



AS

Sociology

7191/2 Research methods and topics in Sociology

Report on the examination

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General Comment

Most students produced responses of an appropriate length and demonstrated good time management. The exam paper was balanced fair but challenging. The overall quality of responses indicates that the quality of learning and understanding of the students continues to improve.

There are still a number of students committing rubric infringements, particularly by answering questions from more than one Section B topic. This included either attempting all the questions across the Section B topics or selecting questions at random.

There are some aspects of the examination where students could easily make improvements in their examination performance with little work or effort. These are the same as last year. On the 10-mark 'outline and explain' question (the fourth question in each topic area), and the 6-mark 'outline three...' question (the third question in each topic).

For the 10-mark 'outline and explain' questions, students would benefit from clearly identifying a specific way, reason, or factor, followed by a developed explanation. This approach would help make their answers more coherent, structured and easier to reward.

In the 6-mark 'outline three...' questions, students could improve their performance by including a brief explanation of each identified point—such as a criticism or feature—rather than simply listing them.

Section A: Research Methods

Question 1

For students who focused on the idea of factors influencing research topic a range of possible and straight forward factors could be selected which would get credit. For example, a topic of personal interest to the researcher or a topic being currently debated and in the “news”. Some students, however, restricted their responses to considering factors influencing the choice of research method: such as those of validity or reliability. These responses did not meet the demands of the question and could not be rewarded.

Question 2

This question for most students was one they could answer, as official statistics feature as a main stay of sociological research methods. Obvious disadvantages, such as official statistics being often gathered for a purpose different to which the sociologist wishes to use them,

gained credit. Where a student suggested a disadvantage that was not self-evident, they needed to explain and unpack the point to gain credit. For example, some students suggested official statistics are time consuming to use. This disadvantage could gain credit if it were developed, for example by suggesting that analysing and working through large amounts of statistics could be laborious. Ethics was an area which a significant minority of students declared as a problem but were unable to show how ethical concerns were an issue regarding official statistics. The most successful answers made links to perspectives and the objections of interpretivists to the use of official statistics.

Section B

Topic B1 Culture and identity

This topic continues to be answered by very few students.

Question 3

This question was drawn directly from the specification where the term mass culture features. Some students referred to mass culture as being synonymous with popular culture which was not creditworthy. Only a few answers managed to give the two-mark definition: attitudes, ideas and perspectives easily accessed. More commonly answers gained credit via examples including music and soap operas. A phrase that appeared frequently in responses was 'liked by many people' which was not creditworthy.

Question 4

This question was successfully answered by most students. Popular approaches involved using aspects of interactionist theory labelling or the looking glass self to gain credit.

Question 5

This question produced a wide variety of responses. Answers generally focused on differences in norms between a subculture and the dominant/mainstream culture. Successful responses referred to the "inverse" aspect of subcultures. Examples of subcultures (clothing / music) were often used to help support answers.

Question 6

This question appeared accessible to most students and some effective answers were given. Some students focused primarily on ethnicity and life chances rather than broadening the

scope of their answers out to consider the totality of “experience” as a whole. More successful responses often drew on content from the education topic, exploring concepts such as labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy. Discrimination was the most frequently mentioned theme, with higher-level answers developing this further into discussions of institutional racism.

Question 7

This question proved to be straightforward. Responses were often well-focused and developed. Answers frequently made a tour of the agencies of socialisation. Oakley was often used in discussions of the family and gender socialisation whilst education and the media were commonly explored as examples of secondary socialisation related to gender. A minority of responses incorporated ideas around masculinity, including toxic masculinity which added breadth to the answer. Evaluation was sometimes limited to a basic juxtaposition of feminist and functionalist perspectives.

Topic B2 Families and Households

This topic was answered by the majority of students.

Question 8

For both marks students needed to identify the instrumental element (paid work) and the expressive element (housework) of the dual burden to and the majority of answers managed this.

Question 9

Most students found this question straightforward and were able to gain both marks. Secularisation and changes in the position of women were popular ways of gaining credit.

Question 10

This question was answered very well, with many students providing a wide range of reasons for the lone parent families being headed by a woman. Women being awarded custody, general expectations of society and male abandonment proved popular reasons. The phenomena of some responses giving a valid reason being without it being developed (and so not gaining full marks) remains.

Question 11

This question required students to name a diverse family form type, for example the lone parent family and suggest how that family form may impact on the domestic division of labour. One common way to do this was found in answers which suggested that in lone parent families the lone parent carried out the entirety of the roles and tasks making up the domestic division of labour. Answers which named a family type generally went on to be developed in an effective way. Where a diverse family type was not named, the development of the answer was limited and often could not gain credit.

Question 12

This question was accessible to most students, many of whom had some strong content to draw upon in shaping their responses. The item was helpful and generally got students off to a sound start. Popular approaches to answering the question began with the Marxist view and then considered other views of the role of the family, typically feminist views and those of functionalism. More successful answers went further and examined more recent contributions to understanding the family such as Beck, Giddens and Smart considering ideas such as risk, pure relationships and fictive kin.

Topic B3 Health

Like the previous year this topic was answered by more students and may suggest that the popularity of Health as a topic is increasing.

Question 13

This was a new question but most students who answered gained full credit, obesity was often given as an example.

Question 14

This question was answered well. Lack of physical adjustments for example and absence of ramps, lifts and other variants was the most popular way of tackling the question.

Question 15

Students were generally confident in answering this question. Popular approaches focused on the ethnocentrism of medical practitioners, racism in society in general and the unequal treatment of ethnic minorities by law enforcement officers.

Question 16

This question proved to be difficult for students. The expected responses were ideas such as the working class having a more fatalistic attitudes to life and therefore choosing to ignore medical advice. Instead, most students focused not on the “advice take” up part of the question but more general issues of access to health care. As a result, many of these answers were not well applied to the question and struggled to gain credit. Better responses focused on themes of understanding advice, material factors influencing the ability to act on the advice and so on.

Question 17

Some students produced well-structured, detailed, and analytical responses to this question. Successful answers effectively contrasted a range of view on the medical profession which mostly included functionalist, Weberian, feminist and Marxist views. Answers that adopted this approach often used a juxtapositional style of evaluation. The impact of ‘Big pharma’ was also present in some better responses along with more specialist concepts such as iatrogenesis.

Topic B4 Work, Poverty and Welfare

This topic was answered by very few students.

Question 18

Most answers were able to give a definition of absolute poverty or to give an example of it and so gain the partial mark.

Question 19

This question was quite intuitive, and most students could suggest why wealthy people are likely to stay wealthy for example through inheritance or being enabled by their wealth to be able to make investments.

Question 20

This was a novel question but one that students had a range of responses for. Popular possible effects of retirement that were suggested included: reduced income / poverty, increased time for leisure pursuits, lack of identity through the absence of work and loneliness.

Question 21

Students generally had no difficulty in finding reasons why manual workers may experience high levels of alienation. Answers often suggested: the various impacts of scientific management, poor pay and conditions, the negative impact of technology including surveillance and job insecurity. The development of the given reasons was often the limiting factor for some students. Some found it difficult to connect the reason to further development of it.

Question 22

The item for this question provided two ways to view the welfare state and many students took the lead given by first examining the Marxist view of the welfare state followed by the social democratic perspective. The most effective answers expanded the breadth of the debate into a consideration of the functionalist, New Right, feminist and postmodern views on welfare and the welfare state.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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