



GCE AS EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**SOCIOLOGY
AS**

SUMMER 2023

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Unit	Page
Component 1- Socialisation and Culture	1
Component 2 – Methods of Sociological Enquiry	6

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COMPONENT 1 SOCIALISATION AND CULTURE

General Comments

This is a challenging paper in that candidates are required to use a variety of skills on the nine questions they have to do in two and a half hours.

Overall, the questions seemed to be accessible and the majority of candidates were able to demonstrate relevant knowledge and understanding on the topic areas covered.

Most candidates chose Families and Households in Section B and Education in Section C. The only candidates who answered Option 2 or 3 in Section C were those who misread the rubric and answered all questions on the paper. There was a small but significant group who made this mistake. This issue was noted in previous reports and centres are encouraged to remind candidates of the rubric on this paper.

Few candidates reached the very top of the mark range but there were only a limited number who were unable to tackle all of the questions they were required to.

Timing did not seem to be a problem.

The level of written communication was reasonable although handwriting was at times very poor and occasionally so small that it was extremely difficult to read.

Comments on individual questions/sections

SECTION A

Candidates should thoroughly revise the key concepts such as primary and secondary socialisation, culture, roles, norms and so on, as identified in the specification.

- Q.1 (a)** This question asked candidates to define secondary socialisation with reference to the item. Candidates need to use the item effectively and not just copy a sentence or extract into their response. This was a common issue.
- (b)** A significant number of candidates lost marks on this due to a lack of understanding of the term 'transmit'. They often failed to grasp that they had to discuss the process of how something, in this case culture, is transmitted and use terms such as imitation, role models, sanctions and rewards. This has been identified in previous reports. Teachers should encourage candidates to practise saying this is what happens and then ask themselves but **how** does it happen and explain how it happens. Too many stopped at the what and did not go on and ask themselves how. Those candidates who did explain how two agents transmit culture and used the item were rewarded appropriately.

There is no need to use the item in both agents of socialisation, one is enough to demonstrate they understand the relevance of the item. The majority of candidates identified two agents. Those who only discussed how one agent of socialisation transmits culture could not access more than half marks.

SECTION B

The majority of candidates chose Families and Households rather than Youth Culture

Option 1 Families and Households

- Q.2 (a) (i)** The majority of candidates were able to provide some sort of a description of a nuclear family. However, answers were often lacking in sufficient detail and candidates who did not elaborate on what a nuclear family is could not access the higher mark bands.
- (ii)** Most candidates were able to identify two reasons for the increase in same sex marriages and the best were able to access the top mark bands by providing detailed explanation of the reasons. Centres are advised to remind candidates that they should always elaborate on a point they make. It was not enough for example, to say there have been changes in the law, they needed to specify at least what law/s. Similarly, to say an increase in secularisation needs detail on what is meant by secularisation.
- (b)** The essay requires evaluation – AO3 is 12 of the 25 marks. Essays need to be clearly structured which in this case means starting with New Right theories which are the focus of the question. Some candidates started with other theories such as Marxism or different strands of feminism. By doing this it gives the examiner the impression the candidate has not properly read the question and it does not help the candidate in focusing on the demands of the question set.
- The best answers cited relevant sociologists to support their claims. Those that did not could only access lower MBs.
- (c)** This question was the most popular question of the two. Some candidates demonstrated a clear understanding of what is meant by relationships. The very best considered relationships between parents, between parents and children and between grandparents and their children and grandchildren. They also were able to refer to wider family relationships. However, some candidates demonstrated some confusion regarding family relationships and discussed structures instead. As with 2(b) those who did not cite relevant sociologists could not access the higher MBs.

Option 2 Youth Culture

- Q.3 (a) (i)** The majority of candidates were able to provide a description of the characteristics of gangs. This was an open question. Candidates were asked to describe the characteristics of gangs.

There are a number of studies available to support the various characteristics and the best candidates used them and were therefore able to access the top mark bands.

- (ii) There are a number of reasons why young people join deviant subcultures and the best responses identified two and supported them with relevant sociologists. If candidates only identified one reason the mark was restricted accordingly. Weaker candidates merely provided a generalised response.
- (b) Whilst there were some strong responses, some candidates who chose this essay question had a poor grasp of the functionalist view of youth culture. They were often able to identify relevant sociologists but were unable to provide specific detail on what those sociologists actually said.
- (c) Compared to 3 (b) only a few candidates answered this question. Those that did were able to respond to the specifics of the question. They tended to cite less studies but those that were included were covered accurately. The command word was to discuss a view and candidates who engaged in a discussion were able to access the 12 marks available for AO3.

SECTION C

Option 1 Education

- Q.4**
- (a) (i) Most candidates were able to offer some interpretation of the item. A considerable number of candidates struggled to get beyond half marks as they either referred to only one or two points or they did not support the points they identified with the relevant data from the item. Candidates should practise data questions not just because of the 10 marks they could be awarded but because they could be learning statistics that are recent and could be cited in essays if relevant and they remember the source.

The summary should be identifying patterns in terms of higher/lower, more/less and so on. This has been mentioned in previous reports and appears in the mark schemes for these questions which are available on the Eduqas website.
 - (ii) The command word for this question is explain. Candidates are not required to refer to the data which they have just summarised but should explain two sociological reasons for the social inequalities in education. Candidates should be reminded of the need to cite relevant sociologists when explaining reasons such as material deprivation, for example. They should provide detail of what the sociologist says in relation to the specifics of the question.
 - (b) (i) Some candidates were able to explain the term and cite a sociologist such as Bourdieu. They were able to provide detail of what Bourdieu said in relation to cultural capital. Some cited and gave detail of more than one relevant sociologist which clearly demonstrated they understood the term.

