

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 0495/01

Paper 1

General comments

Most candidates demonstrated sound knowledge and understanding of the relevant subject matter. The higher achievers also made good use of appropriate analytical skills. As in previous years, some candidates were hindered by difficulty in expressing points clearly and accurately. However, the overall standard of expression was pleasingly high. Cases of rubric error were rare, though a few candidates attempted only one question.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) Most of the candidates provided a clear and accurate definition. A few of them confused 'socialisation' with 'socialising'.
- (b) Good answers referred to relevant examples from appropriate sociological sources. Weaker answers offered just a few generalised points about the ways boys and girls may be treated differently in schools.
- (c) There were some detailed and thoughtful answers to this question. Good responses described gender inequalities across a number of areas of society, often with supporting evidence from sociological studies. Weak answers were shorter and frequently relied on assertion rather than analysis and evidence.

Question 2

- (a) Most of the candidates had no problem defining marriage accurately, but many misunderstood the term 'polygamy'.
- (b) Well answered overall. Weaker answers mentioned only the difference in the number of people associated with each type of family. Better answers also considered factors such as types of relationships, differing structures and roles, and the contrasting social contexts in which each family type may be found.
- (c) The answers were generally good in explaining how industrialisation may affect the functions of families. The impact on the structure of families was barely mentioned in the case of the weaker answers.

Question 3

- (a) Well answered overall, and particularly so by candidates who referred to the work of Max Weber and his distinction between different types of power.
- (b) Good answers demonstrated a detailed sociological understanding of how power is used in each context, using appropriate examples and evidence. Weaker answers lacked balance and/or discussed only one or two methods.
- (c) Answers that were one-sided and based on assertion failed to impress the Examiners. Better responses made a concerted attempt to assess the influence of the media in political socialisation. Candidates received credit for considering that some media forms have different effects and different degrees of influence e.g. television and newspapers.

Question 4

- (a) About half of the candidates who attempted this question failed to demonstrate any understanding of the term 'stereotype'.
- (b) Good answers discussed at least three relevant factors, showing detailed and reasoned understanding. Weak answers were often little more than lists of vague points.
- (c) Most candidates identified a range of relevant suggestions. The main discriminator was the depth and persuasiveness with which the points were made. A few candidates limited their answers by referring only to governmental measures.

Question 5

- (a) Most candidates demonstrated at least a basic understanding of both concepts. Weaker answers were characterised by lack of clarity and detail in communicating their understanding.
- (b) A lot of answers referred to the inherently subjective nature of definitions of relative poverty as the main difficulty. However, to gain high marks other factors also needed to be considered, such as methodological issues, historical and cultural changes that may affect the definition, and political and ideological considerations.
- (c) Weaker answers often failed to focus on relative poverty specifically and/or lacked depth of analysis. Better answers examined a range of explanations in detail and some also impressed by considering the groups involved e.g. elderly, the low paid, unemployed, disabled, etc.

Paper 0495/02

Paper 2

General comments

While there were some good scripts, the overall standard was a little disappointing. Many candidates demonstrated only a limited understanding of content analysis. A lot were also handicapped by having a misconceived notion of ethical issues. Weak answers were often very brief and poorly articulated. Better candidates used appropriate sociological terms and examples to provide reasoned and sustained responses.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Almost all of the candidates provided correct answers to both parts of the question.

Question 2

Answers were often vague or wholly misconceived. While some candidates noted that content analysis is linked to the study of the media, few demonstrated any understanding of what the actual method of research involves.

Question 3

Answers often reflected a lack of understanding of the nature of content analysis. However, a number of candidates noted some appropriate advantages, such as it being cheaper and less time consuming than other methods.

Question 4

Well answered overall, with most candidates recognising two or three possible sources of bias in media sources. Some also rightly pointed out that the research was possibly dated and based on an unrepresentative or small sample.

Question 5

Many candidates provided an inappropriate response by discussing only the ethics of the media in encouraging dieting. Better answers focused on the ethical issues raised by the interview research that provided the basis for the source. Relevant issues included, for example, confidentiality, danger of intrusion into private matters, and the sensitive, medical nature of the subject.

Question 6

There were some poor answers that merely, or mostly, moralised about media portrayals of violence. Better answers assessed the nature of the evidence and its usefulness, raising issues such as the limited scale of the research, possible researcher bias, and the various pros and cons of sociological studies based on interviews.

Question 7

Well answered overall, with candidates again demonstrating good awareness of the limitations of evidence collected from the media. Good answers referred to a range of appropriate points, such as author bias, editorial bias, recording errors, selectivity, sensationalism or distortion, and presentational issues.

Question 8

Some poor answers simply moralised about the possible ill effects of violence in the media. Better answers considered different types of evidence, both primary and secondary, that might be used to assess the affects of violence in the media on children's behaviour. There were a few very good answers that provided a detailed account of an appropriate research strategy, including justifications for the recommended research methods.

Paper 0495/04

Alternative to Coursework

General comments

It was pleasing to note that many of the candidates achieved a high standard in this paper. In most cases the questions were answered with appropriate detail and insight. **Question 6** proved to be the main discriminator. While some candidates provided thorough and well-reasoned responses to this question, others struggled to address all of the relevant issues. There were no rubric errors and no common misunderstandings of the questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

Almost all of the candidates were able to provide an accurate account of what an interview is in sociological research, and most demonstrated good awareness of what comparative studies involve.

Question 2

Weaker answers contributed only vague, loosely relevant points. Better answers identified accurately one advantage and one disadvantage.

Question 3

Some weaker answers relied on just one relevant observation, usually the point that sampling reduces the costs and time involved in sociological research. Better answers covered a wider range of points, often referring to the usefulness of samples in allowing research findings to be generalised to a wider population.

Question 4

This question posed few problems for the candidates. Most were able to identify clearly three advantages of using observation in sociological research. Appropriate advantages included, for example, first hand evidence, high validity, detailed information can be gathered, and ability to get close to groups that might otherwise be difficult to study.

Question 5

Some weaker answers relied on just one or two relevant points, sometimes repeating the same point. Good answers identified four clearly different possible causes of inaccuracy or bias in the recording of sociological evidence.

Question 6

Most of the candidates made at least some relevant progress in answering this question. However, weaker responses were often rather disjointed and/or naïve in the research strategy they articulated. Better answers addressed evenly all four aspects of the research strategy as identified in the question. They also made strong links between their recommendations and the specified context of the research, which was an investigation into differences in socialisation between social classes.