



Questions matter



A-level

Sociology

7192/2 Topics in sociology

Report on the Examination

7192

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Overall comments

Some of the best answers come from students applying their sociological imagination and knowledge to the issues raised in a given question. It was also good to read answers in which students were able to draw on recent examples, or their own experience, or to show how sociology can help understand issues in the news.

There were a significant number of scripts which were partly or wholly illegible. Credit cannot be given for work which cannot be read. Centres should ensure that students whose writing might not be legible are provided with a word processor or scribe.

Some students wrote all they knew about one or more terms in a question. Students should read questions carefully to work out what is being asked for. For example, Topic A2 Question 4 asked about how falling birth rates may affect gender roles and relationships within families; some answers included a lot of material on why birth rates fall, which was not asked for.

Most students answered their chosen questions in the order in which they appeared on the question paper. They therefore answered the Section B 20 mark question last. For some this was a relatively brief and often apparently unfinished answer. This suggests that students need to be careful about time spent on each question. Some students answered the 20 mark questions first; for many this seemed to help improve the overall mark.

A small number of students did not follow the rubric and answered more topics or questions than required. Seeing a full paper 2 question paper before the exam will help students find their topics on the exam paper.

Evaluation is the most challenging skill. The most successful evaluation weighs the strengths and limitations of a theory, claim or piece of evidence and reaches a reasoned judgement. This receives more credit than a learned criticism, or a statement, without explanation, that two theories or views are different.

The quality of knowledge and understanding varied considerably. Credit is given for use of sociological concepts, theories, research findings, names of sociologists and so on. Suggestions of studies are given in the mark schemes. Knowing some sociologists and studies helps students develop and give structure to their answers. Wordings such as “some sociologists argue that...” are used in items so that students can build on them, eg by naming a theory or sociologist, so are best not simply repeated.

General comments on 10 mark questions

The nature of these questions means that students cannot rely on reciting knowledge. Questions will ask them to bring together aspects of their sociological knowledge in ways they will not have done before. It is therefore important for students to allow time to think about how to answer the question.

Students should be made aware that there are two types of 10 mark questions. These have different requirements and different mark schemes. There are different marks available for the assessment objectives. A breakdown of the marks awarded by assessment objective can be found in the mark scheme.

10 mark “outline and explain” questions have more marks available for knowledge and understanding, and none for evaluation.

The items for 10 mark “analyse” questions are written to give prompts or “hooks” for student answers. These have to be used to access application marks. Answers can indicate use of hooks by quoting, by a reference in parentheses or by wording (eg “As the item says...”). Items end with a sentence restating the question; the hooks are in the preceding part of the item. Students should avoid writing all they know about a “hook”, and focus on applying the idea to the question.

Introductions and conclusions are not required for 10 mark questions; they take up time and rarely improve the mark.

It is helpful if answers are set out to clearly indicate the two answers, with wording such as “One way/reason is...”, or by starting a new paragraph for the second point. Answers that give more than two points are unlikely to develop two of them sufficiently.

General comments on 20 mark questions

The items for these questions have a different purpose to those for 10 mark “analyse” questions. The items will suggest a few starting points for students, including ways into evaluation. Students are expected to also bring in further ideas (“and your knowledge” in the instruction).

A wide range of material can be relevant to these questions, so students need to be selective. It is more effective to cover a limited number of points in depth rather than to try to include everything.

Students who made essay plans appeared to benefit by having more structured and coherent responses.

Culture and Identity

Q1: Most students could identify two reasons why gender may influence consumption choices. Canalisation was the most cited reason, with the use of toys and activities as examples to elaborate the answer. The influence of media was another common reason given. The impact on consumption choices was not always thoroughly analysed, which limited the potential marks awarded.

Q2: Many students were able to suggest two ways derived from the “hooks” in the item. Not all suggestions were fully developed in relation to the individual’s sense of self. Many students discussed how people reject popular culture through youth subcultures and drew on concepts like hegemony. Answers that included Marxist and postmodernist perspectives provided more comprehensive analyses and evaluations.

Q3: This question posed challenges for some students. While many relied on the item, they struggled to extend beyond broadly accurate knowledge focused on social class and identity. Stronger responses incorporated a broader spectrum of knowledge, both conceptual and theoretical.

Families and Households

Q4: The responses to this question achieved mixed success. Most students managed to identify at least one way in which falling birth rates have influenced gender roles and relationships. The most thoroughly explored aspect was the shift towards women engaging in paid work, a change driven by evolving

attitudes towards education and careers. The feminist perspective was effectively employed to examine the repercussions on family roles and relationships.

Q5: A small number of students failed to effectively utilise any "hooks" from the provided material. Instead they offered knowledge on a variety of social policies or accounts of the history of childhood, rather than effects of policies on children's status. Many were, however, able to successfully connect at least one of the two "hooks" from the item to the changing status of children. One way of doing this was by illustrating the shift from being an economic asset to becoming an economic liability.

Q6: There was a tendency for essays to rely heavily on the item, with some copying sections from it and offering a brief development. Some students discussed functionalist and New Right perspectives but failed to relate these to the effects on family diversity's nature and scope. Some less effective responses listed examples of individual choice without exploring the reasons behind these emerging family structures. The most successful responses demonstrated extensive conceptual understanding and evaluated by engaging in a theoretical discussion.

