



GCSE

Sociology

8192/1

Report on the examination

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General

The number of entries for this specification are increasing each year.

There was evidence of some well-prepared students showing good sociological knowledge and understanding. Many students demonstrated a good grasp of sociological terminology and theory in their responses with some very strong examples from some students. It is evident that students' understanding, and application of theory is improving year on year, and this is providing a good foundation to base their longer answers on.

There was evidence of some good understanding of the key studies when answering the specific questions (Q8 and Q19). Some students showed wider knowledge of the studies by incorporating them into their 12 mark responses very effectively. There was evidence of improvement in the structure of the essays and in many cases, there was effective use of alternative perspectives/relevant arguments. The extended responses seemed to have been addressed by more students, writing longer answers than in previous years. Although students do not need to write an introduction for their essays, it is important that they write a conclusion to summarise 'how far sociologists would agree...' with the statement in the question.

However, the research methods questions were an area of more noticeable concern this year. Students seemed to find the questions on non-participant observation (Q18) and structured interviews (Q20) particularly challenging. Students need to be aware of all the different research methods and must be able to show an understanding of the advantages/strengths and disadvantages/weaknesses for each of the research methods. These questions appear on the paper each year and students should be able to answer these questions confidently.

A recurring issue is where students do not link their response to the context presented in the relevant questions (Q6, Q7, Q9, Q17, Q18, Q20). Where students do not show any link to the context, they cannot achieve more than 2/4 marks (see comments on each question).

With the key studies questions (Q8 and Q19), students were generally able to pick relevant points from the item and attempted to develop them. However, some did rely heavily on copying large sections from the item rather than including their own knowledge.

If a question asks for **one** aspect (advantage/disadvantage etc) then students need to ensure they do this. Writing more than one factor will not receive extra credit and penalises the student in the fact that they have wasted time.

It is important that students are aware of the key terms in the glossary. This is particularly important when evaluating research methods. There is still confusion between the terms of quantitative and qualitative data, reliability and validity, representativeness, and generalisability. Students need to be able to use these terms accurately when evaluating different research methods. Terms such as 'accurate' and 'flawed' are too vague. A list of key terms and concepts that may be assessed can be found in Appendix A of the specification.

The majority of students completed the paper this year, showing an improvement in time management. Students should be reminded of the importance of the 'mark a minute' guidance intended to help them complete each question. Writing too much for some shorter

answers and giving more than one strength/weakness/factor when the question asks for only one, often prevents students from completing the paper.

Handwriting is becoming a major issue with more and more scripts becoming difficult to read. Whilst every endeavour is taken to read the scripts, it is sometimes very difficult to fully comprehend everything a student has written.

Question 01

The majority of students successfully identified the correct answer A, beanpole family.

Question 02

The majority of students identified the correct answer B (instrumental role) but there was some confusion between expressive and instrumental roles.

Question 03

This question was attempted by most students with some good responses. However, many students struggled with this question. It was important to explain the concept of men being dominant over women by explaining how men might dominate in areas such as money management and decision making within the family leaving the women with very little power and relying on the man for money. Many answers outlined different roles within the family without specifically linking the answer to patriarchy e.g. the man goes out to work or the women looks after the children, is not necessarily patriarchal and therefore wasn't credited. There needed to be some evidence that women were being controlled/exploited by men to achieve the marks.

Question 04

The majority of students were able to identify and describe one function of the family mostly linked to the functionalist perspective. Strong responses included key terminology such as primary socialisation and stabilisation of adult personalities with detailed descriptions. The majority of students used a point, explain, example structure which worked effectively for this question. There were, however, many general answers that identified a function of the family without development.

Question 05

Many students identified an appropriate strength of using official statistics to research the number of cohabiting couples. Many focussed on the fact that official statistics produce quantitative data and developed their answer by commenting on how this type of data can be used to identify patterns and trends. However, many only identified the strength and didn't develop their answer and often failed to explain why it was a strength and therefore didn't gain the second mark. Giving two strengths without any development cannot gain the second mark. Students should be discouraged from using generic terms such as 'accurate' and should be encouraged to use sociological terminology to explain their evaluation point e.g. valid, representative etc. This is an AO3 question, so answers need to focus on evaluation rather than description. There appeared to be a lot of guessing for this question even though this type of question appears on the paper every year.

