# GCE

# Sociology

Advanced GCE A2 **H581**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS **H181**

# OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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**Advanced GCE Sociology (H581)**

**Advanced Subsidiary GCE Sociology (H181)**

**OCR REPORT TO CENTRES**

# G671 Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity

**General Comments:**

This session, once again, saw a wide range of candidate performance, and overall, candidate performance saw an improvement across all four questions. It is pleasing to note that increasing numbers of candidates are responding accurately to the question stem instructions. For example, question 2 asks for "two ways/types/features" and many candidates plan their answer into two distinct paragraphs, citing "the first way..." followed by "a second way..." There were very few rubric errors and the vast majority of candidates attempted to answer all four questions which indicate that the questions were clear and accessible to all. The majority of candidates allocated their time appropriately, recognising, for example, that since question 4 has half the marks for the exam paper, they should be spending half the time (45 minutes) answering this question. There remains a significant number of candidates who don't include precise sociological evidence in their answers. There is a more detailed commentary on these questions in the section below.

It may be useful to, once again, clarify the role and purpose of the pre-release material. The pre-release material is specifically related to question (4) on the examination paper as this question contains the instruction "using the pre-release material…". The focus of question (4) is always on sociological methods and the research process and the aim of this question is to enable students to discuss methodological issues in the context of a piece of contemporary research focused on culture and/or identity and/or socialisation (the pre-release material). The other three questions on the examination paper aim to test candidates on the specification content from this unit which is outlined clearly and explicitly under seven key issues in the specification content. That is not to say, however, that the pre-release material can *only* be used for question (4). As the instructions on the front of the examination paper state*: "You may interpret and apply the pre-release material as well as your own sociological knowledge for any question, wherever it is relevant and appropriate".* This is because the pre-release material is based around research into culture, socialisation and identity which means that any other questions (1-3) asking students to write about these areas may wish to draw upon the pre-release as a piece of sociological evidence. It may happen that the pre-release material could be referred to in questions 1 and question 3. Of course, candidates who rely on the pre-release material as their only source of evidence are not going to score highly; students need to be able to draw on a range of sociological evidence.

*Teaching tip:*
*Keep copies of previous pre-release studies, not just to use as mock examination practice, but also as a bank of resources to add to the range of evidence students could draw upon. This can also be cross referenced with methods, so that methods are taught "in context" throughout the course, rather than as a discrete unit.*

With every question, in order to achieve marks in the highest mark band, candidates need to include a range of sociological evidence and to discuss these with some depth. Some candidates were able to use the same studies for question 1, 2 and 3, for example, Bourdieu, and the ones who did this well made sure that their relevance to each question was well explained. A significant number of responses, particularly for questions (2) and (3) failed to include the required range and depth of sociological evidence. "Evidence" can include studies, theories, concepts and contemporary examples, although it should be noted that responses which rely heavily on contemporary examples will not score very highly as, on their own, contemporary examples are not good sociology. It is also worth noting that there is a difference between contemporary examples and anecdote. Contemporary examples mean events in

society that can inform sociology but may not have been formally researched or studied; or events that are happening as sociologists are carrying out their research. For example, some candidates used the number of MPs that were privately educated, especially old Etonians in the cabinet, when discussing the 'old boys' network' in question 3. Anecdotal evidence, on the other hand, is bordering on 'common sense' knowledge and this is not rewarded in the examination; for example, by claiming that "working class parents don't socialise their children as well as middle class parents". Responses which were wide-ranging in their use of sociological studies, in questions (2) and (3) tended to score highly and there are some examples of good practice in the specific individual question sections below.

Most candidates allocated the use of time effectively, spending the longest on question 4 which is worth just over half of the marks of the whole paper. There is some evidence that question (4) responses have improved in quality since the start of this specification. However, some candidates did experience timing issues; most commonly by spending too much time on question 1 which should be allocated approximately five minutes, or by spending too long on question 4, at the expense of the other three questions. Some candidates spent far too long on question 2, sometimes writing up to 2 sides for a question which should be answered in approximately 15 minutes. There is some evidence that where candidates choose to answer question 4 first, they often spend too long on this and then run out of time for questions 1, 2 or 3. Candidates who had been prepared well, even those who were clearly of weaker ability, managed to pick up marks on all questions, by knowing the assessment requirements and using sociological evidence appropriately. However, some centres did not seem to have adequately prepared their candidates - either by having very little understanding of the role of the pre-release material (for example, by writing long descriptions/summaries of the pre-release) or by arming them with very little sociological knowledge for questions 1, 2 and 3.

