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FOREWORD

This booklet contains reports written by Examiners on the work of candidates in certain papers. **Its contents are primarily for the information of the subject teachers concerned**.

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SOCIOLOGY

GCE Ordinary Level

Paper 2251/01

Paper 1

General comments

It was pleasing to report that, as with the first year of the examination, overall candidates produced a high standard of responses. Most candidates appeared particularly well prepared for the compulsory question on research methods (**Question 1**). As with the previous year, there was greater variation in the standard of answers to other questions. There remains a problem that some candidates are spending too much of their time on the earlier parts of questions and neglecting parts **(c)** and **(d)**. In a number of cases part **(d)** responses tended to lack focus and development. However, at the other extreme there were some excellent scripts, which gained very high marks and demonstrated a sophisticated conceptual understanding and a great range of knowledge.

The most frequent rubric error remained – candidates attempting more than the specified number of questions. Centres should remind candidates that there is usually little to be gained from attempting more than four questions. Often attempting more than the required number detracts from their chances of achieving a mark that fairly reflects their ability.

Centres and candidates on the whole appear well prepared for the new syllabus. Examiners would like to remind Centres that the CIE Sociology web discussion group is an available forum for commenting on, or raising questions about this year's examination, or any other matter related to the syllabus.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Most candidates were able to define *Questionnaire* and *Qualitative Research* with some degree of accuracy, but fewer were able to provide good definitions of *Reliability.*

(b) Most candidates were able to describe two types of sample, though some misunderstood the question and outlined Sociological methods.

(c) Generally, this was poorly answered with candidates in particular failing to address the issue of the neutrality of the researcher in quantitative research.

(d) This question proved to be a good discriminator with some excellent answers, but with some candidates only displaying a very limited knowledge of *longitudinal studies.* Such candidates in particular tended to have difficulty outlining advantages of the method with any clarity.

(e) The majority of candidates were able to demonstrate a clear understanding of strengths and limitations of questionnaires.

Question 2

(a) Well answered with the majority of candidates providing a clear definition.

(b) Most candidates were able to distinguish between the two forms of socialisation, providing a range of good supporting examples.

(c) Better candidates were able to identify a range of influences on a child's development.

(d) Candidates who addressed the issue of instinct versus socialisation tended to score high marks. Many candidates however, tended to focus on providing an account of socialisation without directly addressing the question.

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Question 3

(a) Most candidates provided a clear definition.

(b) Most candidates clearly had a very good understanding of both forms of social control, providing a range of good examples.

(c) Good answers stressed the importance of types of informal social control and provided examples. Weaker answers demonstrated a lack of understanding of social control.

(d) There were a number of effective answers, which displayed a clear understanding of Marxist and Functionalist theories. More enterprising candidates also made reference effectively to feminist explanations. Weaker responses tended to give a few common sense points about how the wealthy tended to benefit from social control.

Question 4

(a) Most candidates were able to provide a clear definition.

(b) This was generally poorly answered. Better responses were able to identify the difficulty of using occupation to place some groups in the occupational structure. A number of candidates failed to understand the question.

(c) Some candidates struggled to identify relevant factors, but others were able to provide a range of explanations regarding the changing nature of work.

(d) Some candidates were able to provide sound accounts of Marxist theory and successfully linked them to contemporary society. Weaker responses tended to provide very limited theoretical accounts or made a few commonsense points about class.

Question 5

(a) Some candidates had difficulty in providing an effective definition.

(b) Answers were generally very good with the vast majority of candidates identifying race and gender issues.

(c) Weaker answers focused on simplistic descriptions of gender discrimination. Better candidates focused on a range of issues such as: the problems of family responsibilities of women, the lack of educational opportunities for women in some societies and the problems of vertical and horizontal segregation in the labour market, etc.

(d) This was generally well done with many candidates making reference to: education, social status, health, and the opportunities for the children of professionals to have cultural and educational advantages.

Question 6

(a) Most candidates were able to provide an adequate definition to gain the two marks.

(b) Most candidates were able to provide a description of two political systems.

(c) Good answers were able to provide an outline of their own political system. Weaker candidates provided answers that were very vague and lacked knowledge of their political institutions.

(d) Few candidates had a clear knowledge and understanding of Pluralist theory. Most answers were vague accounts, which lacked a critical element. A minority of candidates provided an analysis of the strengths and limitations of the theory.

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Question 7

(a) Most candidates had a clear understanding of what *pressure groups* are and provided a clear definition.

(b) Generally, candidates were able to identify two functions. Some answers lacked sufficient clarity to gain all four marks.

(c) Very well answered with some excellent accounts, which differentiated between 'insider' and 'outsider' groups. Most candidates were able to present a list of methods adopted by pressure groups.

(d) This question produced a wide range of responses. Weaker answers tended to provide descriptive accounts of the work of pressure groups in varying degrees of detail. Better answers were able to address the question directly and provide a range of issues regarding the democratic roles of groups and were able to note the dominance of some groups over others. However, few candidates provided a balanced assessment.