Some students described the graph rather than identifying a strength of the official statistics. These answers didn't answer the question and could not be credited.

Question 06

The majority of students were able to identify one factor that may have led to an increase in cohabitation rates. Many focussed on the change in social attitudes and the decline in religion whilst some answers focussed on the expense of weddings. There were some very detailed answers. However, some students lost vital marks by not linking the factor to the increase in cohabitation rates.

Some answers focussed more on why people are not getting married or on divorce rates rather than why more people are cohabiting.

Question 07

Most students identified an appropriate disadvantage of using postal questionnaires to investigate cohabitation rates. The majority of students answered with low response rate or that people may lie. Some students who identified an appropriate disadvantage failed to develop their explanation and confused key terms e.g. validity, reliability and representative. Many students did not explain why the disadvantage they had identified was a specific disadvantage for investigating cohabitation rates. Students need to engage with the context to reach the top marks. If there is no reference to the context (use of postal questionnaires to investigate cohabitation rates) student can only achieve 2 marks.

Question 08

The majority of students knew the work of Rapoport and Rapoport and were able to engage with the source material to answer this question. Most students were able to identify a type of family diversity and were able to describe the type of family they had identified. However, many students did not read the item carefully enough and identified types of families not identified by Rapoport and Rapoport e.g. same sex families, nuclear families.

Some students merely named a type of family diversity e.g. cultural diversity without development. Stronger answers developed a more detailed description of the type of diversity, often using an example to further develop their answer.

The question asked for the research method used by Rapoport and Rapoport (secondary data.) Many were unable to identify this and consequently, were unable to obtain full marks.

Question 09

Students seemed to struggle with this question. Many students were not fully aware of what constituted a practical issue in research. Many students identified ethical issues rather than practical issues. Cost and time were the practical issues most identified.

In too many cases, the practical issue wasn't linked to the context – researching the extent of family diversity. If students don't link their answer to the context of the question, they can only achieve a maximum of 2 marks.

Students should be discouraged from using generic terms such as 'inaccurate' and should be encouraged to use sociological terminology to explain their evaluation point e.g. lack of validity, lacks generalisability, etc.

Question 10

There were some very good answers to this question which showed a very good understanding of family diversity. Students were able to confidently discuss the importance of the extended family and often used the work of Rapoport and Rapoport and the work of Parsons and the New Right as alternative arguments. There were some excellent answers with many students reaching the top mark band.

Despite this, too many answers focussed on the importance of the nuclear family and the benefits that this provides and seemed to forget that the question was about the extended family. Some answers were generic with lists of different types of families without focusing on the question. In many cases, evaluations and conclusions were often weak or missing, which limited the marks for many students who had demonstrated some good knowledge and understanding.

Question 11

There were some excellent answers to this question showing some good sociological understanding. Students were able to use perspectives and studies effectively to develop a detailed coherent answer. Parsons and Murdock and the importance of the family in socialising children featured heavily in the responses, with most students being able to recognise the sociological perspectives. Those who reached the higher bands were able to build analysis through discussing other agents of socialisation e.g. education and the media. However, other students struggled with this question and gave answers that didn't answer the question, and some gave 'common sense' descriptions of what a family does. Many didn't consider any other agents of socialisation and were therefore unable to conclude whether the family is the main agent of socialisation.

Many students did not provide any form of counterargument. In some cases, it appeared that students didn't really know what an agent of socialisation really was.

Students need to make sure they have an effective conclusion summarising how far sociologists agree that the family is the main agent of socialisation.

Question 12

The majority of students successfully identified A as the correct answer – Cultural Capital

Question 13

The majority of students identified A (Marketisation) as the correct answer but there was the whole range of possible responses given.

Question 14

Most students were able to describe an anti-school subculture, and some good examples were given including references to the work of Willis. To achieve full marks there needed to be a coherent description demonstrating good knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological theories/concepts (level 3.) Many answers described anti-school subcultures as children not wanting to go to school or parents deciding to home school. Again, it is important that students are aware of the glossary of key terms and know key terminology.

