GCSE

SOCIOLOGY

8192/1: Paper 1 – The Sociology of Families and Education
Report on the Examination

General

The new GCSE specification for 2019 had a strong uptake from centres. The first sitting of this paper elicited a range of responses from students. Most managed their time appropriately and only a small minority left some questions unanswered. There was evidence of some very well taught and well prepared students with good knowledge of relevant material. This was particularly the case for questions 03, 10, 14, and 21. In general, however, the skill of application was less evident. For the methods in context questions, very few students were able to apply their knowledge of the research methods to the specific issue raised by the question. By way of an example, for question 07 there was limited application to the specific issue of conjugal role relationships. Responses to the questions requiring extended writing were mixed. A large number of students demonstrated excellent knowledge of relevant sociological theories, concepts, evidence and methods to the issues under consideration in the 12 mark questions, and were able to apply these to the question. The most successful responses included evidence based judgements and conclusions relating to the issue of extent.

Question 01

On this first multiple choice question, the vast majority of students selected the correct answer.

Question 02

This second multiple choice question saw most students correctly identifying the feminist perspective as focusing on patriarchy.

Question 03

Question 03 was generally well answered, with many students gaining at least two marks for their description. Most opted for primary socialisation, with many developing their answer, often by successfully linking the function to wider society, and thus gaining full marks. Those choosing the reproductive or sexual function struggled to develop the response fully enough for Level 3. Less effective responses tended to centre on emotional support, sometimes merged with financial support and presented in general terms, eg 'to be there for each other'.

Question 04

There were some very effective answers to this question, showing a good understanding of criticisms that Marxists make of families. Many gained marks through a consideration of the ways in which families perpetuate the class system through inheritance. Some students focused on the family operating as a unit of consumption, exploited by capitalism, eg buying products to enrich the bourgeoisie, whilst other students considered the relationship between capitalism and the families' reproductive function, eg breeding new proletarian workers. Less effective responses confused Marxist and feminist perspectives, writing about gender inequalities in the family, and as a consequence were not credited. Some students criticised Marxism as a belief system rather than exploring the Marxist criticism of the family or just made broad comments about Marxism that did not fully relate to families.

Question 05

There were a range of different responses to this question. Many students chose an appropriate feature to examine, usually the longitudinal nature of the survey or the structured nature of the interviews, but they often failed to explain their choice fully enough *as a strength* for the second

mark. A significant number of students struggled to focus on just one advantage. Few chose to discuss a strength of the actual findings.

Question 06

Unfortunately a significant minority of students appear to have misread the question. Many of them explained factors accounting for the *change* in division of domestic labour, writing about how men now do more housework and the role feminism has had in ensuring women no longer do the housework. Another common issue was responses that simply described the traditional roles rather than explaining how they arose.

Question 07

Most students gained some credit as they wrote about an appropriate disadvantage, usually based on the interviewer's inability to ask follow-up questions, or the interviewee's inability to elaborate/explain their answers. Responses focused on the interviewer effect tended to be weaker, with the explanation not going much beyond 'so they might lie'. A few students spent time unnecessarily explaining the superiority of an alternative research method. Many struggled to link to the context, simply making generic comments about the method or just dropping the term conjugal roles into their answer without appropriate development.

Question 08

The majority of responses contained an accurate identification, but unfortunately some students omitted to consult Item B, offering methods such as questionnaires or structured interview. Many were aware of Oakley's perspective as a feminist and her work on conjugal roles, but struggled to integrate that knowledge into a discussion of her research method. More effective responses were clearly aware of the texts and summaries covered in Appendix B and could apply that knowledge to this question.

Question 09

Most responses successfully identified and explained an appropriate ethical issue. However, understanding of the context was often weak, with many students assuming it was the actual couples in an arranged marriage, rather than the general public, whose attitudes were being investigated. A fairly common occurrence was blurring of confidentiality, anonymity and consent, with students suggesting, for example, that the researcher would need to maintain confidentiality by keeping respondents' names anonymous unless consent had been given to reveal them.

