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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.**

SOCIOLOGY

GCE Advanced Level and GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level

<p>Paper 9699/01</p>

<p>Essay</p>

General comments

The overall standard for this Paper continues to improve. It is pleasing to see that increasingly candidates are making good use of references to appropriate sociological studies as a way of supporting their main arguments and ideas. Improvement is also noticeable in the extent to which candidates are adopting a suitably analytical approach in addressing the issues raised by each question. As the syllabus document emphasises, analysis and evaluation are key skills that candidates need to demonstrate in order to achieve high marks in the examination.

There were no common misunderstandings of the questions other than for **Question 2** where many candidates repeated an error we have drawn attention to in the past by writing about socialisation in general rather than the social construction of childhood specifically. Examiners would urge Centres to address this issue, as the social construction of age is a key theme in the syllabus and one that should not be subsumed under the general concept of socialisation.

Post-modernist theory is increasingly relevant in sociology and Examiners would encourage all Centres to ensure that their candidates are well informed about this important new perspective. A textbook written specifically for the CIE Sociology Syllabus will be available from Cambridge University Press from January 2004. The title is 'Sociology Explained' and the Principal Examiner for the syllabus is one of the authors. The main aim of the book is to cover parts of the syllabus that are not well covered by alternative textbooks. This includes special sections on both post-modernist theory and the social construction of childhood.

Centres can obtain further advice and ideas about teaching Sociology for the CIE Syllabuses by joining the web discussion group for the subject.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

This was a popular question and most of the answers were well informed and suitably evaluative. Some candidates focused on the debate about the status of Sociology as a science. This was an appropriate response as long as the focus remained squarely on the issue of values and their place within sociological research. References to relevant contributions from key thinkers such as Weber, Becker, Berger, Gouldner and C. Wright Mills were often a feature of the better answers. Addressing the distinction between 'can' and 'should' sociology be value free was a requirement for reaching the top of the mark range.

Question 2

Many candidates wrote only about the importance of primary socialisation and the mechanisms through which it is enacted. Such responses gained some credit for being broadly relevant to the question, but they failed to address the key issue of whether the concept of childhood is socially constructed. This is essentially the debate about whether childhood as a distinctive age category is a culturally and/or historically specific phenomenon. The French historian Philip Aries, for example, has argued that childhood, as we know it in the West today, only came into existence in the twentieth century. Before that time, he argues, children were treated little differently to adults. Good answers focused on the debates about the significance of cultural and/or historical variations in the treatment of children, often using Aries' work as the focus for the discussion.

Question 3

This was a popular question. Weaker answers were often confined to mentioning a few general advantages and limitations of participant observation. Better answers focused on the distinction between covert and overt approaches. Candidates who discussed both the practical and theoretical advantages and limitations of the two approaches particularly impressed the Examiners. References to relevant participant observation studies were a useful way of supporting key points.

Question 4

Most candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the four concepts on which the question was based. Some wasted time by describing at length the general features of questionnaires and interviews. Better answers adopted an analytical approach from the outset and focused directly on assessing the usefulness of these research methods in terms of the specified concepts. Some candidates confused the terms validity and reliability. Using examples from relevant studies was often a feature of good answers.

Question 5

There were relatively few answers to this question and the quality of response overall was poor. Many candidates simply offered commonsense ideas about the links between occupation and social class. Others concentrated on descriptive accounts of different theories of social class, with few direct links to the question as set. Good answers utilised an appropriate theoretical framework to highlight key issues. For example, answers based on an assessment of the meritocracy thesis impressed the Examiners. Likewise, there were some good answers that evaluated the functionalist/Weberian traditions of class analysis, with their emphasis on occupation as a major factor in understanding class relations. Post-modernist critiques of traditional class analysis were another feature of good answers.

Question 6

This was well answered overall. Weaker responses merely highlighted a few examples of sexual inequality without advancing any clear or coherent explanations. Better answers focused directly on the concept of patriarchy and its relevance for understanding gender inequality. References to relevant feminist contributions, such as those of Walby and Firestone, often provided an appropriate framework for addressing the issues raised by the question. Most candidates relied on a simple understanding of patriarchy as referring to male domination. More sophisticated answers recognised that patriarchy is generally understood by feminists as an ideology that seeks to justify special privileges and rewards for males, both within the family and in the wider society. It is therefore not compatible with a purely economic or cultural explanation of gender inequality, and thus the concept of patriarchy marks an important distinction between feminist theory and traditional Marxist and functionalist accounts of the relative positions of male and female in society.

