# AQA

# AS

# SOCIOLOGY

7191/2   Research Methods and Topics in Sociology
Report on the Examination

7191
June 2019

Version:  1.0

**7191/2 – Research Methods and Topics in Sociology**

Most students seemed able to manage their time appropriately and to write answers of an appropriate length. There were however, some occasional rubric infringements with some students attempting all 22 questions.

In general, students coped well with the demands of the exam. The requirements of the 10-mark question seem to be well understood by the majority of students. However, some aspects of student answers could be improved. In relation to all questions, students need to pay attention to the specific wording of questions and address this rather than write generic answers that cover the general topic area. There was a tendency among weaker responses to write answers to a different question than the one set.

**Section A: Research Methods**

**Question 1**

Students who recognised that the key to this question was the idea of overt observation were largely successful.  The most common responses then identified the ethical advantage of gaining consent from those being observed. Many answers pointed out the advantage of being able to record information openly and not rely on memory. It is helpful for students to explain how the suggested advantage is an advantage. For example, answers that just said that one of the advantages was that overt observation allowed questions to be asked without elaborating on how or why that was an advantage were credited as partial answers. There were a number of students who identified generic advantages of observation in general. These answers failed to score any marks.

**Question 2**

This attracted a wide range of responses. Better answers explored ethical issues and how these impacted on choice of methods and then analysed and evaluated these issues. A number of students made reference to methods without any reference to ethical issues or alternatively referred to ethical issues without any mention of methods. Many students gave long accounts of particular studies such as Milgram without specific application to the question.  Some answers were structured around the practical, ethical and theoretical factors framework. Unfortunately, many of these had a lot more to say about practical and theoretical factors than ethical issues. The ethical issues that students tended to discuss most effectively were consent, deception and harm to participants.

**Section B**

**Topic B1 Culture and Identity**

**Question 3**

The majority of answers were able to explain labelling with reference to stereotyping based on some characteristic of an individual or group. A minority of students explained labelling in terms of being labelled and subsequently failed to score any marks.

**Question 4**

This question proved to be relatively straight forward for most students. The most common successful answers were able to relate social class to income and the impact financial constraints have on leisure choices. Partial answers merely gave examples of class-based leisure activities.

**Question 5**

Many students struggled with this question. Successful answers identified the way global culture can give individuals more choice to create hybrid identities. Other popular responses included the idea that global culture may strengthen local sense of identity as resistance to the perceived threat of global culture. However, a lot of answers just outlined examples of global culture without relating them to the idea of an individual's sense of identity.

**Question 6**

In general, this question was answered poorly with limited knowledge and understanding shown. While students were familiar with agencies of socialisation, they were less clear about sexual identities and often answers drifted into accounts of gender role socialisation with limited success. Successful answers were able to discuss the role of schools in shaping sexual identities via the teaching of sex education or via the heterosexual assumptions of everyday interactions in school. Others referred to the role of religion or the media in promoting particular sexual identities. Answers that focused on the family as an agent of socialisation tended to get diverted into a discussion of gender roles rather than attitudes to sexual identities.

**Question 7**

The majority of students seemed unprepared for this question.  The most common response was to outline some stereotypical statements about old people and leisure activities, and then move on to gender and ethnicity. Very few students were able to provide a theoretical structure to their answer in relation to age and identity. Many students assumed that age meant old age and limited their responses accordingly. Relatively few answers covered more than one age group. Successful answers often discussed age and identity in relation to work and retirement, as well as notions of status and dependence. Some excellent responses were able to explore the significance of age for identity at different stages of people's life cycle.

**Topic B2 Families and Households**

**The majority of students chose this option**

**Question 8**

Many students were able to define both aspects of the term. Some answers struggled to explain the meaning of 'net' and hence only provided a partial definition. A sizeable minority seemed to be unfamiliar with the concept and were unable to give a satisfactory definition at all.

**Question 9**

The most common response was to make a reference to the 'triple shift' or 'domestic violence' and these were rewarded accordingly. Some answers described conjugal roles but omitted to explain the negative side for women of the aspect of family life that they identified.

**Question 10**

Some answers confused one-person households with lone parent households and therefore struggled to make appropriate points. Many students successfully identified and outlined three reasons for the increase in one-person households. The most common responses mentioned were an increase in the divorce rate, the decline of stigma in living alone, and women's greater on focus on education and career. Partial answers failed to identify any change affecting the increase in one-person households or alternatively were sometimes unclear about the link to the increase to one-person households.

**Question 11**

Many answers either discussed changes in families and households without explaining how these affected the experience of childhood, or more frequently discussed changes to the experience of childhood without relating these to changes in families and households. For example, students that discussed the disappearance of childhood and the negative aspects of modern technology, or the changes in child labour laws, often failed to make any link to families and households changes. The best answers had a clear example of family change such as increased divorce or decline in family size and were then able to explain how this change had impacted on the experience of childhood.  Child centeredness, same sex parents, and changes to gender roles were all common themes. Good answers analysed the impact, both positive and negative, of these changes to the experience of childhood. For example, some answers identified that families in general are more affluent today than in the past. This has had a positive impact on childhood in terms of access to resources and technology but may have come at a price, as both parents are too busy to spend as much time with their children as parents did previously. These ideas could then be developed with reference to toxic childhood or diminished role of parents in the socialisation process vis a vis media or other agents.