Question 10

Many students produced detailed answers, with most reaching at least Level 2 by discussing how functionalists, such as Parsons, emphasise the significance of the family as an agency of socialisation. More effective responses used feminist and/or Marxist thinkers to analyse and evaluate the extent to which Parsons' view is significant through outlining how alternative agencies of socialisation, such as the education system, are more significant. Generally, the views of Parsons and sometimes Murdock were well detailed, especially focusing on the importance of the family for the functionalists. The functionalists were seen as supporting the view that the family was important for primary socialisation. Many responses noted that the Marxists saw education as the most important, often using Bowles and Gintis as supporting evidence. Some considered the feminist focus on the importance of the family in terms of gender socialisation, referencing Oakley,

while others focusing on the role the family had in enabling the continuation of patriarchy, citing Delphy and Leonard. Generally, students presented some good knowledge and application, but were weaker on evaluation. A few described the importance of the family for 'socialising'.

Question 11

Unfortunately, there were a significant amount of less effective responses to this question, with many students only offering limited knowledge in order to discuss the importance of marriage in Britain today. Some students gave very simple accounts of how important marriage was for expressing 'love' and commitment. Some focused on the importance of the traditional family rather than on 'marriage' itself. Many described the functionalist view that a traditional heterosexual nuclear family was still important because it delivered the appropriate 'functions'. Some turned it into a defence/attack of the nuclear family. As with all the 'mini essays', many students demonstrated good knowledge but relatively weak analysis and evaluation.

More focused responses outlined a variety of reasons as to why marriage continues to be important in Britain today, citing statistics which show that many people experience marriage at some stage in their lives and also considering that, despite a recent decline in the total number of couples getting married, marriage remains popular and is still seen as an 'ideal' to which people aspire, eg the attention given by the media to royal weddings. The popularity of same sex marriage was often stated as evidence of the continued importance of marriage, along with remarriage after divorce. The recent decline in the number of marriages was linked with increased economic independence and choice for women, together with divorce, secularisation and cohabitation. Some students gained credit by exploring the continued importance of religion/arranged marriages amongst specific social groups within British society.

Question 12

Most students correctly chose option D, Private, as schools that charge fees for students to attend.

Question 13

For this multiple choice question, just under two-thirds of students selected the correct answer.

Question 14

This question was generally well understood and answered, with some excellent accounts of teacher expectations, labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy. Many students also went on to explain how the factor that they identified influenced the educational achievement of working class students and gained full marks by doing so. A few responses mistakenly covered *out* of school factors, such as material deprivation or parental attitudes. Others misinterpreted the question's use of 'may' and discussed hypothetical factors, setting out their visions for a kinder, fairer system.

Question 15

A significant minority of students did not attempt this question, presumably because they were unfamiliar with the key term. A list of the key terms and concepts that may be assessed can be found in Appendix A of the specification. The majority of students who were familiar with the term were able to describe how the ethnocentric curriculum might disadvantage minority ethnic groups, eg due to a focus on 'white' British history. The most effective responses gave appropriate descriptions of the way an ethnocentric curriculum might disadvantage students from other ethnic

backgrounds, usually in terms of how educational achievement can be negatively impacted if students are alienated from lessons. British history was the most commonly cited example, although some responses were presented in rather vague and general terms and would have benefitted from a little further development. A small number of responses focused on non-curricular issues, eg pupils whose religion obliged them to leave the classroom at prayer times causing them to miss out on learning, whilst the least effective responses overlooked 'curriculum' entirely and simply made assertions about discrimination or racism.

Question 16

As with Question 05, many students had difficulty selecting a single strength and examining it in sufficient depth to obtain both marks. Surprisingly few responses considered the benefits of basing research on official statistics. The least effective responses examined only the presentation of the findings, noting for instance that the use of different coloured bars would have made the chart easier to read.

Question 17

Some students found this question particularly challenging. For example, some students overlooked the issue of gender entirely, writing instead about other factors such as social class or material deprivation. These responses sometimes showed a relatively detailed understanding of how out of school factors can influence overall educational achievement, but unfortunately failed to answer the question as **Item C** refers specifically to differences between boys and girls. Where students did address the question, the answers were often well developed, with bedroom culture and gender socialisation given as explanations for the differences in educational achievement. The least effective responses simply quoted statistics taken from the item and earned no credit for doing so.