Paper 9699/02

Data Response

General comments

As was the case last year, candidate performance was greatly affected by whether or not a sound technique for answering structured data response questions was utilised. Some candidates misused their time by writing overlong answers to the part **(a)** and **(b)** sections. As these parts account for only six of the twenty-five marks available for each question, it is advisable that answers are correspondingly brief. A single well-phrased sentence would generally be sufficient for answering the part **(a)** questions and an answer based on a single short paragraph would be adequate for the part **(b)** questions. Candidates who write much more than this simply waste their time and invariably leave themselves less well placed to provide suitably detailed and thoughtful answers for the part **(c)** and **(d)** questions that together account for the majority of the marks.

A few candidates also placed themselves at a disadvantage by failing to identify each part of their answer. The left hand margin of the answer sheet should be used to designate where each part of the answer begins i.e. by writing, for example, **Q1(a)**, **Q1(b)**, and so on. Centres are asked to remind candidates of the importance of numbering their answers.

Candidates may benefit from more practice in writing short, accurate definitions of key terms, as this skill is particularly important in relation to the part (a) and (b) questions. The practice of using an example where the question requires a formal definition should be discouraged. A suitable example may help to illustrate a definition, but it can never replace it.

There were no common misunderstandings of the questions and the vast majority of the candidates complied with the rubric requirements.

Comments on specific questions

Question 1

- (a) About half of the candidates correctly noted that informal social control occurs within the context of socialisation, whereas formal social control refers to the regulatory activities of the government and law enforcement agencies. Answers that defined only one of the terms correctly gained half of the marks. A common error was to conflate the terms with primary and secondary socialisation. Another frequent mistake was to give examples of social control in place of a formal definition.
- (b) Answers that merely identified the contexts in which informal social control may operate, such as the family or education, gained half of the marks available. Better answers described the specific means through which informal social control may be applied. This included references to practices such as ostracism, labelling, gossiping, and loss of status.
- (c) Most candidates were able to identify two or three groups who may benefit most from social control. Often the response was couched in terms of the debate between functionalist and Marxist perspectives. Better answers also frequently featured references to other relevant theories such as pluralism and the feminist perspective. The best answers offered a well-reasoned assessment of the issues and/or provided evidence to support a particular conclusion.
- (d) Weak answers offered just a few commonsense ideas about the extent to which an individual can resist the processes of social control. Better answers developed their points within an appropriate sociological framework. This often took the form of exploring the debate between macro and micro perspectives, highlighting the divide between theories that are deterministic and those that allow more scope for voluntarism in understanding individual and group dynamics. Some candidates rightly distinguished between the different opportunities available to the isolated individual, individuals in cooperation, and powerful organised groups. Organised groups and classes would generally have more power to resist the processes of social control than would be the case for the individual person alone, though context and circumstances are also a major variable in this respect.

Question 2

- (a) While most candidates demonstrated some understanding of the term representative sample, many were unable to offer a sufficiently complete definition to merit both marks.
- (b) A few candidates mistakenly gave examples of research methods, such as questionnaires and interviews. However, most correctly identified two sampling methods, and many were able to gain full marks by briefly describing each method.
- (c) Most candidates demonstrated some understanding of what longitudinal studies involve. Weaker answers were confined to a limited range of mostly practical points about the strengths and/or weaknesses of studies that are carried out over a long period of time. Better answers made a good range of relevant points, usually covering theoretical as well as practical issues. Some also illustrated their points with references to particular studies based on longitudinal research.
- (d) This was well answered overall. Some candidates became rather too immersed in discussing the pros and cons of particular research methods, but generally the responses were well focused on the practical, ethical and theoretical issues that may influence the sociologist's choice of survey method.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates demonstrated a surprising lack of knowledge about the meaning of embourgeoisement. While a few rightly noted that it refers to the idea that sections of the working class are adopting middle class lifestyles, many wrongly suggested that it refers to the domination of the working class by the bourgeoisie. Others made vague references to the breaking down of class divisions and the purported increase in social mobility. Such answers merited half marks at best.
- (b) This question was well answered, with virtually all of the candidates identifying two relevant examples of social inequality. Most were able to attain full marks by describing the key features of each example.
- (c) Weak answers were often confined to a few general points about the distinguishing features of the working class. Better answers identified relevant divisions within that class, such as those based on different skill levels within employment and on the factors of age, ethnicity, gender, unionisation, housing classes, and lifestyle choices.
- (d) This question was not answered very well overall, with many of the responses being restricted to a few isolated points about the supposedly growing power and status of the working class in modern industrial societies. Better candidates recognised that the proletarianisation thesis provided an appropriate peg on which to hang their answer. Some also impressed the Examiners by adding elements of the post modernist critique of traditional class analysis.

