



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**SOCIOLOGY
AS**

SUMMER 2019

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COMPONENT 1: SOCIALISATION AND CULTURE

General Comments

This component has been available for four years. For the most part candidates followed the rubric. Those who followed the rubric were able to use their time appropriately and many had been well prepared for the demands of the paper. The paper was generally accessible and 100% candidates were able to respond to the compulsory question 1 (a) and (b). The majority were able to answer all of the questions in their chosen option. Apart from one or two responses, which were rubric errors, option 6 was not chosen.

The overall performance was similar to 2018.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Section A

This a two part question and is compulsory. 100% of candidates attempted this question.

- Q.1 (a)** Primary socialisation is a basic term in sociology. In order to access the higher mark bands candidates had to explain what the term meant and make reference to the item. The ability to use an item is a key skill in sociology. It enables candidates to develop the ability to use sociological information. Candidates were also asked to use their sociological knowledge in relation to the concept. The better responses included a clear definition of primary socialisation referring to the family as the first agent of socialisation. Some referred to sociologists such as Parsons and Oakley but this was not necessary in terms of accessing full marks. The majority of candidates referred to the item although in some cases a phrase was simply lifted and not used. Candidates should be aware that they must use the item, not simply lift it, in order to access mark band 3 for AO2.
- Q.1 (b)** Candidates were asked to explain how any two agents of socialisation transmit gender roles. Most candidates were able to identify two agents of socialisation though it is surprising that some candidates did not know what is meant by an agent of socialisation. The question asked for the process of how two agents of socialisation transmitted gender roles. Those who did not consider the process such as by imitation or role models but simply described what they did were unable to access the higher mark bands. There are examples of responses that do this on the WJEC website. The most commonly used agents of socialisation were family, education and peers. The question asked candidates to use the item and also their sociological knowledge. It is important that candidates pay attention to the command/s of the question if they are to access the higher mark bands. Candidates must use the item not just repeat what the item says. For example...In the item it says...which means...

Section B

There was a choice between option 1 - Families and Households and option 2 Youth Culture. The majority of candidates chose option 1- 210/244 compared to 26/244 for Youth Culture.

Question 2(a)(i)/3(a)(i) and 2(a)(ii)/3(a)(ii) are compulsory.

2(a)(i)/3(a)(i)

These questions asked candidates to describe an aspect of families and households or of youth culture. Many candidates were able to identify a number of features. However those who did the families and households option either knew the term co-parenting and were therefore able to access the higher mark bands or seemed to struggle. It is a term that is in the textbooks including those published by the WJEC.

The notion of spectacular youth subcultures was one familiar to many candidates who chose this option but some seemed a little confused and tried to evaluate what they were saying. A comparison of the mean marks for 2(a)(i) and 3(a)(i) would indicate that 3(a)(i) was slightly more accessible.

As indicated in previous reports there are no marks for evaluation on these questions and therefore those candidates who did evaluate were wasting valuable time.

2(a)(ii)/3(a)(ii)

Candidates were asked to explain two sociological reasons for a sociological issue. A short piece of stimulus material was provided although in relation to 3(a)(ii) this appeared to distract some candidates. The questions clearly asked for two sociological reasons so more than two could not attract more marks and citing a third reason was wasting valuable time. The question asked for sociological reasons, weaker candidates tended to offer common sense rather than sociological responses. Sociological reasons should always be supported by evidence. A comparison of the mean marks for 2(a)(ii) and 3(a)(ii) would indicate the reverse to 2(a)(i) and 3(a)(i) in terms of accessibility.

2(a)/2(c)/3(a)/3(c)

These questions are essay style and as such candidates were expected to write a clearly structured discursive response.

In order to access the higher mark bands candidates were expected to use sociological evidence. There were some excellent answers where candidates demonstrated detailed and wide ranging knowledge and understanding of relevant sociological material. Weaker candidates tended to offer generalised answers.

Where the command in a question is to evaluate a theory, such as 2(c) and 3(c) then they should have started by providing a detailed exposition of the theory. The evaluation was sometimes juxtaposed or added on at the end of paragraphs. Other candidates took an evaluative tone throughout the essay and consequently were able to access the higher mark bands. The majority of candidates who chose Families and Households did 2c 127 compared to 85.

Section C

There are three options to choose from - Option 1 Education, Option 2 Media and Option 3 Religion

The questions were consistent across all three. No-one choose Option 3 and the most popular was Option 1. Only 6 candidates chose Media.