On the whole there was a clear difference between the high and low achieving candidates. At the top end, there was a range of sociological evidence contained in answers to all of the questions. Such responses included relevant and detailed explanations including sociological studies, concepts and theories where appropriate. The lower achieving candidates were often unable to provide sociological knowledge and understanding and their answers became very anecdotal and common sense-like. Candidates must be encouraged to back up their answers with sociological evidence; be it concepts, studies, relevant contemporary examples or theory. For example, in answers to question 2, candidates who discussed ways the family socialises individuals into their identities using concepts and theories scored more highly than those who wrote about girls being given dolls to play with and boys playing outside.

In terms of assessment objectives, Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) remains the strongest area; good candidates were able to offer a whole range of sociological knowledge, mainly in the form of concepts and studies, but sometimes making relevant use of contemporary examples and theory. AO2a (Interpretation and analysis) remains the most difficult skill area for candidates; whilst many have been trained to evaluate evidence and arguments, they are less successful at interpreting knowledge and applying it to the specific question or context. For example, in question 3, candidates were able to offer a range of studies relating to socialisation into class identities, such as Bourdieu or Mac An Ghaill, but they failed to focus explicitly on how these demonstrated individuals continuing to be socialised into a class identity. It is also worth pointing out that a significant number of students are not offering any evaluation for question 3, which is worth 4 marks and candidates must be reminded that there is also an evaluative element to this question.

*Teaching tip: Devise a mark sheet (or request one from a fellow sociology teacher on the e-community), based on the published mark schemes that you can attach to your students' work so that they are aware of being marked according to the three separate assessment objectives.*

**Comments on Individual Questions**

1.  In general this question was answered relatively well, although most candidates were stronger in giving examples than defining the concept.  The best responses showed a clear core definition by referring to how individuals viewed themselves or others viewed them based on socio-economic factors and added further explanation by referring to objective and subjective measures.  Many weak responses did nothing more than reiterate the concept in the question; for example some responses stated that "Social class identity is a person's position in society due to their social class", while others gave descriptions of class inequalities.  These types of responses were awarded very few marks.  Most candidates explained two examples well, referring to high and popular culture, cultural and social capital as well as patterns of employment.  Weaker candidates merely stated two different classes.  There are some candidates who are spending too long on this question and writing a whole page answer.  This obviously has implications for later questions and candidates should be reminded that they should only spend approximately 5 minutes on this question.  At the other end of the scale, some candidates chose not to answer this question at all and therefore limited their overall marks.

    *Teaching tip:  Question 1 is always a concept question taken from the specification content.  Ensure that your students have detailed definitions and examples for each one.  Encourage students to keep a glossary with all of these key terms.*

2.  This was a broad, open-ended question which allowed candidates to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the process of socialisation.  Stronger candidates successfully applied their 'ways' to identities, giving examples from gender, ethnic or class identity.  Commonly used studies were Oakley, Frosh, Parsons, McRobbie for gender identities, Ghuman, Butler, Sewell and Modood for those who linked to ethnic identity, and Bourdieu and Reay for class identity.  Some candidates referred to age identities, but often this was often not supported by evidence.  Sometimes more narrow 'ways' were selected, such as separating canalisation and manipulation into two separate ways and others referred to role models and/or sanctions.  These were creditworthy, but candidates sometimes struggled to support them with the range of evidence required for higher marks.  Weaker responses only referred to primary socialisation in terms of learning general norms and values and fitting into society, thus failing to engage with identities as the question required.  The range of evidence was the main problem seen in this question, and weaker candidates were still prone to just supporting their 'ways' with common sense examples, rather than using sociological studies and/or concepts/processes.  Candidates should be encouraged to use a range of studies/evidence for question 2 to support points made.

3.  This question had a range of responses.  The best answers contained a wide range of evidence and a real focus on socialisation into class identity, by referring to some of the agents of socialisation; family, education, peers, the media and the workplace and using supporting studies such as Bourdieu, Reay, Willis, Mac An Ghaill, Scott, Sewell and also including concepts such as the hidden curriculum, social, economic and cultural capital and cultural comfort zones.  There were, however, a large number of weak answers to this question which failed to include any real sociological evidence or interpreted class identity as class inequalities.  Many answers did offer potentially relevant concepts such as the 'old boys' network' but fell down in terms of Interpretation and Application marks by failing to make their answers relevant to the question, specifically in terms of how these explain that individuals continue to be socialised into a class identity.  There were a number of candidates that seemed unprepared for this question and responded with little more than common-sense descriptions of the different social classes.  These were awarded few marks.  Theories of social class inequalities were often outlined, but not applied to the question.