<p>Paper 9699/03</p>

<p>Social Change and Differentiation</p>

General comments

There were a full range of answers from candidates in this examination and evidence that Centres have prepared their candidates well. Evidence was shown of the use of key thinkers as well as empirical data in support of answers. In order to access the highest marks candidates need to summarise a variety of views and evidence; many spend too long describing in detail one or two pieces of work. This was quite frequently accurately done by candidates but less detail with more analysis and assessment can potentially gain full marks. Candidates can best ensure that they reach these higher levels by checking that they have used two or three perspectives in their answer as well as using evidence based on class, gender and ethnicity. To improve the performance of their candidates, Centres should concentrate on the teaching of concepts. When candidates do make reference to studies or trends, it would be helpful if they could name the society or type of society that is being used.

Once again some candidates failed to answer both parts of the question with the inevitable consequences for their result although there were few rubric errors where candidates answered less than three questions. However, too many candidates failed to number the parts of the question that they had written leaving it to the Examiner to work that out.

In order to improve their scores candidates need to divide their time more evenly; a short final question does not usually score well. This also applies to the two parts of any question: candidates should spend twice as long on part (b) as compared to part (a). Those candidates who limited themselves to short factual answers in part (a) and then developed a debate in part (b) did very well.

Candidates that chose to answer questions from **Sections A, B, C and D** generally did better than those who answered **E and F**. If candidates are going to answer questions from the new elements of the syllabus they should be sure that they have the sociological knowledge to be successful.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

This was one of the most popular questions attempted by candidates and answers displayed a great deal of sociological knowledge.

- (a) Candidates showed a great deal of knowledge of structures but many of them confined their answers to families exclusively. The best candidates defined the nature of households and either by definition or examples showed that households do not have to be made up of kin. A small number of candidates confused the meaning of the question and wrote about houses.
- (b) A number of candidates used a lot of sociological knowledge in their answers but they redefined the question. They wrote about the reasons why the nuclear family exists or if it has become dysfunctional. Centres who had prepared candidates to not only describe and evaluate the arguments for the disappearance of nuclear families, but also express the opposing view did well. The best candidates also considered the possibility that the nuclear family could be changing rather than declining.

Question 2

The candidates who selected this question mostly had a good understanding as to its meaning.

- (a) Candidates who described the changes did well but they would have improved their answers by naming the society or societies that they were referring to. A few candidates explained why these changes were taking place; they frequently made reference to sociological research in their answers but it was not relevant to the question set.
- (b) The best answers pointed out that the issue of raised status was not universal and gave examples both from the family and elsewhere to show this. Good answers also discriminated between different societies. More reference could have been made to feminist views.

Section B

Question 3

Few candidates elected to answer this question and of those that did very few had a clear knowledge and understanding of the material required.

- (a) Some answers clearly demonstrated that the candidate did not know what an ethnic minority was. Those that did nearly always claimed that minorities are disadvantaged and underachieve. In order to access the highest band, the exceptions to this rule, e.g. whites in South Africa, also needed to be included.
- (b) Those that knew what an ethnic minority was were able to attempt this question well, outlining the problems of racism and material deprivation that can influence the educational achievement of ethnic minorities. Some candidates just referred to working class experiences.

Question 4

This was very popular with candidates and some of the most impressive answers were give to this question.

- (a) The most accurate answers to this question described the process of labelling and showed how it passes through stages to stabilisation. At the highest band the acceptance of the label or rejection of it was also included. A disappointing number of candidates focused on the consequences of labelling rather than the process itself.
- (b) A well understood and well answered question by nearly all candidates. A clear understanding of the major theoretical perspectives was offered as well as useful reference being made to both studies of girls and ethnic minorities, as well as material relevant to class position.

