AQA

GCSE
SOCIOLOGY
8192/1 Paper 1 The Sociology of Families and Education
Report on the Examination

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Report on the examination

There were a large number of entries for this specification this year. There was evidence of some very well taught and well prepared students with good knowledge of relevant material.
The understanding of key studies seems to be improving each year with some students showing very good knowledge of them 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. It is, however, important that students know the perspectives of the sociologists being studied as this was a noticeable area of deficiency for many students.
There was a good attempt by the majority of students to answer the essay questions. There was evidence of improvement in the structure of the essays and in many cases, there was effective use of alternative perspectives/relevant arguments. Most students attempted all the essay questions with some very good answers evident.

However, students seemed less prepared for the methods questions, particularly when they were required to apply the research methods to the context. The different types of observations were especially weak, and it was clear that many students were not very confident in explaining some of the methods and many were unable to evaluate the methods.

It is important that students are aware of the key terms in the glossary. This is particularly important when evaluating research methods. There was 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. A list of key terms and concepts that may be assessed can be found in Appendix A of the specification.

Question 01

The majority of students successfully identified the correct answer.

Question 02

This second multiple choice question saw most students identifying the correct response.

Question 03

There were a wide range of different responses to this question. Students who knew what a commune was, provided very comprehensive answers mainly referring to a 'Kibbutz.' However, there were a very large number of students who confused communal living and commune with many answers referring to student accommodation and care homes. Many students did not attempt this question.

Question 04

There were some very good answers to this question with different family members identified and the consequences of divorce clearly discussed. Many students focussed on the consequences for children and developed their answer by referencing longer term consequences of the loss of a role model, educational impact, behavioural change etc. Many students discussed the consequences for the parents leading to single parent families and possible financial difficulties. Less successful answers were where students attempted to add depth by adding a second consequence but without linking it to the initial consequence.

Question 05

Many students identified an appropriate strength of using statistics to research one-person households and many also explained why this was a strength. Many students focussed on the fact that statistics produce quantitative data and developed their answer by commenting on how this type of data can be used to identify patterns and trends in one person households. 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. This is an AO3 question, so answers need to focus on evaluation rather than description.

Question 06

There were three parts to this question and students who followed each part of the question carefully, provided some good answers. However, many students didn't address all parts of this question. A surprisingly small number of students were able to identify the type of statistical data as Official Statistics or statistics from the ONS. However, the majority of students were able to identify the upward trend. Most students were able to identify a factor that accounted for the upward trend in one-person households with the most common answers referring to feminism and the changing role of women (more independent, less financially dependent on men, focussing on career etc) but many then didn't explain why the factor they identified led to an increase in one-person households. Unfortunately, some students misread the question and discussed single parent families instead of one-person households.

Question 07

Most students gained some credit as they identified an appropriate disadvantage of using unstructured interviews, usually based on the skills of the interviewer, the amount of time involved in unstructured interviews and the difficulties in analysing and comparing the data collected. Some students who identified an appropriate disadvantage, did not explain why the disadvantage they had identified was a specific disadvantage for investigating one-person households. Students need to engage with the context to reach the top marks. For example, participants may be asked different questions about their experiences of living in one-person households which would make it difficult to compare the data collected. Students need to ensure they can use the terms validity and reliability correctly when evaluating research methods. Many students confused unstructured and structured interviews, and some gave an advantage rather than a disadvantage.

Question 08

The majority of students knew the work of Oakley and were able to engage with the source material to answer this question. Some students talked about the roles within the family and went on to develop their answers explaining how Oakley saw the conventional family as being patriarchal. However, many failed to link these roles to patriarchy in the family. Many students did not identify Oakley as a feminist.

Question 09

Students seemed to struggle with this question, and many identified ethical issues or issues with the research method rather than identifying a practical issue. Good answers included low response rate for postal questionnaires which could be solved by using online questionnaire. However, understanding of the context was often weak and when a practical issue was identified, in many

cases it was not developed and was not linked to the context. Students need to explain why the practical issue they have identified is an issue for investigating role relationships within the family. Some students gave generic answers relating to the use of questionnaires rather than specifically referring to postal questionnaires.

Question 10

There were some very good answers to this question which showed a very good understanding of capitalism. Students were able to confidently discuss the work of Zaretsky as well as Functionalists such as Parsons and feminists such as Delphy and Leonard. There were some excellent answers with many students reaching the top mark band. Some of the more able students explained how feminists believe that the family supports patriarchy rather than capitalism as an evaluation. Although there were some very good answers, some answers were generic with students juxtaposing the perspectives and listing the functions of the family without focusing on the question or comparing the perspectives. Some students seem to have seen 'functions of the family' and not read the rest of the question. There were also many students who were unable to answer this question.

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, Willmott and Young, Oakley and Delphy and Leonard figured heavily in the responses, with most students being able to recognise the perspectives for each. There was good use of sociological key terms such as symmetrical family, dual burden, triple shift. Those who reached the higher bands were able to build analysis through referencing the improved position of women, legislation changes, technology and changing social attitudes. Some student offered more critical analysis by questioning the extent of this change, for example, male participation in the home still having task differentiation.

