



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

SOCIOLOGY

SUMMER 2022

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SOCIOLOGY

GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 1 – UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL PROCESSES

General Comments

This paper was the first full examination since the pandemic and the cancellation of the exams in 2020 and 2021. In fact, this is only the second summer examination session for this specification. The papers provided a suitable level of challenge for the candidates sitting this exam. The advance notice gave some reduction in the level of content students were required to learn, although the subject does not lend itself easily to a narrow field of study. In fact, students still needed to know the breadth of the specification, if not depth. The paper was as academically challenging as the 2019 paper and required knowledge of a breadth of theories, concepts and studies.

There were some remarkable responses from a cohort whose progress has been affected significantly by the pandemic. The paper is largely sat by 16 year olds, who dealt with difficult academic concepts well and have already presented themselves as strong candidates for the next level of study. Less able candidates also demonstrated a level of knowledge and understanding showing that study of sociology had benefitted their understanding of the social world. On this paper there were some candidates who did not attempt certain questions where it appears they were unfamiliar with the terminology used in the question. However, most candidates tackled the 8 and 15 mark questions with some confidence.

The paper assessed the higher order skills successfully with questions demanding all three learning objectives. There was a tendency for many candidates to not use paragraphs on the 4 mark questions to separate their ways/reasons and also on the extended writing questions.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1** Most candidates were able to claim all four marks, but there were a sizeable minority unable to accurately choose ethics or Willis accurately.
- Q.2**
- (a)** Almost all candidates were able to define norms and/or give an example. Some were very basic definitions.
 - (b)** Most of the candidates were able to identify a norm.
 - (c)** The most successful answers used the idea of peer pressure or sanctions to explain this.
 - (d)** There were difficulties for some in identifying ways. They might identify language or religion, but not explain how families socialise their children into these.
- Q.3**
- (a)** Agents of socialisation were known to the candidates. Weaker candidates found it hard to use accurate terms successfully but were able to name an agency or explain what they did.

- (b) The stronger responses used relevant sociological terms and often referred clearly to sanctions of informal and formal social control in this process.
 - (c) Stronger responses referred to key terms related to social control. These included social order, social cohesion, anomie and others. Weaker answers just wrote about danger, crime and safety in a common sense style.
- Q.4**
- (a) This question was generally answered reasonably well, but weaker candidates did not identify key features of a nuclear family.
 - (b) Stronger responses referred to at least two aspects of patriarchy, such as power and money or the unfairness of family life. Candidates referred to the glass ceiling, gender pay gap, triple shift and many other ideas. Weaker answers were not able to explain what patriarchy meant in practice although they were familiar with the term. Candidates were almost all able to access the question.
 - (c) Again, candidates were almost all able to access the question and enjoy some success. Many successful responses referred to secularisation, feminism, cost, contraception, decline in marriage, fear of divorce and changes in norms and values. Stronger candidates developed these ideas or showed evidence or knowledge to back their ideas up.
 - (d) This question saw candidates able to use some of the same material and apply it to this question. Most candidates wrote about similar social changes to those in 4(c) and changes in the law to create an argument about whether norms and values were responsible for the changes. Stronger answers understood that secularisation is part of norms and values. Some also connected the fact that changes in the law may be linked to changes in norms and values. Some candidates included New Right, Marxism, functionalism or feminism but tended to use them to discuss whether divorce was good or bad. More creative answers saw divorce as benefitting capitalism with the wealth created by court costs etc.
- Q.5**
- (a) This was a question that many candidates struggled with. Many knew what peer pressure was but struggled to turn this into a way. Some introduced the idea of anti-school subcultures or used sanctions as a base for their answer. Encouraging candidates to use key terms rather than common sense would improve performance.
 - (b) Some candidates found this difficult. Weaker candidates were able to write about preparation for the workplace. Stronger candidates used theory and included meritocracy, Correspondence theory and feminism to explain. There was a sizeable minority who did not know the term and failed to attempt the question.
 - (c) This question produced some good answers and was answered fairly successfully. Successful responses often drew from Willis, Hargreaves, Carolyn Jackson and Tony Sewell to tackle this. Weaker students confused the studies and terms a great deal. Some students relied on common sense ideas about anti-school subcultures. Again, a sizeable minority struggled with the concept or became side-tracked into explaining labelling itself and forgetting to mention anti-school subcultures.

(d) Most students were able to fashion a response to this question using a range of cultural factors, material factors and labelling as the core arguments. Stronger answers were able to cite Bourdieu's cultural capital and Bernstein's codes of language. There were some students who did not understand what cultural factors were, instead writing about material factors. Other strands tried to relate it to language barriers, racism or the relative success of different ethnic groups. However, nearly all students were able to attempt this question.

- Q.6**
- (a)** Most candidates were not able to explain the term representative clearly.
 - (b)** Generally, this question was answered in a basic fashion and did not use sociological terminology, but referred to time and cost only. Candidates were credited for mentioning climate change in their answers but not many candidates did.
 - (c)** This question was dealt with by many candidates in a list fashion which tried to mention two strengths and weaknesses but did not create a discussion. This would be an area for improvement along with the accurate use of terminology. However, there were some outstanding responses too.

SOCIOLOGY

GCSE (NEW)

Summer 2022

COMPONENT 2 – UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL STRUCTURES

General Comments

This paper was the second of two for the first full examination since the pandemic and the cancellation of the exams in 2020 and 2021. In fact, this is only the second summer examination session for this specification. The paper provided a suitable level of challenge for the candidates sitting this exam. The advance notice gave some reduction in the level of content students were required to learn, although the subject does not lend itself easily to a narrow field of study. In fact, students still needed to know the breadth of the specification, if not depth. The paper was as academically challenging as the 2019 paper and required knowledge of a breadth of theories, concepts and studies.

