
GCSE

SOCIOLOGY

8192/1: Paper 1 - The Sociology of Families and Education
Report on the Examination

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General

Overall, the paper proved to be accessible to the students sitting this examination, with all questions providing opportunities for students to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and skills. Many students used skills from across the range of assessment objectives. Weaker responses tended to demonstrate misconceptions and confusion, sometimes in relation to basic content. The stronger responses contained thoughtful and well-developed arguments that focused directly on answering the question set. Planning was evident in many of the best responses to the higher tariff questions. Most students managed their appropriately and there were only a relatively few students left questions unanswered.

It was encouraging to see the amount of sociological knowledge shown by many students. For instance, it was pleasing to discover that the majority of students were clearly familiar with the key studies, with some very good answers to questions 08 (Zaretsky) and 19 (Durkheim). There was generally a good awareness of the various research methods used by sociologists. However, some students were unable to apply their knowledge and understanding of particular research methods to the specific issues raised by the questions.

A large number of students demonstrated fine knowledge of relevant sociological studies and theorists to the issues under debate in the 12 mark questions. The most successful responses were able to go on to analyse and evaluate applicable sociological theories, concepts and evidence in order to construct arguments, make judgements and draw appropriate conclusions.

Section A

Question 01

For this initial multiple-choice question, the vast majority of students gained a mark for correctly choosing B, Cohabitation, to describe a situation whereby partners live together without either being married or in a civil partnership.

Question 02

The second of the multiple-choice questions for this section of the paper saw most students correctly identifying answer A, Matriarchal family as a family in which a woman holds power and authority.

Question 03

A significant number of students did not attempt this question, presumably because they were unfamiliar with the key term. A list of key terms that may be assessed can be found in Appendix A of the specification for GCSE Sociology. Some gained credit for displaying fragments of knowledge by citing an example of familial ties, with reference relating to 'next of kin'. Some scored two marks, but failed to gain the third available mark because of just providing a partial description. Students who did gain full marks gave very clear, comprehensive responses to describe what sociologists mean by kinship, focusing on the social relationships derived from blood ties and marriage, providing appropriate family members, such as siblings and spouses as examples to support their response to this question.

Question 04

Most students gained a mark as they identified an example of how grandparents can contribute to family life. Some went further, offering at least a partial description based on the example that they had given. Weaker responses failed to address directly the actual question, simply describing what an extended family consisted of. Stronger answers were able to verify how grandparents looking after children contributed to family life. The very good answers provided often focused on how a grandparent can help with childcare, offering financial support, or by providing emotional and moral support to other family members.

Question 05

The majority of students achieved one mark for indicating a possible weakness of the research, with most citing that, only she used a small sample. Some obtained a further mark for stating a reason why this would be a weakness of the research, stating that it would mean it is more likely to be an unrepresentative sample, so generalisations are difficult to make from such a small sample that was London-centric. Some students gained some credit for referring to the research being somewhat dated, but did not develop this any further, so achieved a single mark instead of the possible two available. Weaker answers merely restated the findings, or discussed conjugal roles and thus not actually addressing the actual question.

Question 06

Most students obtained a mark, as they were able to identify one factor that may account for the differences in the allocation of domestic tasks. However, some struggled to explain why the factor they had identified affected the allocation of tasks. The students who identified gender socialisation as the factor seemed able to develop good responses and used appropriate sociological concepts, such as canalisation, in their response. Those selecting traditional norms and values as the factor often failed to develop the response fully enough to reach either level three or four. Weaker answers appeared to not be based on the item and explained that men were doing more housework today than they did previously, which was not shown in Item A.

Question 07

There was a range of responses to this question. Some students were clearly aware of the advantages of using a mixed methods approach and gave some very good answers that clearly linked to the context (the advantage of using a mixed methods approach to investigate conjugal role relationships). However, a significant number of students knew what the mixed method approach was but failed to link the advantage to the context. Other students guessed at what the mixed methods approach was, with answers such as having both males and females in the sample. A sizable minority did not score any marks since they did not know and understand what a mixed methods approach was. Assessing the usefulness of the mixed methods approach is part of the subject content, clearly stated in the section 3.7 (sociological research methods), as well as in Appendix A: key terms and concepts.

Question 08

There were some very good answers to this question, based on a classic and seminal text listed in Appendix B of the specification, with many students knowledgeable about Zaretsky and his Marxist perspective. Many students referred to the source material and were able to expand upon the meaning of 'unit of consumption'. Stronger answers included information on Zaretsky's perspective

on the family. Weaker responses copied directly from part of Item B, rather than using the source to develop their answer. Other less strong answers omitted Zaretsky as coming from a Marxist perspective, with other weak student responses just describing Zaretsky's ideas without identifying one way the family benefits capitalist society.