4(a)(i)/5(a)(i)

The data this year was in the form of words rather than a graph or table. It was clear that candidates responded well to this, particularly for 4(a)(i) and there were far fewer statistical errors than in previous sessions.

Candidates who did not read the precise wording of the question i.e. to summarise the data and instead analysed and evaluated it wasted valuable time as there were no marks for doing so.

4(a)(ii)/5(a)(ii)

Candidates were asked to explain two sociological reasons. The two was emboldened and therefore if candidates were reading the question carefully they would not have done what some candidates did and provided as many reasons as they could think of. Marks can only be awarded for two reasons.

4(b)(i)/4(c)(i)/5(b)(i)/5(c)(i)

The best responses were those who identified 3 or 4 key relevant points using sociological evidence to support each point.

4(b)(ii)/4(c)(ii)/5(b)(ii)/5(c)(ii)

As with 2 (a)/2 (c) 3 (a)/3 (c) these were essay style questions and as such required the same range of skills, discursive style, evaluative tone, sociological evidence and knowledge of relevant sociological theories.

Summary of key points

- In order to access higher mark bands candidates must answer the specific question.
- If a question asks a candidate to use the item then they should do precisely that. That means not simply lifting a phrase or sentence but using what is there to help their response.
- If a question asks a candidate to use the item then they should do precisely that. That means not simply lifting a phrase or sentence but using what is there to help their response.
- Sociological evidence should be cited in all of the discursive essays as well as those questions which specifically ask for evidence.
- Candidates should check where they will be awarded marks for evaluation and where there are no marks available for AO3.
- Finally it was good to see that many candidates were using contemporary evidence.

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COMPONENT 2: METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

General Comments

This paper was generally answered well and all the questions were accessible. As with previous years, candidates need to be reminded of the demands of each question as in too many instances the commands in the question such as referring to the item or sociological studies were ignored.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question (a)

Generally answered well. Despite this being key term in the specification it was surprising that a significant minority struggled to provide a simple definition. However, most candidates were able to explain and show understanding in their own words. Better answers referred to representative samples of the target population and used sociological language such as referring to generalisability. Despite the question asking candidates to refer to the item, weaker answers did not and some provided examples of other sociological studies but not the item. Weaker answers that used the item often simply quoted a line directly from it without linking to the idea of a representative sample or adding additional knowledge.

Question (b)

Most candidates correctly provided examples of ethical issues – in the main anonymity, consent, right to withdraw and the sensitive nature of the study. The best answers were able to contextualise to the item rather than give general definitions of the ethical issues chosen. Of candidates that scored 0, they misunderstood the question and gave practical issues. The best answers applied the item in their answers although a significant minority again quoted other research and ignored the item (e.g. Humphreys, Milgram etc).

Question (c)

Most candidates understood the question. Candidates should be advised to clearly separate the two disadvantages (as for part b) as sometimes it was difficult to work out whether one paragraph was two disadvantages or an extension of the first. Some candidates offered three or four disadvantages in which the best two were credited but the penalty for the candidate is wasting unnecessary time. Weaker answers confused validity and reliability or would use 'valid and reliable' in the same sentence therefore showing little understanding of the key terms.

Question (d)

Most candidates were able to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of secondary data. Weaker answers provided basic knowledge and understanding of secondary data with very little application or evaluation. Better answers had a clear structure with a definition of secondary data in the opening paragraph and then a balanced explanation of strengths and weaknesses illustrated by research examples. The best answers identified different types of strengths and weaknesses and relative merits. However, many candidates treated all secondary data as quantitative and therefore missed the opportunity to fully develop their answer. Again, the best answers were able to use key terms correctly such as validity, reliability, representative etc. Weaker student would use key terms without showing understanding such as saying 'valid and reliable'.

Summary of key points

Overall, it is advised that student practise these questions as they are very skills based and some centres seemed unaware of the demands of the questions. The key to this exam is being able to contextualise to the item and explain in detail why the researchers in the specific study used the method or the methodological issues faced by the researchers in the specific case. Some candidates feel that the way to obtain marks is to show off knowledge in terms of referencing other studies but this isn't the case (for parts a, b, and c). Finally, candidates need to be able to correctly apply and explain key terminology in order to show understanding.



WJEC
245 Western Avenue
Cardiff CF5 2YX
Tel No 029 2026 5000
Fax 029 2057 5994
E-mail: exams@wjec.co.uk
website: www.wjec.co.uk