However, some candidates did not demonstrate any understanding of the term and were unable to access any marks. It is recommended that candidates keep a revision list of key terms relating to the option.

- (ii) This was a very accessible question and some candidates provided very strong answers and were able to access the highest mark bands. However, there were some who ignored the command to evaluate functionalist theories and started with Marxist and neo-Marxist theories only moving to functionalist theories later in their essay. As with most other questions, candidates must be advised to follow the demands of the question and to cite relevant sociologists and detail of what they say, with reference to the specifics of the question.
- (c)
 - (i) Candidates who opted for this question often answered it well. There were many references to Rosenthal and Jacobson, although some were a little inaccurate. There were also references to the work of others such as Becker, Rist, Woods and Fuller.
 - (ii) This was a question chosen by many candidates who had clearly been well prepared for it. The best candidates knew a wide range of relevant sociologists and were able to offer detail of what they said with regard to the specifics of the question.

There were some however, who wrote generalised responses, full of suppositions and assertions. They could not access more than mark band 1 with such limited knowledge and understanding.

Option 2 Media

The only candidates who chose this option were candidates who had misread the rubric and answered all questions on the paper.

Option 3 religion

As with option 2 the only candidates who answered questions from this option were those who had misread the rubric.

Summary of key points

1. The better answers to the essay questions were able to cite relevant sociologists to support the claims they were making, providing accurate and detailed knowledge and understanding of those sociologists. Candidates should be advised to learn names of sociologists and what they say for all of the options being studied. Candidates could be encouraged to keep their own reference booklet for these.
2. Candidates should also be advised to learn some contemporary sociologists. Families and Households, Youth Culture and Education are all areas where there is considerable recent research which has superseded some of the older research. They will still be rewarded for the old favourites, but they should understand that new research should be considered.

3. Candidates should be advised to avoid making sweeping generalisations/common sense assertions. As mentioned above, points/claims in the essay questions should be supported by names of relevant sociologists/evidence.
4. Finally, candidates must be advised to take a few minutes to read the question and to pay attention to what the command words are asking for. For example, whether the requirement is to evaluate, discuss a view or explain and so on.

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COMPONENT 2 – METHODS OF SOCIOLOGICAL ENQUIRY

General Comments

Candidates 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 accessible and nearly all candidates were able to answer all questions. As with previous years, some 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. The guidance below should help teachers to remind candidates of the demands of each question.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Question (a) Candidates had good knowledge of the term ‘quantitative data’ and could give an accurate definition. Those responses placed in mark band 1 could define the term, whereas those in mark band 3 were also able to apply, and show understanding of, methodological language such as reliable, generalisable and objective, as well as a knowledge and understanding of relevant theory, in this case positivism. The best answers could show their understanding by explaining why positivists prefer quantitative data rather than simply stating that they prefer it, or by explaining why quantitative data is more reliable. Some candidates spent too long evaluating the weaknesses and need reminding to stay focused on the question. Similarly, some answers focused too much on additional studies which is not a requirement of the question, and this meant they failed to focus on the item. Weaker answers that utilised the item, simply quoted a line directly from it without explicitly linking to quantitative data. Candidates should be reminded to see ‘referring to the item’ as an opportunity to apply additional knowledge.

Question (b) Most candidates could give two distinct reasons for the use of unstructured interviews. Some centres encouraged candidates to leave a line after their first reason, making them clearer and more distinct. The best answers were able to contextualise to the item and support points with methodological language rather than giving a general definition. Answers placed in mark band 3 were able to state their reason, for example, to improve validity, and then explain how this was beneficial in the context of the researchers in the item. For example, linking to the nature of the topic which in this case was sensitive as it was about family relationships.

However, some candidates would give additional unnecessary reasons or refer to other studies rather than contextualise to the item and the researchers in the study and therefore need reminding of the demands of the question.

Question (c)

Most candidates understood the question and were able to give a strength and a weakness of using more than one method. The best answers were able to explain methodological pluralism in terms of gaining a more holistic view of the topic whereas weaker answers would list the strengths and weaknesses of the individual methods used rather than the benefits of combining the data. Again, contextualising to the researchers in the item is key to this question and this needs to be done when explaining both the strength and the weakness.

Question (d)

Most candidates were able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of questionnaires, distinguish the different types of questionnaires and explain which sociologists preferred which type and why. The best answers had a balance of strengths and weaknesses and were able to make these explicit throughout their answer using link words such as 'another strength....'. They were also able to illustrate their answers with references to research/writers (at least two for mark band 4) as supporting evidence while still staying focused on the question. Weaker answers became more anecdotal in style and lacked focus.

Top band answers contained methodological language whereas more basic answers gave common sense style strengths and weaknesses. Weaker answers would use key terms without showing understanding of them, for example, saying the method was 'valid and reliable'.

Summary of key points

It is important that candidates understand the commands terms and the demands of each question. The key to questions (a), (b) and (c) is contextualising responses to the item rather than giving generic definitions, reasons, or strengths and weaknesses. Candidates must be able to accurately utilise, apply and explain methodological language. Candidates must provide answers which meet the demands of the question to reach the top mark bands.



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