Question 15

Most students knew what material deprivation was and gave good examples. Common answers included the inability to buy books, pens and not having access to the internet etc. Weaker answers didn't link material deprivation to educational achievement so were unable to achieve full marks. Some students confused cultural deprivation and material deprivation.

Question 16

There was a range of responses to this question. Many students expressed clear ideas about the fact that the data was limited by the sample size and therefore not representative. As with Q5, many students did not focus on the AO3 nature of this question enough. Some students who gave a weakness of the research often provided no evaluation. Students need to ensure they are familiar with the key terms of validity, reliability, representativeness, generalisability etc. and ensure they can use them appropriately. Again, there were too many guesses to this question, using the incorrect terminology.

Question 17

Most students were able to identify one in-school factor and in many cases, they were able to provide an explanation of how this factor influenced the educational achievement of different social classes. Most answers focussed on teacher labelling and streaming/setting. However, there were a large number of answers that didn't link the factor they had identified to social class and educational achievement, many answers ignoring social class. There were some students who referred to out-of-school factors rather than in-school factors indicating the importance of reading the questions carefully.

Question 18

This seemed to be a difficult question for many students. Many students did not seem to appreciate the difference between non-participant and covert observations. Many students thought that non-participant observation meant that the students being observed didn't know they were being observed so there would be no Hawthorne effect. This is not always the case as in the majority of cases, students will know they are being observed. Higher level responses focussed on the researcher being able to see the behaviour for themselves or being able to take notes, so they didn't have to rely on memory. Many students who provided a correct response, then failed to link it to the context - pupil behaviour in the classroom. Some students misread this question and gave an advantage of using participant observation. Students need to read the questions carefully as mistakes such as this will negatively affect their overall marks. This is another opportunity to use terms such as validity etc, again emphasising the importance of students knowing how to use these terms correctly.

Question 19

The majority of students knew about the work of Durkheim and used the source well to answer the question, although there was evidence of a lot of direct copying from the item with no development. Many students were able to identify Durkheim as a functionalist so were able to gain the 4th mark, but many students didn't know Durkheim's perspective and couldn't achieve this 4th mark.

Question 20

Many students were able to identify a disadvantage of using structured interviews to research the educational experiences of students from different ethnic groups.

Answers referring to the inflexibility in questioning and the lack of rapport were the most popular responses. The most effective answers were able to relate the disadvantage clearly to the context (educational experiences of students from different ethnic groups). Answers that identified a disadvantage of a structured interview but did not explain why it was a disadvantage for investigating educational experiences of students from different ethnic groups could only receive a maximum of 2 marks. Giving more than one disadvantage wastes time and credit cannot be given to more than one disadvantage. This is another opportunity to use terms such as lack of validity etc, again emphasising the importance of students knowing how to use these terms correctly.

Question 21

There were some excellent answers to this question. Many students focussed their answer on the work of McRobbie and bedroom culture and many discussed canalisations. Counter arguments included in-school factors such as labelling and the work of Willis. Key terms were generally used well with many students showing some detailed sociological knowledge. However, less strong answers to this question included a list like answer with little or no development. Some students gave generic explanations about how parents socialise children and failed to use appropriate perspectives in their answers. Many students ignored the gender element of the question and focussed on in-school factors versus out-of-school factors. As with all the extended writing responses, it is important that students provide a conclusion to summarise 'how far sociologists would agree that gender differences in educational achievement are mainly due to factors outside school.'

Question 22

As this was the last question, some responses were brief. However, there were some very detailed and full answers provided which was encouraging to see for the last question. The most effective answers made excellent use of students' knowledge of concepts such as correspondence principle, hidden curriculum, and capitalism. Some of the stronger answers used appropriate sociologists and perspectives such as Bowles and Gintis. As with the other essay questions, there is a tendency for weaker answers to juxtaposition alternative perspectives which are not specifically linked to the question. Students need to consider how the arguments relate to each other. Again, conclusions are an important part of the response and should be included to show the examiner how far sociologists agree that the main function of the education system is to produce obedient workers. Conclusions can be throughout the answer but what has been concluded needs to match the essay and should not be generic.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results Statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.