Question 09

A significant number of students failed to obtain any marks as they were unable to identify one ethical issue that would need considering when investigating relationships within families. Some students were able to identify an ethical issue but did not proceed to refer to the context (investigating relationships within families). Many students did not explain how the ethical issue that they had identified could be dealt with, and therefore did not achieve maximum marks for this question. Stronger responses usually focused their response on the need to obtain informed consent, going on to how they would do this, or exploring how confidentiality could be addressed when undertaking research into family relationships. Ethical considerations are a key part of the subject content, as listed in Appendix A, in addition to section 3.7 (ethical issues) of the specification.

Question 10

There were some very good, well-developed answers to this question, with many students focusing their discussion on functionalist and Marxist perspectives of divorce as well as how the changing status of women had an influence. Knowledge of divorce laws was apparent in plenty of students' answers, with some using this knowledge to address the debate by making comment that changes in the law has made it easier to obtain a divorce. Weaker answers focused their response more on marriage than divorce, discussing why marriage was not as popular, and for the rise of cohabitation, without any reference to divorce. Better responses discussed female independence combined with changing attitudes as the reasons for the divorce rates increasing. Some struggled to reach the higher mark levels as they did not fully explain and evaluate the reasons that they presented for the pattern of divorce in Britain since 1969.

Question 11

There were some good responses to this question, with many students focusing on the functionalist perspective (with reference often made to Durkheim) emphasising the essential functions of the nuclear family, and the media image of the cereal packet family. Many answers moved up at least one other level by using the idea from the Rapoports of family diversity by way of an evaluation as whether the nuclear family can still be considered the norm in Britain today. Weaker answers to this question either wrote about the roles of the family, or responded by describing different types of families in the United Kingdom today.

Section B

Question 12

For this multiple-choice question, just over three-quarters of students selected the correct answer (option B, Mixed ability).

Question 13

Most students obtained a mark for correctly choosing option A, Comprehensive.

Question 14

A number of students did not respond to this question. Of those that did, weaker answers referred to culture and cultural diversity. Some students confused cultural capital with material deprivation. Strong answers described in detail visits to museums, holidays abroad and parents' knowledge of the education system as examples.

Question 15

There were some good answers to this question, with many identifying Willis and his study of the 'lads'. Stronger responses provided a developed description of a counter school subculture, with it consisting of an anti-school group of students within a school, which often found in the bottom set, that reject the norms and values of that school. Some students were unfamiliar with the term, and resorted to guessing, therefore gaining nothing worthy of any credit.

Question 16

Many students identified a strength, but only some provided an explanation as to why it was a strength. Most focused on the strength being that it provided quantitative data, but few went further than this by stating why national examination board entries statistics are useful when researching gender differences in education. Weaker responses tended to focus on the key results and merely quoted from the table without referring to what the question was actually asking.

Question 17

This question produced a range of responses. The majority of students were able to identify one factor that may account for the gender differences in subject choice, with many suggesting canalisation/early gender socialisation as a significant factor. Many received further credit for explaining the factor that they had stated, and relating it to why there were gender differences in subject choice. Weaker responses tended to restate the statistics from the source, or gave personal reasons as to why a girl may take English Literature.

Question 18

The majority of students were able to identify a disadvantage of using group interviews, often citing issues to do with social desirability or peer pressure, but in many of the answers, it was weakly applied to the context (investigating gender-based subject choices in schools). A large number of responses did not explain how this disadvantage had an impact on the research. Stronger responses addressed the context by focussing on validity and the concern to conform to gender specific norms.

Question 19

It was encouraging to see that most students knew Durkheim's functionalist perspective on education, and were able to describe one way in which he believed schools to be important to society, with many using the source to identify that Durkheim saw the main role of education to be the transmission of the norms and values of society. Stronger responses often outlined and developed his ideas of the function of education in creating a socially cohesive society.

Question 20

There were some good answers but many students left out the context so were only able to obtain a couple of marks. Better responses considered practical issues such as cost and time implications, then went on to relate this to when investigating the effects of home-schooling on students. A significant number seemed unfamiliar as to what a longitudinal study is, let alone a disadvantage of using one to investigate a particular educational issue.

Question 21

There were some strong responses to this question, with several students successfully using Ball and his research as a starting point for their discussion. Many demonstrated a good understanding of how placing pupils in bands, sets or a certain stream can affect their educational performance. Others referred to Becker's research on teacher labels. Some went further and considered alternative reasons that may have a more significant effect on students' educational performance, such as providing an evaluation of the impact of external factors, such as those suggested by Marxists. Weaker responses centred on a simple description of how students group together within a school based on friendship groups rather than formal groupings within schools.

Question 22

As the last question on the examination paper, it was encouraging to see that the vast majority of students attempted it. There were some very detailed answers, the most effective being those which used their knowledge of the different perspectives to response to this question. Stronger responses used both the Marxist and feminist perspectives to evaluate the functionalist view that the main role of the education system is to teach children how to become part of society. Stronger responses often referred to how Marxists argue that the education system's major function is to serve the needs of capitalism.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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