Question 18

The majority of students demonstrated a good awareness of the limitations of choosing non-participant observation to investigate this topic, developing their response in terms of either the Hawthorne effect or the researcher's constrained understanding of the reasons behind certain behaviours. The most effective answers were able to relate these limitations clearly to the context. Some students assumed that the observation was covert and were distracted by less relevant issues such as the ethical issues arising from observing students without their consent. A few of the least effective responses thought incorrectly that it was a matter of the students declining to participate.

Question 19

The majority of students understood the concept of marketization, with many offering detailed accounts of its impact on schools, pupils or parents, usually with a focus on the effect of league tables. Even less effective responses accurately identified the appropriate material in Item D. Some students produced 'ready-made' answers about marketization with no reference to the work of Ball, Bowe and Gerwirtz, and so failed to gain marks. A few tried to shoehorn in what they had learned about Ball's solo study of the effects of banding.

Question 20

The vast majority of responses identified and explained an appropriate disadvantage of mixed ability teaching, often in considerable detail, although occasionally spending disproportionate amounts of time on developing a comparison with setting. A small proportion of students speculated on the drawbacks of having *teachers* whose ability was mixed, eg teachers might struggle to cover all parts of a curriculum adequately, and therefore their responses were not worthy of credit. It was rare for no response at all to be offered to this particular question.

Question 21

There were some excellent answers to this question. Many students concentrated their answer on a comparison between the working and middle classes, with particular emphasis on the disparity of resources between the social classes. Most referenced the Marxist view that class is the most important factor; the work of Bowles and Gintis and the 'correspondence principal' were frequently described in some detail. Students also commonly referred to the work of Willis in support of this view. The views of Bernstein and Bourdieu were also referred to. Parsons, Durkheim and the functionalist view that education 'fair' and open to all based on merit, effort and motivation was offered as an alternative/contrasting approach. A few students referred to the work of Davis and Moore and the principal of 'role allocation'. Feminist views of society as patriarchal and the importance of gender role socialisation were also considered. However, a significant number of students described rather dated ideas about the education system failing females and causing female underachievement because it was male biased. More successful answers referenced the sea change in opportunities for females via feminism, and economic and social changes that have enabled women to succeed in education. Sharp and Oakley were often referenced, along with canalisation, bedroom culture and the crisis in masculinity as explanations of gender differences in educational achievement.

Some made very naive, sweeping assertions, assuming private education was easily available for middle class families, and that all working class families were materially and culturally deprived. Other factors, such as peer groups and the media, were generally fleetingly considered. Some students mentioned ethnicity as an important factor. Relatively successful answers discussing the importance of ethnicity referenced the work of Troyna, Williams and Fuller among others.

Question 22

Some very detailed and full answers were provided to 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 principal', and Willis's study of working class boys. As a counter to this, many students offered a consideration of the functionalist perspective, that education was based on 'merit' and the purpose of education was to ensure 'role allocation' referring to Parsons (meritocracy) and the work of Davis and Moore.

Some students also considered feminist views that the education system was based on the continuation of patriarchy via a gendered curriculum. However, much of the argument tended to be based on the past, with schools and the curriculum being male dominated and geared mainly towards boys. Only a few students considered recent changes. The most successful of these referred to Sharpe's research and considered how the education system was now more female friendly, quoting initiatives such as GIST (Girls into Science and Technology). Others referred to STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subject choices and a continuation of gendered selection of subjects reflecting the continuation of gender stereotypes in the workplace.

Unfortunately, a minority of students ran out of time as a consequence of devoting disproportionate amounts of time to earlier questions that carry relatively few marks. Students should be reminded of the importance of the 'mark a minute' guidance intended to help them avoid this problem.

Use of statistics

Statistics used in this report may be taken from incomplete processing data. However, this data still gives a true account on how students have performed for each question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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