One feature of stronger responses was the presence of explicit evaluation of the question. The most common approach was to note that class identity is less relevant today and so individuals do not continue to be socialised into it. Stronger answers were able to include some evidence, such as Post Modernism. Studies commonly used in evaluation were Pakluski and Walters, Polemus, Lyon and Savage. Many also used concepts such as consumer culture and globalisation to evaluate. However, candidates need to be reminded that their evaluation needs to contain sociological evidence; it is not enough to simply state that class is dead. Some candidates also referred to socialisation into gender identity being more significant today than class identities, using studies such as Oakley, Frosh, Lees. Where evaluation was weaker, candidates only evaluated in an implicit and assertive way by, for example, just stating that individuals continue to be socialised into a class identity. Some candidates spent far too much time evaluating the view in the question whilst there were also a significant number of candidates who did not offer evaluation points at all and therefore lost four potential marks. Candidates need to be reminded that this question will always start with the instruction to "*explain and briefly evaluate*".

4.      There was, once again, a wide range of responses to this question. The vast majority of candidates knew how to define semi structured interviews and linked these to gathering mainly qualitative data, whilst recognising the potential for some quantitative data to be gained as well. Most candidates were able to discuss issues surrounding the wider research process, such as sampling, access and ethics and related the method to theory, particularly positivism and interpretivism. A key differentiator in marking this question was candidates' use of the key concepts as highlighted in the specification - validity, reliability, representativeness and generalisability. Some weaker responses did not explicitly use these concepts and therefore achieved marks at the bottom of level 2. Others did attempt to use the concepts but were very confused, partial or undeveloped. To reach level 3 of the mark scheme, and beyond, for both AO1 and AO2b, responses needed to address the key concepts in an accurate, and wide-ranging way. Even where candidates correctly discussed the key concepts, they were often not developed enough in explanation to reach level 4. For example, responses which state that the sample was large and therefore representative were not fully demonstrating a core understanding of the concept 'representativeness'. There continues to be some confusion for many candidates with the concept of reliability, many confused this with representativeness and/or validity. Centres need to be reminded that it is not recommended practice to "question spot" for this question. Candidates need to be taught the pre-release in a detailed and analytical way, which will enable them to answer any potential question in the examination.

The high achieving responses tended to systematically explain semi structured interviews offering a range of strengths and weaknesses, including key concepts. Another characteristic of strong responses was the discussion of aspects of the wider research process, for example, sampling, access, ethics and the impact of these. Many candidates made good use of theory in their responses, comparing positivist and interpretivist approaches. Strong responses recognised the qualitative nature of the findings and used these to illustrate strengths/weaknesses of the method. Such responses tended to be conceptually strong, referring to issues surrounding interviewer effect, social desirability, and researcher imposition. Teachers need to ensure that they spend some time teaching the content of the pre-release material in preparation for the exam. One real problem is in the number of candidates who waste time copying out/summarising the pre-release material and describing the findings of the study, once again, it should be reminded that this is stimulus material, not source material. The philosophy behind the pre-release material is to give candidates the opportunity to look at some real research in depth, but the exam question will always require them to go wider than this; to address research issues, methods, process and concepts and using the pre-release as an illustrative example.

It must also be noted that twelve marks are awarded for AO2a and in this question it is about how well the candidate contextualises their responses.  The majority of students offer very generalised answers or just threw in the words 'experience of being a mother'.  To score highly in this skill area, candidates need to be asking themselves "What is the problem/advantage of using this method for studying THIS particular group (mothers) on THIS particular topic (childcare choice and social class).  Candidates need to be encouraged to highlight the actual question on the question paper, particularly where it states "to research..." .  Stronger responses in this area offered some very thoughtful comments about, for example, how socially desirable answers may be given by working class mothers to the middle class researchers in order to be seen as a good mother; generalising results to areas other than London/cities may be difficult as childcare costs and arrangements may be very different in other cities/rural areas of the UK, and volunteer sampling techniques may not gain a fully representative sample as mothers who may be struggling with childcare would not take part in the research.  Candidates who did score more highly on this skill engaged much more fully with the context.

The findings were included in the pre-release material to enable candidates to gain an understanding of the value of this research and to discuss the idea of the method being 'fit for purpose'.  There were some strong responses which linked the findings into the research methodology; for example, by recognising the limitations of semi structured interviews in identifying patterns and trends across the UK.  Some centres had trained candidates to make reference to other research which had either used a similar methodology or which was focused on a similar topic.  This was rewarded where they were being used to support or criticise a methodological issue, but centres need to advise students not to spend time describing the findings of other studies as this is a question about methods.