Health

Q7: Students generally chose to interpret this question as referring to issues of access to health care. Responses often used issues of language and gender inhibiting take up and use of health care amongst certain ethnic groups. Other answers referred to possible ethnocentrism and racist attitudes amongst health care professionals as restricting the take up and use of health care services among some ethnic groups.

Q8: There was some good understanding in responses to this question. Successful answers often discussed issues of work-related hazard or stress or not having the time to have health concerns checked out. Women being socialised into the caring role was also frequently developed by linking caring to a willingness to seek out medical help or to stress from a dual burden or triple shift.

Q9: Some students were unable to move beyond generic approaches such as the Marxist or functionalist views of medical professionals being either harmful or benign. Better responses managed a wider consideration of specific groups who might be considered powerful in health and illness such as "Big Pharma". Some also discussed ways groups perceived as powerful may be being challenged, for example by the availability of alternatives giving greater health consumer choice.

Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

Q10: Successful answers identified two reasons such as the reduction in traditional employment for working-class males and the emergence of an underclass. Social groups discussed included those based on gender or ethnicity, and people with disabilities. Some students found it difficult to develop the identified reasons. Better answers usually brought in one or more theoretical perspectives.

Q11: Answers demonstrated reasonable knowledge and were able to apply the "hooks" with some degree of success. Some answers referred to the effects of deskilling due to the increase in production lines, or to the idea of upskilling.

Q12: These answers were largely accurate and some made good use of contemporary material of, for example, food banks and homelessness. There was though a tendency to rely heavily on the item and to not show detailed conceptual knowledge or engage in a theoretical debate. Some potentially relevant

discussion on functionalist and other views on meritocracy and social mobility was not directly related to poverty.

Beliefs in Society

Q13: Most students successfully identified two ways in which social change might lead to secularisation. Popular responses included individualism and personal choice, the privatisation of religion, and rationalisation alongside scientific advancements. Explicit 'connections' to secularisation were often underdeveloped. Some answers focused on changes within religions, which are themselves aspects of secularisation, and so lost focus on the question.

Q14: Some responses were too descriptive, failing to engage with the item's "hooks". There were, however, some outstanding answers that demonstrated a deep understanding by incorporating concepts, religious examples, and theory. There was a tendency for answers using the second "hook" to just give an example when a more general point, then exemplified, would have been better.

Q15: There were some outstanding answers, but a few students did not complete the question, while others relied on repeating the item with little development of the points. It was disappointing to note the limited understanding of the relationship between religion and globalisation among many students. Some responses assumed that any recent social change was part of globalisation.

Global Development

Q16: Most students were able to identify two ways, for example industrialisation increasing employment or creating unemployment by undermining traditional employment patterns. For some students developing the ways proved difficult, though others used perspectives such as dependency or modernisation theories to provide a route.

Q17: Answers to this question were mostly example driven; it is good to make a general point before giving answers. Responses often referred to pollution, deforestation and exploitation of raw materials and these were often linked to actions of specific transnational corporations. Some students did not use the "hooks" provided and so did not demonstrate the application required.

Q18: Students generally had some good knowledge and understanding of gender and development. Less effective answers drifted into generic feminist material regarding male dominance and patriarchy without linking to development and underdevelopment. Evaluation was often through contrasting the gender blind theories of modernisation and dependency with more modern theories and examples.

The Media

Q19: Globalisation, increased choice, and citizen journalism were commonly referred to in responses. Some were unable to develop their points and others lost focus on new media. Better answers were aware that ownership and control are not the same, and gave examples.

Q20: Stronger responses often referred to effects models such as the two-step flow model or the cultural effects approach to enhance their answers. Citizen journalism and the greater speed of communication also often featured in good answers.

Q21: Most responses demonstrated accurate knowledge but were confined to a narrow scope. Many were generalised, relying on clichéd examples of working and middle-class representations on television

without deeply connecting them to the question. Debates tended to lack depth, with most answers touching on Marxist perspectives but offering little evidence. The best answers drew on a range of media, on examples that do not conform to stereotypes as well as those that do, and on other perspectives.

Stratification and Differentiation

Q22: Answers often discussed the creation of new jobs and opportunities or the outsourcing of production so leading to a reduction of employment opportunities. For some students developing the ways by explaining the effects on life chances proved difficult. A minority of students linked globalisation and life chances to other features such as globalisation enabling advances in health care, so improving life chances.

Q23: Some answers had an overlap between the two “ways” they analysed. The status of women was discussed in terms of breaks in work, discrimination in the workplace, the glass ceiling and so on. Points about men were sometimes limited to these issues not applying to men. Few students considered changes in the workplace or to the balance of domestic labour which might have helped development of points.

Q24: Students were able to apply the item by contrasting functionalist and Marxist approaches to the nature of social mobility. They did this, for example, by setting functionalist ideas of meritocracy against Marxist concepts of class, elite self-recruitment and so on. Feminism was also frequently added to provide an extra dimension to the debate. Few students made use of more traditional material on social mobility such as intragenerational and intergenerational mobility. There were also few references to empirical mobility studies.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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