GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

SOCIOLOGY

SUMMER 2014
Grade Boundaries

Grade boundary information for this subject is available on the WJEC public website at: https://www.wjecservices.co.uk/MarkToUMS/default.aspx?l=en

Online results analysis

WJEC provides information to examination centres via the WJEC secure website. This is restricted to centre staff only. Access is granted to centre staff by the Examinations Officer at the centre.

Annual Statistical Report

The annual Statistical Report (issued in the second half of the Autumn Term) gives overall outcomes of all examinations administered by WJEC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unit 2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principal Examiner: Janis Griffiths

General comments

This examination paper presented a higher level of challenge than was expected by the examination team. Many candidates experienced difficulty with section B and others struggled with some of the technical language that was used in the paper. Centres are reminded that any term on the specification may be used in the examination. Nevertheless, despite this, there were a number of excellent and mature responses to the paper. Those using computers to write their examination responses should be using double spacing and a size 12 font.

Section A

In this section, brief but specific answers usually gain the highest marks. This approach allows candidates time to think about their responses to Section B and plan their answers with care.

Q.1 Many candidates struggled with stigma and labelling. Most gained full marks and then went on the use the terms to support other answers elsewhere on the paper.

Q.2 This was generally done very well indeed, with most candidates gaining the full number of marks available.

(c) Most specified the disabled as a social group and explained why Tanni Grey-Thomson could be a positive role model, though others suggested young people and feminists. This showed considerable imagination and thought had gone into response.

(d) This was the question that was handled less well by some candidates. Answers were circular, ‘Imitation is when you imitate someone’. To gain the full marks, candidates needed to explain implicitly through their example that role models are copied or to use the term ‘copying’. Some did not recognise that gender was also required as a reference. The best answers were very short and quite specific, so candidates referred to girls copying a role model such as their mother to learn gender.

Q.3 (b) There are still those who refer to socialisation in terms of mixing with other people rather than learning from them the expected behaviour for society.

(e) Most candidates did not point out a difference between the two forms of socialisation. This was a requirement of the question.
The research element of this question was generally handled very well and with reference to technical terms. The performance of candidates on research questions is improving.

This was generally done well. Some still struggle with the difference between reliability and validity but most were able to explain a problem and then offer some context. A number of candidates referred to ethical issues and did very well. A few mentioned the difficulty of obtaining a representative sample, and this was rewarded by markers too.

Some answers were a little vague about the meaning of social control but those who were able to refer to informal and formal social control generally were able to gain full marks. Some referred only to the police and therefore implicitly discussed formal control. This was rewarded but not with full marks.

Strong candidates named and then described a sampling method in simple terms. Others described a viable method without naming it. There were a few who offered non-representative samples such as opportunity or snowball. Unfortunately, these could not be rewarded. Weaker candidates failed to respond to the term sample and many described a method such as ‘questionnaire’ or ‘interview’. There were a few circular answers such as ‘A random sample is when you pick people randomly’. As no understanding of the term ‘random’ is actually displayed, then only one mark could be awarded.

Generally this was done well and with obvious understanding.

There are still those who are not able to explain the term culture with clarity. However, most candidates were able to gain something on this question.

Those who understood cultural relativity as being something that may be seen as odd or strange in one culture will be seen as perfectly normal in another and then referred to the difference in the concept of gender between Samoans and British people did well and gained full marks in few words. Others however struggled with the term relative and thought it referred to family relationships or kinship.

Not all the examples were social, so there was reference to psychology examples. Many overlooked the term debate as well. The best candidates explained each term with a relevant example, and some went on to say that there were different opinions as to which was most influential in human behaviours.

There was some slightly careless reading of the item, so ‘parents by Ofcom’ was seen fairly frequently. This was not rewarded.

Most managed to gain a few marks, but few were able to gain full marks on this question as answers were shallow, or did not refer to young people or body image. The best answers were concise and used sociological language such as ‘role models’ or referred to photoshopping of images leading to unrealistic images of males and females.