Question 6(d) seems to have caused some candidates some problems and there appeared to be more candidates who did not attempt the question. I will discuss this further in the individual question comments.

There were some remarkable responses from a cohort whose progress has been affected significantly by the pandemic. The paper is largely sat by 16-year-olds, who dealt with difficult academic concepts well. And already presented themselves as strong candidates for the next level of study. Less able candidates also showed a level of knowledge and understanding showing that study of sociology had benefitted their understanding of the social world. On this paper there were some candidates who did not attempt the 15 mark question. It appears they were unfamiliar with the terminology used in the question. However, most candidates tackled the 9 mark questions with some confidence.

The paper assessed the higher order skills successfully with questions demanding all three learning objectives. There was a tendency for many candidates to not use paragraphs on the 4 mark questions to separate their ways/reasons and also on the extended writing questions. This was more noticeable than before the pandemic.

Comments on individual questions/sections

Q.1 Most candidates were able to claim all four marks, but there were a sizeable minority unable to accurately choose Carlen accurately.

Q.2 (a) Almost all candidates were able to identify senior judges as the job with the highest percentage who attended independent schools in 2019.

(b) Almost all candidates were able to identify footballers as the job with the lowest percentage who attended independent schools in 2019.

(c) Many candidates were able to identify two patterns and explain these clearly. Some missed out on full marks because they failed to provide statistics to support their answer. There were a sizeable minority of candidates who did not show an understanding of the table. They either did not grasp the significance of the figures or just omitted a full explanation.

For example, 'there are less people going to independent schools' or stating only 'the highest percentage was senior judges'. Candidates could improve by explaining the patterns clearly.

- Q.3**
- (a)** Status was known to the candidates. Weaker candidates found it hard to explain but were able to give examples.
 - (b)** Stronger responses referred to key terms related to life chances such as old boys network, glass ceiling or institutional racism. Some candidates identified money and power as reasons why people wanted the jobs and got some basic credit for this although it was unexpected.
 - (c)** Candidates were able to tackle this question with confidence referring to sociological theories such as feminism and Marxism and related concepts. Some also referred to other theories related to disability and ethnicity. The stronger answers added an element of discussion or a short conclusion linking things together. Candidates were almost all able to access the question.
- Q.4**
- (a)** This question was generally answered reasonably well, but weaker candidates did not develop the concept with examples or further explanation.
 - (b)** Most successfully used the idea of the new man or similar ideas. The disappearance of traditional masculine jobs was also popular.
 - (c)** Again, candidates were almost all able to access the question and enjoy some success. Many successful responses referred to limiting career options, pressure on males to provide or be tough and related mental health issues, affecting happiness, harmful discrimination and media representation. Stronger candidates developed these ideas or showed evidence or knowledge to back their ideas up.
 - (d)** This question saw candidates able to use material about gender inequality and apply it to the question. Most candidates referred to work, media and family and related concepts such as gender pay gap, changes in the law, media representation, triple shift, glass ceiling and others to create their argument.
- Q.5**
- (a)** The strongest answers gave detail and examples of social class. There were some notable uses of Max Weber and the concept of market position to show a further dimension to social class.
 - (b)** Stronger candidates used concepts including gender pay gap, Marxism, child slavery, gig economy and others. Some did not know the term and related it to scams on the elderly.
 - (c)** This question produced some good answers surrounding the poverty debate. Successful answers used theory including New Right, Marxism, Functionalism and Feminism. The debate centred around who was to blame for poverty. Again, stronger answers featured ongoing evaluative comment and/or a conclusion at the end.
- Q.6**
- (a)** All knew the term deviance but many struggled to define it, wrongly seeing it as separate from crime. Most could give examples.

- (b)** Stronger answers referred to the social construction of deviance and how deviance varies from society to society or between different groups and individuals. There were many good examples of changes in deviance, such as Rosa Parks committing deviant acts and then society changing.
 - (c)** Most students were able to make links between age and crime. The best answers talked about the age crime curve, victims or stereotyping of the young and moral panics. Some also brought in the idea of white collar and corporate crime as crime committed by older people that did not make it into the spotlight in the same way as youth crime.
 - (d)** This question was found by some candidates to be difficult. There were more candidates who did not attempt the question than would have been expected compared to other 15 mark questions. Some candidates did not know what the term subculture meant and this was common. Some knew the term anti-school subcultures and attempted to link this across. Candidates were given credit for this. Stronger answers were familiar with the term subculture and status frustration and compared this approach to understanding crime with other approaches such as labelling or Marxism. The strongest answers used Albert Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin, Matza, Walter Miller and Charles Murray. There were some responses which argued that moral panics about subcultures and blaming crime on the working class distracted from corporate and white-collar crime. The two main problems with the question seem to be that it appeared academically narrow but also students had not learned the term subculture in relation to crime or Albert Cohen which is named.
- Q.7**
- (a)** Most candidates were able to name an appropriate method. Observation was not credited as it would not have been appropriate.
 - (b)** Generally, this question was answered in a basic fashion and did not use sociological terminology, not referring to vaping and/or schoolchildren. Some students had been drilled to mention the item but did not do so with any meaning or actual link to their answer.
 - (c)** This question was dealt with by many candidates who referred to ethical issues but did not create a discussion. Most students did not link successfully to schoolchildren's views on vaping. This would be an area for improvement along with the accurate use of terminology.



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