Section C

Question 5

Religion remains a popular choice with candidates but this question was the least popular this year.

- (a) Some candidates gave two reasons why religion continues to be important from a theological perspective and this continues to be the main pitfall to questions on religion. Others described two sociological perspectives but the key to a successful question was explaining why religion continues to be observed in modern societies from the viewpoint of two sociological theories like Functionalism or Marxism.
- (b) This question confused many candidates and many of them also confused the work of Weber with that of Comte. There was no specific necessity to refer to the work of Weber in answers but to assess the view that science would replace religion in modern industrial societies. Again some candidates used the opportunity to express their own religious views.

Question 6

There were some superb answers to this question but as with **Question 5** there were some candidates who became over enthusiastic with their religious beliefs to the detriment of their sociological understanding.

- (a) Religious power in this question could refer to either a political or social context, and the main weakness in answers was that candidates wrote too much. The best answers showed a range of powers in the past and showed how this has changed but at the same time noting the way in which religion continues to have influence in the world. This exploration of the changing nature of religious experience was generally explored more fully than the changing nature of religious power.
- (b) On the whole the answers to this question were the best in the Paper, and showed a range of ways in which the concept can be used. At the highest band, candidates discussed the controversial nature of the concept and how the answer depends on the definition. Candidates should at least refer to the work of Martin and Wilson (or similar).

Section D

Question 7

Very few candidates attempted this question.

- (a) It was disappointing that many of the candidates who attempted this question had no idea of what a moral panic, was as they wrote about how morals influence crime. Those that related their answer to the way that the media can impact on levels of crime did well.
- (b) This part of the question was well answered by those candidates who evaluated the question and covered a range of factors that influence the levels of crime and deviance in societies, as well as definitions of the two concepts. In general this part of the question was not as well answered as (a).

Question 8

A very popular question with candidates, but very few wrote good answers to both parts and many spent too long on part (a) to the detriment of part (b).

- (a) There were some very good answers that showed a range of material and most candidates concentrated on the factors that influence female criminology. Some candidates are still inclined to treat 'lesser' female crimes as statistics that will not appear on any official record or wrote about male and not female criminology; others gave undue weight to the work of Pollack. Candidates who confined their answers to socialisation were marked in the bottom band.
- (b) Candidates had a wide range of knowledge about theories that account for deviance and there was good use of empirical data. A few candidates redefined the question and confined their answers to factors that dealt with deviant behaviour among ethnic minorities. Most candidates were able to explore and give evidence to support the view that deviant behaviour is to be found in all strata of society.

Section E

Question 9

Very unusually, this question was answered by so few candidates that no realistic assessment of performance can be made. Those that did attempt this question were confused and made no reference to sociological material.

Question 10

Few candidates answered this question.

- (a) Most definitions were weak and limited themselves to the issue of pay. Some candidates wrote about why people engage in work but made no reference to the issues of status or choice in undertaking work.
- (b) Candidates showed an insufficient amount of sociological material in attempting this question and Centres would be well advised to warn candidates about the pitfalls of answering questions for which they have not been prepared. Some offered lists of satisfying jobs or described what you can do with the money you earn from work. Few studies of worker satisfaction such as Parker or Blauner were referred to.

Section F

Question 11

This question was selected by a small number of candidates.

- (a) Some candidates ignored the concepts of selection and presentation while others referred to adverts. This gained some credit but to score well candidates needed to show how agenda setters/gatekeepers can influence the audience.
- (b) Those candidates who showed clearly that they understood the nature of ideological control did well and most interrogated the Pluralist/Marxist debate. In order to improve their marks candidates need to make more use of research in their answers.

Question 12

This question was answered by a reasonable number of candidates.

- (a) The key to answering this question well was understanding the meaning of a stereotype and those candidates who understood this concept did well. There were a disappointing number of candidates who thought the mass media stereotyped the audience or offered examples of stereotypes but gave no description of the process.
- (b) Many candidates who had given a good answer to (a) did not maintain their standard to this part of the question. Very few gave answers that used sociological material (the effects of the media on levels of violence in society is one of the most researched areas of study). Many answers were full of value judgements about the way that the media portrays violence.