However, other students struggled with this question and gave answers focussing on other aspects of the family such as family diversity and there was evidence that weaker students focussed on 'common sense' descriptions of family life.

Question 12

A surprisingly large number of students didn't choose the correct answer to this question.

Question 13

The majority of students successfully identified the correct answer to this question.

Question 14

Many students struggled to explain what was meant by a comprehensive school. Answers including a private school, a school where there is an entry exam, a school where parents have to pay, all incorrect. Many students confused a public school with a state school. Students should ensure they know the difference, and can describe different types of school eg comprehensive, private, public, grammar, academy etc. Good responses looked at the fact that such schools were available for all regardless of money or intelligence, paid for by the government/local authority, had no entry requirements etc.

Question 15

This question needed a response relating to work/the workplace. Some students gave very detailed answers relating to the hierarchy in school/workplace, how rewards and sanctions in school are similar to work, routines in school and work etc but a significant number of students answered incorrectly. There were many non-attempted responses to this question indicating that students were not secure in their knowledge of this key concept.

Question 16

As with Q05, many students did not focus on the AO3 nature of this question enough, often giving a weakness with no evaluation. It is important that students use the item to answer this question as some students used weaknesses that were not evident from the item eg ethics. There were lots of potential weaknesses identified in the item – students needed to select one eg London based so not representative, small sample size so difficult to make generalisations, presence of researcher (Hawthorne effect) affecting the validity of the data collected. Students need to ensure they are familiar with the key terms of validity, reliability, representativeness, generalisability and can use the right term appropriately to evaluate the weakness they have identified.

Question 17

This question appeared to be quite challenging for a large number of students as it was asking for an advantage of non-participant observation and not a disadvantage. It appeared that many students didn't know what a non-participant observation was, with many responses referring to covert observations. Consequently, many provided answers relating to the Hawthorne effect and how students wouldn't change their behaviour because they didn't know they were being observed. This was not credited. Answers that focussed on gaining more insight, seeing the whole class without getting involved in the activities of the class, generating new ideas were all credited. Unfortunately, many students did not link the advantage of non-participant observations to the investigation of classroom interactions as shown in Item C. To reach the top marks, students must link their answer specifically to the context.

Question 18

The majority of students demonstrated good knowledge of the advantages of using structured interviews. The most effective answers were able to relate the advantage clearly to the context (working class students' experiences of school). Answers that gave an advantage of a structured interview but didn't use the context cannot reach the top marks. Answers relating to standardised questions and ability to replicate study, presence of interviewer can ensure all questions are answered etc were credited. Giving more than one advantage wastes time and credit cannot be given to more than one advantage. This is another opportunity to use the terms validity/reliability etc correctly, emphasising the importance of students knowing how to use these terms correctly.

Question 19

The majority of students knew about the work of Ball and used the source well to answer the question. Many students wrote about the concept of labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy and linked it to the Beachside study. Many also discussed the impact of banding on behaviour. Fewer students were able to identify Ball as an interactionist so were unable to gain the 4th mark.

Question 20

A large number of students knew what snowball sampling was but unfortunately, many didn't. When students knew what it was there was a tendency to explain what it was rather than give a disadvantage for investigating the effects of streaming on students' experience of school. Those who produced stronger answers focused on how the nature of snowball sampling risks participants choosing peers who are in similar bands and so share similar attitudes and experiences – this enabled them to then gain context marks to reach the top mark band. There were many non-attempted responses to this question indicating that students were not secure in their knowledge of sampling strategies.

Question 21

There were some excellent answers to this question. Many students focussed their answer on in-school factors such as labelling, teacher expectations, streaming etc and in many cases these factors were supported with appropriate studies. External factors such as parent attitudes to learning, material and cultural deprivation were then used as an evaluation of internal factors. Many students showed some detailed sociological knowledge when answering this question. However, weaker answers to this question included a list like answer with little or no development. Some students gave generic explanations of in and out of school factors that can cause differences in achievement without specifically explaining how these impacted ethnic groups. Stronger answers differentiated between ethnic groups as well as recognising how these interact with gender and social class, for example Asian girls.

It was evident that some students didn't plan their time appropriately and only answered one of the two essay questions in this section. Consequently, there were many non-attempted responses to this question, with some students opting to answer Q22 rather than this one. Students should be reminded of the importance of the 'mark a minute' guidance intended to help them avoid this problem.

Question 22

Some very detailed and full answers were provided for this question. The most effective answers made excellent use of students' knowledge of the Marxist perspective, particularly the work of Bowles and Gintis and the 'correspondence principle.' Some of the stronger answers also discussed feminism and patriarchy, with the impact this has on subject choice, future careers etc. As with the other essay questions, there is a tendency for weaker answers to juxtapose alternative perspectives which are not specifically linked to the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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