Many thought that a survey was a method and confused it with questionnaire. They offered more than one reason for their choice and sometimes in vague terms so that no depth of understanding was shown.
Those who understood ethics did very well indeed. They pointed out the sensitivity of the issue and the importance of careful wording or the fact that informed consent is required for research because of the age of the population. Weaker candidates sometimes correctly identified an ethical issue but developed it in terms of reliability or validity rather than of ethics. There were those who confused ethic and ethnic.

Options

Parts a and b often use classical sociology theory badly. It is not really necessary until part c) questions and is often not essential in this part of the question. The commands are ‘describe’, ‘explain’ and ‘discuss’. Some very good candidates are over-writing parts a) and b) and simply not addressing the commands. Lots of use of studies and contemporary evidence – excellent

Q.7 Family

This was the most popular choice of topic

(a) Few candidates achieved full marks. The question was unexpectedly challenging because many ignored the word ‘form’ and concentrated on the much harder question of how culture affects family. Those who did well were those who identified that this was a question about different family structures in different parts of the world or in Britain and in a variety of cultures and so they mentioned Mormon polygamy, arranged marriages, extended families and differing legal codes affecting family structures.

(b) This was very disappointing. Very few candidates recognised that this question was about the functions of the family, even when they had used the term cultural universal or referred to Functionalism. The best candidates outlined and explained three or four functions of the family for society, such as socialisation and care of the young. Those who used technical language did well.

(d) Generally, this was handled well, though there are still those who refer back to pre-industrial Britain and are therefore unable to focus on the key points that they need to make because they describe family change over the centuries. Some did not refer to the issue of change. Many referred to classical theory on the lines of ‘Functionalists would say change is a bad thing’ but generally did not link this to a reason for change, such as the impact of these ideas on the law. Feminism was generally well used if it was linked to women’s attitudes and behaviours. Where it was simply described then it was not really relevant to the issue of social change.

Q.8 Education

(a) Most candidates, even those who did not seem prepared for the question, managed some marks if they recognised what the term meant. There were those who focussed simply on a lack of resources but the best candidates referred to a range of implications of material deprivation such as bullying or poor food quality.

(b) Again, handled fairly well by most but there are still those few who insist that boys do better in school basing their arguments on historical points such as 11+ or who use biological explanations along the lines of ‘boys will be boys’. Others reversed the question and did not refer to the success of girls, but discussed the failure of boys.
(c) This was a struggle for some who used it as an opportunity to complain about teachers in general without considering labelling theory or the variety of different types of school available in modern Britain

Q.9 Media

(a) This was generally handled well with a variety of possible Internet uses described.

(b) Most candidates did well, but there were those who did not appear to notice that the question referred to agency of socialisation and therefore talked about general reasons for the importance of the media.

(c) Where the concept of news values was understood, then answers were efficient and clear. Many candidates just described what they saw in the news, so they referred to celebrities or sport in a descriptive way. Few mentioned ownership or control, which was surprising given the national debate regarding issues such as the phone-hacking scandal that are so current.

Q.10 Sport

(a) (b) (c) Generally weak and based on common sense answers. Few responses, fewer than in previous years, but those who had studied the topic and understood the questions were able to do well.
Section A

Q.1 Most students gained all 6 marks. The methodological terms caused problems for a small number of students.

Q.2 (a) and (b) Almost all students experienced no problems on these.
   (c) Generally this concept was well understood. The stronger answers tended to contrast it with Absolute Poverty using examples for both. Weaker answers neglected to give an example with their definition. Conversely, some gave examples but failed to really define the term.
   (d) The better answers used the idea that the government needed to know about changing living standards so that they could intervene by adjusting benefits or changing policy. Stronger answers may also have used terminology, such as poverty.