Paper 2251/02

Paper 2

General comments

As in previous sessions, a pleasing number of the candidates produced work of outstanding quality. Their answers demonstrated detailed knowledge and understanding of the relevant issues and provided an appropriate level of analysis and assessment where required. Just below this level of excellence, there were many candidates in the middle of the mark range whose work demonstrated continued improvement in the standard. Better examination technique and more use of relevant sociological sources were the main factors behind this improvement. At the lower end of the mark range, once again there were many scripts that attempted to answer the questions by reference to general knowledge and assertion. This type of approach is inappropriate and achieves few marks. To improve their grades, candidates at the lower end of the mark range need to base their answers on sociological material from the recommended textbooks.

Some candidates continue to answer more than the stated number of questions. Centres are urged to remind candidates that they should focus their time on answering three questions well, as there are no extra marks for answering more than the set number of questions.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

(a) Most candidates recognised that a nuclear family refers to co-residence of a mother, father and at least one child.

(b) The extended family and single parent family were the two other types of family unit most often cited.

(c) Weaker answers made a few basic points about why people may have large families. Better answers made a number of relevant points linked directly to the characteristics of traditional societies.

(d) Some candidates confused this question with the debate about the decline of the extended family. Good answers addressed the question by considering factors such as the rise in divorce rate, the growth in alternative types of household, and the evidence about cultural diversity in family forms.

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Question 2

(a) Most candidates gained at least one mark by noting that divorce refers to the termination of a marriage. To achieve both marks, however, it was necessary to note that divorce is a legally sanctioned process.

(b) Good answers gave the examples of separation, empty-shell marriages, and desertion. Inappropriate answers included many references to the death of a partner and examples of marital conflict such as domestic violence and partners not speaking to each other.

(c) Good answers covered a range of factors, including legal changes, the increasing independence of women, and changes in expectations of marriage.

(d) Weaker answers relied on a few general observations and/or assertion about the state of marriage today. Better answers were based on appropriate sociological evidence and debate from textbook sources.

Question 3

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

(b) Most of the candidates were able to provide two relevant examples of how schools and colleges can give children from poor families a chance to achieve upward social mobility.

(c) Weak answers contained a few simple points with little sociological backing. Better answers covered a range of factors related to both the home background and the school.

(d) Good answers made a range of appropriate suggestions, often referring to various schemes for compensatory education and programmes to promote equal treatment of pupils.

Question 4

(a) Most of the candidates understood the term 'hidden curriculum', though some confused it with teaching that occurs outside of the school.

(b) Most of the candidates were able to give two relevant examples.

(c) Answers achieving lower marks often focused on reasons for educational underperformance in general. Better answers linked their points specifically to the situations experienced by ethnic minority groups.

(d) Lower in the mark range answers were confined to a few simple examples of how teachers may affect the educational performance of their pupils, and little or not attempt was made to answer the 'how far' part of the question. Both parts of the question were addressed in an appropriately knowledgeable way in answers that merited full marks.

Question 5

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

(b) There were some inappropriate answers that simply gave examples of deviance rather than demonstrating how definitions of deviance may vary between societies. Most of the candidates though were able to provide two relevant examples to gain full marks.

(c) Weaker answers considered explanations of deviant behaviour in general, without identifying labelling theory as such. Good answers often included examples from studies where labelling theory is used to explore the nature of deviant behaviour.

(d) Good answers identified a range of groups who are more likely to be labelled as deviant and provided a sustained account of why this process occurs.

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Question 6

(a) Some candidates were clearly guessing at the meaning of this term. Correct answers noted that the dark figure refers to the difference between the actual number of crimes committed and the number appearing in official crime statistics.

(b) Very well answered by virtually all of the candidates.

(c) Weak answers were often confined to a few general points with little or no sociological support. Better answers provided a sound sociological account of the reasons why some groups may be over-represented in the crime statistics.

(d) Good answers made effective use of appropriate sociological concepts and studies to explain why the actions of the police may lead to an increase in the level of recorded crime. There were some particularly creditable references to stereotyping, moral panics, labelling, status differences and power in answers that merited full marks.

Question 7

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

(b) Gender and racial stereotypes were the most frequently quoted examples among the many answers that merited full marks.

(c) Good answers noted that the mass media reinforced gender roles in a variety of ways, such as through the presentation of stereotypical images in various forms and by emphasising very clear-cut male and female roles.

(d) Weaker responses were confined to a few general observations about the lifestyles of young people. Better answers noted that the mass media might influence young people through links with youth culture, pop music, fashion, and the advertising industry.

Question 8

(a) Most of the candidates were able to define the phrase clearly and accurately.

(b) The majority of candidates identified two appropriate reasons why important information may be left out of a news report.

(c) Some candidates seemed to be guessing at what points might be relevant in answering this question. Better answers demonstrated a sound knowledge of the relevant textbook sources on how the gathering and editing of news may involve bias and distortion.

(d) Weak answers relied on a few simplistic points about the power that ownership supposedly confers, with little or no attempt to address the issues raised by the question in a balanced or sustained way. Good answers featured a concerted attempt to assess the extent to which the owners of newspapers may control what is published.

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