**Question 12**

The best responses were able to link a number of forms of family diversity with a strong focus on evaluation and analysis. These answers explicitly discussed the extent to which family diversity has undermined the traditional nuclear family. Alternatively, they argued that diverse family forms might be simply a variation of the traditional nuclear family better suited to fit the needs of a postmodern individualised society. Weak answers would list forms of family diversity with a recycling of the item. Middle-range answers tended to assume that it was obvious that the traditional nuclear family was no longer important and instead focused on outlining different examples of family diversity. These answers often tried to use sociological views (usually functionalist, feminist and New Right) to discuss whether family diversity was a good thing for society. Relatively few responses explored whether the changes to the family unit had been exaggerated. Those answers that did often took a life cycle approach arguing that the traditional nuclear family was important at different stage in people's lives.

**Topic B3 Health**

This option was done by a handful of centres.

### Question 13

Relatively few students were able to define the term adequately. Most partial answers struggled to capture the idea of 'rate' and simply expressed the idea as the number of deaths. Some answers confused the term with life expectancy.

### Question 14

In general, this was answered well. Many responses referred to examples of the medical profession causing harm to patients and the resulting decline in public respect for medicine. Some successful answers made reference to the rise of alternative medicine. Others discussed the role of the internet as a source of knowledge that has enabled patients to more readily challenge the medical profession.

### Question 15

Almost all students were able to suggest appropriate reasons for gender differences in patterns of mental illness. Most answers made reference to the effect of women's roles in society, labelling by the medical profession, differences in willingness to seek medical help and gender role socialisation.

### Question 16

Many students saw this question in relation to health chances rather than access to health care. These answers therefore often struggled to explain how their chosen factor affected class differences in access to health care. Furthermore, some answers failed to stick to material factors but instead spent time outlining cultural differences between social classes and their attitudes to health. More successful responses made reference to the costs of treatment, especially private health care. Others discussed issues to do with lack of transport, getting time off work and the nature of hourly paid employment for many working-class employees. The inverse care law featured in a number of answers, but many students struggled to apply it specifically to the question of access to health care.

### Question 17

The answers to this question were generally disappointing. Some weaker answers made limited and simplistic stereotypical comments concerning the poor education and language skills of ethnic minorities. The best answers were able to discuss numerous sociological explanations for ethnic differences in health chances. These answers typically referred to a range of factors including material and cultural factors, labelling, racism and bias in health care provision as well as attitudes to health care provision. Better answers distinguished between different ethnic groups and the relevance of particular factors in explaining the health chances of specific ethnic groups. Such response also discussed health chances in relation to both physical and mental health and were

often able to frame their answers with reference to different types of explanations such as material or cultural. An additional feature of good answers was the ability to analyse and evaluate their points. For example, a point about bias and racism among health care professionals would be discussed in relation to changing employment patterns in the NHS in relation to different ethnic groups and an appropriate conclusion would be reached.

**Topic B4 Work, Poverty and Welfare**

This option was done by a handful of centres.

**Question 18**

A number of students were unfamiliar with this term. Successful answers referred to the idea of an individual being denied access to aspects of social activity. Some answers failed to define exclusion and wrote about people being excluded by society.

**Question 19**

Most students were able to explain why households with children may be more at risk from poverty with reference to the cost of children for families. This was often developed by discussing the specific expenses that children incur, or in relation to having to give up work, wholly or partially, to care for children.

**Question 20**

Many students struggled with this question. Answers were often vague about government policies and how these policies might reduce the gap between rich and poor. For example, some answers referred to 'the tax system' without really explain how such a policy might work. Better answers were able to be specific about a policy. For example, making the income tax system more progressive, or targeting the wealth of the rich through a wealth tax.

**Question 21**

The best answers tended to start with job satisfaction and discuss the impact of technological change on skill levels. Many answers referred to alienation and these answers were able to provide a fuller account of the impact of technological change on job satisfaction. Some answers were able to discuss at length Fordism and the views of Braverman on autonomy and control in the workplace. Weaker answers focused on technological change and often neglected to relate these ideas to the workplace, let alone to job satisfaction.

**Question 22**

Most answers were able to use the item as a stimulus to discuss structuralist views on the causes of poverty and inequality in society. The best responses were able to locate this discussion in Marxist and sometimes Weberian approaches to social inequality with reference to appropriate sociological concepts. They were then able to evaluate these approaches by discussing some criticisms and strengths of this structuralist approach, often in contrast to cultural and individualistic explanations of social inequality and poverty. A less successful approach was simply to juxtapose these alternative explanations of class inequality or to move rapidly away from discussing class inequality and instead to describe other forms of social inequality based on either gender, age or ethnicity. In general answers that discussed a more limited range of points in more detail were more successful than those that listed a larger number of points with more limited discussion.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.