# G672 Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity

**General Comments:**

The Family continues to be the most popular option, followed by Youth and Religion. There were very few scripts submitted for the Health option. An overwhelming majority of candidates chose to answer both Family questions and only a small number of candidates chose questions from more than one option. Generally candidates used their time appropriately, producing between ¾ to one page of the answer booklet for part (a) and at least three pages for part (b). Only a few appeared to run out of time on the second part (b) question. Very few candidates answered either too many questions or only one question. Overall, candidates fulfilled the requirements in terms of quality of written communication, producing work written in continuous prose and with clarity of expression.

Most candidates demonstrated sociological knowledge and understanding by referring to theories, studies, concepts and relevant contemporary evidence. Some candidates needed to explain ideas more fully to show the extent of their knowledge and understanding and apply evidence in support of the point being made. The best answers were both wide-ranging and detailed and showed a broad and in-depth knowledge and understanding of the topic. Some responses were brief and needed a wider focus on different aspects of the topic. Others covered a range of issues but needed greater depth or development of evidence to achieve higher marks.

**Part (a) Questions**

Most candidates seemed to understand what was required by the instruction 'identify and explain' with ideas typically grouped together under two clear paragraphs. There were only a small number of candidates covering three or more points or providing an essay type response in which it was unclear what the two reasons or ways were. Many responses achieved the 'good' mark band (level 3), but did not achieve level 4 because their answers were underdeveloped. There was clear identification of particular points but these needed to be expanded upon with sociological evidence and terminology in order to achieve Level 4. Candidates need to be aware that to achieve full marks, points should be developed with supporting evidence in the form of research findings or other data together with relevant theories and concepts and these need to be done for both ways or reasons.

An effective approach to achieve Level 4 is to identify two broad reasons/ways/factors etc. that can be developed in a number of ways within the answer e.g. citing 'support and guidance from grandparents' rather than a specific sociologist allows the candidate to include a wider range. Additionally, if answers are clearly signposted through two paragraphs, this makes it easier for the candidate to check if they are fully answering the question.

**Candidates can improve their marks by making sure that they:**
- Carefully select the two points that can be best supported with evidence.
- Consider if they can identify two broad points that can be developed in a number of ways within the answer.
- Fully explain the two identified points with relevant sociological theories, studies, concepts and/or contemporary evidence to develop their answer.
- Choose two points that don't overlap.
- Avoid lengthy and unnecessary introductions to part (a) answers before actually proceeding to identify and explain the two points.
- Include only material that is required, e.g. criticisms are not needed in part (a) questions as there are no marks for evaluation.

**Teaching Tip for part (a) questions** - Use a separate paragraph for each of the two points to be identified and explained. An effective format to start the first paragraph is, for example, 'One way in which...' The second paragraph can then begin with 'A second way in which...' Candidates should be encouraged to write about one side of a booklet page for a part (a) answer.

**Part (b) Questions**

On part (b) questions most candidates showed a grasp of broad theoretical perspectives, but some candidates didn't support these with empirical evidence. Perspectives-based answers along the lines of 'functionalists would argue x while Marxists would argue y' should offer evidence to illustrate/support these arguments, for example, in the form of studies, contemporary examples and/or statistical data. Most candidates answered questions in a sociological, rather than purely common sense manner and even the less developed responses usually included some references to sociological concepts, studies and/or theories. Most answers contained some element of evaluation, but on weaker scripts this was often in the form of juxtaposed theories or studies which didn't explicitly address the question and/or the debate. The best answers used evidence to explicitly support evaluative statements about a specified view or theory and reached conclusions. Such answers tended to use evaluative language which created an 'evaluative tone' to the discussion. In some cases, points of evaluation were presented without any supporting evidence to develop the point. Very good answers also tended to be ones which used up-to-date and contemporary research.

**Candidates can improve their marks by making sure that they:**
- Include sufficient sociological evidence to demonstrate wide and detailed knowledge and understanding. The best responses made accurate use of a range of sociological theories, concepts and/or studies.
- Carefully select the material to be included to make sure that it is relevant and used in such a way that it supports or refutes an argument being made and avoid simply listing evidence.
- Address different sides of the argument and support with evidence.
- Offer critical comments about evidence, weigh up arguments and draw a reasoned conclusion.
- Write an answer that covers at least 3 pages of the booklet.