Q.3 (a) Most correctly suggested making reasonable adjustments or used examples. Others suggested making sure they interviewed disabled candidates for jobs. All of these were worthy of the mark.
   (b) Most correctly answered that it had increased or gone up. Others used the statistics which was also acceptable.
   (c) This was answered reasonably well with some using their own examples and others drawing from the source and explaining that making reasonable adjustments for disabled people was an example of social inclusion. It was also good to see some candidates using terminology well, such as marginalisation.

   A large minority wrote about social exclusion gaining zero marks in most cases.
   (d) Life chances was answered well. An example helped to secure the second mark. Even where a question does not ask for an example, it is clear that examples enhance explanations when used well.

   Some students struggled to explain and repeated the terms of the question.
   (e) Good answers talked about raised awareness, changing norms, less prejudice, anti-discrimination laws and greater media profile of disabled people. The example of the Paralympics in 2012 gave an extra dimension to answers. Some gained some credit by writing about improved facilities.
Q.4  
(a) Most students successfully copied the relevant part of the source. However, the vast majority failed to give an example and so lost a mark.

(b) This was either understood or not. Very few gained 1 mark.

(c) Generally this was tackled well focussing on socialisation, moral panics, media, stereotyping. Some repeated a little in their second reason and lost marks.

(d) Some struggled to find a suitable method and chose participant observation. This affected their answers to the other parts of the question. 4d iii) was a good differentiator and better candidates wrote about validity or reliability with accuracy and logical reasoning. Some very generalised answers.

Q.5  
(a) Again some struggled to name a method. Survey was used by a surprisingly large number.

(b) There were some good answers which focussed on themes of not belonging, feeling marginalised or threatened, not always using such sophisticated language, but nevertheless well argued.

Weaker answers grasped at not being allowed to vote or being illegal immigrants which didn’t answer the question.

(c) This was answered well. Good understanding that the drop in income, dependency or loss of position may affect how others viewed you.

(d) Better answers focussed on the issues of discrimination and workplace racism. Weaker answers were based on students own unintentional stereotypes and prejudices which were disappointing to read.

Q.6  
(a) (i) and (ii) were both answered without problem.

(b) Deprivation was tackled well generally with most answers focussing on having to do without something you need and adding an example, such as education or basic needs.

(c) Students found this difficult and if they didn’t know it tended to use common-sense ideas of privileges, such as having a treat. The sociological sense of a special advantage enjoyed by elite groups seemed to be unknown to large numbers.

(d) Most did reasonably well with a tendency to use common sense, but relevant ideas about diet, health care etc. Weaker answers did not link to health, but just wrote about being better off.
Section B

Q.7  (a)  The few candidates who did this question had a reasonable understanding of automation. More examples would have helped.

(b)  There was a tendency to focus on the individual problems caused by unemployment and less understanding of the social issues.

(c)  Answers tended to be one dimensional just focussing on strikes and showed a lack of knowledge of the range of responses by employees to being dissatisfied.

There were smaller numbers answering Work this year. Larger numbers than ever answered Crime and Deviance.

Q.9  (a)  – Students were able to discuss formal social control well. Better answers contrasted with informal control. Generally a good use of sociological language and appropriate examples. The best students compared Marxist and Functionalist views of social control.

(b)  – This was answered successfully in two different ways. Why do people think that crime is getting worse or Why is crime getting worse? Those who answered the former tended to do better and included key terms such as deviancy amplification, folk devils, moral panics, etc.

The second type of answer tended to be more general and focussed on general sociological reasons for crime. Some were successful with a little of each approach.

What was much less successful was the interpretation of the question as a discussion about official statistics which tended to pick up limited marks.

(c)  – This question was answered well by students. There was good use of sociological terminology, statistics and studies. Some students did focus solely on women though. Others were too general and really only wrote about socialisation.

Q.8 and Q.10  – So few candidates students answered these that it is difficult to comment. Few centres appear to be teaching these topics.