturity of thought and careful attention to the wording of the question. Higher marks could be gained by adopting a more analytical and evaluative approach to the **(b)** questions. For the **(a)** questions, more use of examples to support key points would be another way to gain further marks.

Not focusing on the key terms in the question was a limitation with some of the answers. For example, some candidates attempted to answer **6(a)** without referring to the new media, even though the latter term was central to the question. Encouraging candidates to make a note of the key terms in the question before starting to answer is to be recommended. Referring back to the key terms at regular intervals in the answer is also advisable. A small minority of candidates appeared unprepared for the exam, relying on assertion and general knowledge to answer the questions rather than drawing on relevant sociological materials and argumentation. Some candidates answered more than the three questions required, with the extra answers rarely contributing to an improvement in the overall mark.

Section A

Question 1

(a) Good answers provided an accurate account of several reasons why it is difficult to measure intelligence. Some candidates rightly noted that intelligence is difficult to measure because it can take many different forms and there is no common definition of what is meant by intelligence. The point that IQ tests are socially constructed and may reflect cultural bias, provided another theme that often featured in high scoring responses. There were some lower scoring answers that discussed the role of intelligence as an influence on educational achievement rather than considering the difficulties in measuring intelligence.

(b) There were some high scoring answers that provided a sustained assessment of the view that ethnicity is the main influence on educational achievement. Good responses detailed several ways in which student performance may be affected by factors relating to ethnic background. Some candidates achieved high marks for assessment by considering whether social deprivation, rather than ethnicity as such, is the main factor explaining the educational underperformance of some ethnic minority groups. Low scoring answers lacked examples of how ethnicity may influence educational achievement and often relied on assertion rather than using relevant sociological material.

© 2019

Question 2

(a) Good answers provided a clear account of several ways in which the educational performance of girls may be influenced by the hidden curriculum. High scoring responses were often supported with references to relevant sociological studies, such as those by Stanworth, David, Norman, and Ballantine and Spade. Lower scoring answers were confined to discussing just one or two features of the hidden curriculum that may impact on female educational performance. A few responses demonstrated little understanding of what is meant by the 'hidden curriculum'.

(b) High scoring answers drew on material from the Marxist perspective and the correspondence theory of Bowles and Gintis in particular. Other sociological perspectives were used to provide an assessment of the view that the organisation of schools reflects the organisation of the capitalist workplace. Effective use of concepts such as social control, ideological state apparatus, social conditioning, symbolic order, and selective education was often a feature of answers that triggered the top mark band. Lower scoring answers were often unbalanced; for example, discussing the organisation of schools but with little corresponding reference to the organisation of the capitalist workplace. A few responses lacked references to relevant sociological studies and arguments.

Section B

Question 3

(a) Answers that merited high marks offered a well-developed discussion of several factors that may lead to the rapid growth of urban areas in developing countries. Both 'push' and 'pull' factors were identified in the highest scoring responses. There were some low scoring answers that provided only brief coverage of one or two relevant factors.

(b) High scoring answers used relevant examples and sociological arguments to assess the view that modernisation theory has more strengths than limitations. Good responses often distinguished between the work of earlier modernisation theorists, such as Rostow and Parsons, and later contributions from writers such as Landes and Edwards. Lower scoring answers often relied on a simple line of argument rather than considering different perspectives and angles on the questions.

Question 4

(a) There were a few good answers that made several well-developed points about why poor health care may have a negative effect on economic growth in developing countries. High scoring answers were often supported with examples of particular health care problems in developing countries. Some answers lower in the mark range lacked detail and were confined to articulating just one or two relevant points.

(b) High scoring answers offered a sustained analysis of the economic impact of transnational corporations in developing countries. Some candidates made good use of case studies to support their assessment. Answers that gained marks in the middle of the range often relied on a few basic points about the purportedly adverse impact of transnational corporations. Higher scoring responses were more nuanced and considered arguments both for and against the economic benefits of transnational corporations. There were a few low scoring answers that showed little understanding of the relevant sociological debates about economic development.

Section C

Question 5

(a) Good answers demonstrated a detailed understanding of the pluralist theory of the media. Examples of how the theory has been used in sociological studies of the media were a feature of high scoring answers. Some responses showed only a limited or inaccurate understanding of the pluralist theory.

(b) High scoring answers provided a sustained analysis of the two-step flow model of media influence. Other explanations of media influence, such as the hypodermic syringe and cultural effects models, often featured as part of the assessment of the two-step flow model. Some good responses also included references to studies of the media that help to illustrate the strengths and/or limitations of

© 2019

the two-step flow model. Lower in the mark range, less use was made of relevant concepts/theories and knowledge about the two-step flow model was less assured.

Question 6

(a) Higher in the mark range, answers provided several well-developed points about how the new media may be used to challenge government authority. Examples from specific countries were often used to support key points. Good answers also often drew relevant contrasts between the power of the new media and the traditional media. Low scoring answers lacked detail and often covered only one or two ways in which the new media may be used to challenge government authority.

(b) High quality answers examined several ways in which media content may reflect the interests of the ruling class. Most candidates also referred to the Marxist perspective on the media in order to provide a relevant theoretical context for the answer. Other theoretical perspectives (functionalist, pluralist, feminist, postmodernist) were often used to develop the assessment and some answers included helpful references to relevant sociological studies of media. There were some low scoring answers that relied on general observations about the media, with little or no reference to how media content may reflect the interests of the ruling class.

Section D

Question 7

(a) Good answers identified several factors that may lead to the growth of cults. Concepts such as postmodernity, secularisation, sub-cultures, cultural defence, globalisation, and remoralisation of self and society, often featured in high scoring responses. There were some low scoring answers that lacked understanding of what is meant by the term 'cult'.

(b) Most candidates recognised that the question provided an opportunity to discuss the secularisation thesis. Answers that reached the top of the mark range offered a detailed assessment of the arguments for and against the view expressed in the question. Evidence from studies was often used to gauge whether religion remains a powerful force in modern industrial societies. Some high-quality answers distinguished between the decline of some established religions and the possible growth in religiosity through the emergence of new religious movements and privatised forms of worship. Answers that merited the middle of the mark range often relied on a largely uncritical account of the secularisation thesis. There were a few low scoring answers that made assertions about the power of religion today, but offered little supporting evidence from the relevant sociological literature.

Question 8

(a) High scoring answers provided several well-developed points about why religious organisations may be viewed as patriarchal. Specific examples of patriarchy in a religious context were described in many of the best answers. Lower scoring responses were limited to a few general points about the role of women in religious organisations.

(b) Good answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the functionalist theory that religion contributes to social solidarity. High scoring responses also included a sustained assessment of the functionalist theory. The assessment often took the form of a juxtaposition of different theories of religion, including the Marxist, feminist, and post-modernist perspectives. Some candidates made good use of examples from particular countries to examine how far religion contributes to social solidarity. Answers in the middle of the mark range were often confined to a basic account of the functionalist view that religion contributes to social solidarity together with a few limited comments about contrasting theories, particularly the Marxist view that religion acts as a form of ideological control. There were a few low scoring answers that demonstrated little knowledge of the functionalist theory of religion.

© 2019