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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.

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SOCIOLOGY

GCSE

Summer 2017

UNIT 1 – UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL PROCESSES

General Comments

Candidates again generally have performed well and the standard of sociological writing and understanding has improved. Last year there was a gap between the performances on the two papers. This year Unit 1 closed the gap on Unit 2. Terminology which caused problems a few years ago has now been grasped well by most candidates.

There is a great deal of use of theory and sociological studies in both papers. There were still some candidates who presented rehearsed knowledge of theory or studies, but were not able to relate this to the content of the question. This is disappointing as they had clearly learned content, but not grasped the exam skills of answering the question.

There are now very few candidates breaking the rubric.

Despite this there were many very successful examples of extended writing which examiners note as worthy of Advanced level candidates.

Section A

Question 1 posed few problems although some still confused ethics and nature.

Question 2

Part (a) was fine, but some struggled to firmly describe what a tradition was in a successful way. However, the vast majority were able to create a sensible answer for this using the item. More problematic for about a third of candidates was uncertainty about what a cultural relativity was and they confused this with cultural universals. Better answers gave cross-cultural examples.

Question 3

Part (a) saw a common mistake by reducing gender to biological differences which gained no credit.

Part (b) caused few problems and most were able to use the source to claim both marks.

Part (c) saw most candidates claim both marks. Candidates who didn't either failed to give a successful definition and relied on examples where others gave a definition without an example. A minority explained social media rather than a broader definition.

Part (d) saw better answers relating their reasons to sociological concepts such as patriarchy, stereotyping and socialisation. Some lost marks through repetition.
Part (e) still saw some confusion between concepts of validity and reliability. Very few were able to really focus on a practical problem rather than a methodological problem. However candidates were given credit for an attempt to do so.

**Question 4**

Part (a) saw no concerns. Secondary socialisation was clearly known to all candidates. Most were able to name examples of this. Where some fell down was in failing to explain what people learned in socialisation explicitly.

Part (c) presented few problems and most benefitted from the use of examples using celebrities like David Beckham.

Part (d) caused some issues with a failure to explain how teachers may act as role models. Candidates described teachers behaviour but not the process. Better answers used terms like modelling or imitation.

Part (e) showed that most candidates have a more secure knowledge of sampling methods. Some lost marks by naming a technique but not describing it accurately. A small number of candidates used snowball as a method or discussed a research method rather than sampling.

**Question 5**

Parts (a) and (b) posed few problems. In a number of answers to part c, the meaning of norms was underdeveloped and included ideas that were too simplistic and used the word normal which was not credited.

Stronger answers to part (d) used a term such as imitation, stereotypes, role models or representation to answer. Part e was answered well with most referring to the loss of childhood. Part f was answered well, but candidates may have found it more difficult if there were more marks available. Most candidates to their credit named an ethical problem successfully. Some failed to use terminology costing them a mark.

**Question 6** Part (a) was mostly answered well.

Part (b) some chose not to use the item.

Part (c) was a good differentiator. Stronger candidates highlighted the nature of what is learned through socialisation, but also the fact that it takes place in the family and is the first and most important part of the process. In part d most were able to say something about how culture is passed on, but stronger answers used sociological terms to explain.
Section B

Question 7 Family was most commonly answered.

Question 7 (a)
Stronger answers referred to segregated and joint conjugal roles, symmetrical family, dual burden, new man etc. Weaker answers were simplistic, making sweeping statements about roles being completely reversed or lacking terminology. There was a common tendency to become side tracked into talking about changes as work rather than within the family.

Question 7 (b)
Main answers related to changing norms, expectations, secularisation and expense. Stronger answers referred to feminism and female independence. However, many were underdeveloped and only mentioned 2 points.

Question 7 (c)
Most candidates used similar concepts to those in 7(b) and stronger answers weighed up the importance of different reasons. Some wrote about what the theories said about divorce but failed to relate this explicitly to the question.

A number of candidates related their answer to why people weren't getting married rather than changes to divorce. Some lacked knowledge of changes in divorce laws.

Question 8 (a)
Candidates struggled with this question. The answers lacked depth and in general made only brief references to different ethnic groups. Pupils focused more on the reasons than the patterns.

Question 8 (b)
Stronger answers related to the main theories of Functionalism and Marxism. Often only one theory was referred to. Others gained credit for relating to more practical purposes of education. Most of these answers focused on selecting people for work and some reference to the notion of the hidden curriculum.

Question 8 (c)
Some answers focussed on common sense explanations. Better answers focused mainly on laddish behaviour and girls being more controlled by parents and teacher stereotypes. Stronger answers referred to studies such as Willis, subcultures or the crisis of masculinity.

Question 9
There were some candidates who attempted the Media questions. Overall these tended to be weaker than those who did the Family and Education. There was a lack of knowledge about the patterns of media ownership. The question about editors' choice of news stories was answered better with appropriate use of terminology. Yet answers to 9 C lacked the level of sociological knowledge found in comparable questions on Family and Education.

Very few pupils attempted either question 10 and where they did, they were answered only in common sense terms.
Section A

Question 1

In almost all cases candidates got these correct. If any were a problem it was exploitation and ascribed status.

Question 2

Parts (a)(i) and (a)(ii) were answered correctly by almost all candidates.

Part (b) was answered well with most candidates understanding both terms wealth and income. Stronger candidates showed knowledge of the differences for full marks. For example explaining that a high income could generate wealth or that wealth may be inherited.

Part (c) was answered well. There were some interesting answers where candidates turned the question on its head by identifying the group as employers or the wealthy who are having to pay higher wages, or those who are still unemployed and not benefiting.

Question 3

Part (a) was answered correctly by almost all as was Part (b)(i). Better answers used terminology, such as discrimination, prejudice, racism or equality to gain both marks.

Part (c) featured stronger answers which gave examples and included both prejudice and discrimination in their response. Weaker answers tended to give a more narrow or extreme view of racism or lacking in terminology.

Part (d)(i) saw most offering appropriate methods. A minority suggested sampling methods instead.

Part (d)(ii) tended to be answered better when candidates were more specific about the method used. This led them to identify problems with greater clarity. As is normal, some confused reliability and validity.

Question 4

Most candidates performed reasonably well on this question. Part (d) was at times answered without enough breadth. Stronger answers linked different aspects of life chances to poverty and to each other creating a story.
Question 5

Part (a) was mostly answered correctly.

Part (b) saw most candidates explain the idea of the underclass clearly. Stronger answers gave examples of the different features of groups in the underclass, such as social exclusion or marginalisation.

In part (c) 'chavs', 'unemployed', 'disabled' were all usually explained well. Some mentioned being marginalised but the emphasis in the explanation was on unemployment and benefits. A few candidates tried to include subcultural groups, such as goths without much success.

Part (d) featured some strong answers which focused on permission, exploitation, informed consent and privacy. Better answers included terminology. Some wrongly answered with reference to methodological problems, such as people acting differently when observed.

Question 6

Part (a) was answered correctly in general. A few misread the question and put 'attitudes/institutional'.

Part (b) was answered well, although some failed to read the question accurately and wrote about youth or the elderly.

Part (c) saw some pleasing answers which included socialisation and the impact of the media. These answers showed a strong understanding of the power of socialisation and the resilience of social norms.

Section B

Question 7 Work

A small percentage of candidates did this question.

Question 7 (a)

The effects of unemployment were quite weak with obvious details explained surrounding having no job therefore no money. Some were very weak. None referred to new working conditions such as zero hours or growth of casual labour nor brought in much sociology. Some of the answers were strictly common sense. Opportunities were missed to include sociological terms even from the core topics.

Question 7 (b)

There was some understanding of sexism and the glass ceiling concept was well understood. Many referred to men and women doing exactly the same jobs and yet getting different pay rates without showing knowledge of legislation or how well this is enforced. Answers seemed narrow and lacked breadth.

Question 7 (c)

There were some stronger answers referring to alienation, automation and de skilling. Blauner and Marx were referred to. The ideas didn't always refer to 'modern Britain'. There could have been more discussion and more knowledge shown of contemporary trends, such as the gig economy, zero hour contracts and the minimum wage.
Question 8

A minority answered this question. Those who did tended to have good knowledge and understanding of issues regarding U.K. politics. Some answers lacked sociological knowledge and terminology with more general knowledge included in answers.

Question 9 was by far the most popular question.

Question 9 (a)

Nearly all recognised that criminal subcultures have their own norms and values. In some cases status frustration was extremely well explained. Merton, Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin were all referred to. The importance of peer group pressure was referred to and of the desire to 'fit in'. Poverty and lack of jobs were both understood to lead to growth of subcultures.

Some candidates wrote about the ideas of the sociologists in a general way without mentioning them or separating them. This was considered to be a reasonable approach at this level.

Question 9 (b)

The inaccuracy of crime statistics was generally understood and there were some good answers. The scope of answers split into two. Some focused on the practical reasons for the 'dark' figure including non-reporting or non-recording of crime. The other focus was more sophisticated and related ideas such as female conformity, chivalry factor, white collar and corporate crime. The best answers covered both of these approaches.

Some Marxist theory was referred to especially with reference to white collar crime, corporate and victimless crime.

Question 9 (c)

This question should have allowed candidates to show their knowledge, yet some found it hard to focus on the question. Some candidates focused on this entirely as an official statistics on crime question. This limited their success. Stronger answers took a broader approach focusing on the causes of changes in the level of crime. These were more successful. Others had success with links to gender, age, class and ethnicity.

There was understanding that crime committed by the working class was more visible and very often linked to poverty and deprivation and when it became the only way of feeding a family. Moral panic/deviancy amplification/folk devils were also used well by some candidates.

Question 10

Very few candidates answered and there were some poor quality responses.