**Teaching Tip on Knowledge and Understanding** - To achieve the highest marks in the skill of knowledge and understanding, candidates need to show a detailed understanding and so must learn as much about the evidence they are using as they can to be able to write about it in an informed way. Teachers should aim to select teaching material that will best facilitate this process and use evidence that gives depth and detail.

The skill of interpretation and application is challenging for some candidates who tend to list evidence without applying it to the question.

**Teaching Tip on Interpretation and Application** - To achieve the highest marks in the skill of interpretation and application candidates need to select and apply different types of data including theories, concepts and/or contemporary evidence on various sides of the argument. Candidates should aim to identify the most relevant data and then show how this relates to the question, highlighting patterns and trends, supported with evidence where appropriate. Applying sociological material to the question can be enhanced by including phrases that explicitly use the wording of the question, e.g. 'This study shows that pupils form part of their ethnic identity through their experience of school.'

Many candidates demonstrate very good skills in analysis and evaluation.  Others need to avoid simply juxtaposing views by analysing arguments so that they can then evaluate the strengths and weaknesses.  Analysis involves breaking down an argument to gain a clearer understanding.  This is an essential stage in the evaluation process.  A sustained evaluation is needed to achieve the best marks and this involves candidates using an evaluative tone from their introductory paragraph onwards so that evaluation is evident throughout their answer.

**Teaching Tip on Analysis and Evaluation** – A sustained evaluative approach can be demonstrated by candidates writing an evaluative introduction, making some pertinent evaluative points about studies, theories and ideas used, and summarising the different views in relation to the question.  Candidates could be encouraged to use key evaluative terms that signal that they are evaluating the evidence or the argument at a given point, e.g. 'however', 'on the other hand', 'conversely', 'on the contrary', 'in contrast', 'this evidence can be criticised because...'.

**Comments on Individual Questions:**

1 (a) The vast majority of candidates were able to identify two reasons with the most widely used being as a source of financial, emotional and practical support or women's increased role in the labour market.  A number of these answers didn't refer to enough sociological research for a level 4 answer but did use underdeveloped evidence and concepts.  The best answers used concepts and evidence to support their points such as Brannen, Henrietta and Grundy and McGlore.  Some candidates explored the question in relation to ethnic diversity which was an inventive approach.  Some responses had introductions defining extended families which rarely added to their answers.

1 (b) This question was generally well answered and the majority of candidates were able to locate this debate very well within a theoretical context.  Typically candidates provided a developed account of Parsons and Murdoch's views with a few candidates supporting these ideas further with links to Fletcher and the New Right.  The linking back to the question was on the whole very pleasing with candidates often using the phrase 'meeting the needs of society' on numerous occasions.  The majority of evaluation points took the form of Marxist and Feminist counterpoints on the contribution of the family as well as ignoring the "dark side" of the family.  A minority of answers drifted into family diversity.  The best answers explicitly criticised Functionalist views before offering alternative explanations or developed evaluative tone by consistently questioning if the family did meet the needs of society.

2 (a) Most candidates showed a good understanding of this question.  Typical answers revolved around the impact of single parent families and the impact of reconstituted families.  The most cited use of evidence was Charles Murray and the New Right perspective as well as Dennis and Erdos.  At times there was also some reference to Functionalism.  A few candidates spent too much time focusing on the advantages of family diversity and the postmodern perspective and hence did not receive any credit.

2 (b) There was a range of responses to this question which on the whole was answered well.  Typically candidates would use Wilmot and Young and the symmetrical family as a starting point before looking at wider issues arising from this such as childcare, domestic labour and emotional support.  Studies used in support were Pahl, Gershuny, Hatter and Stacey.  Evaluation was also equally good and focused around how roles had still not become equal.  This usually began by Oakley's critique of Wilmot and Young before featuring studies by Dunscombe and Marsden, Delphy and Leonard and Ansley.  Overall a wide range of evidence was used to answer the question.  The best answers explicitly criticised particularly viewpoints as well as offering alternative viewpoints.

3 (a) There were a variety of responses to this question, with the most common citing the Interactionist view of labelling and the artefact or cultural approach.  Typically answers were underdeveloped and did not go into enough depth to reach Level 4.  The best answers used evidence by Goffman or Becker to support their points and gave good contemporary examples.  However some answers when providing this evidence, needed more detail and concepts to make it fully developed.

3 (b) There was a range of levels of response to this question with the best answers demonstrating a keen knowledge of the role medical professionals played in reinforcing inequalities in society.  Typically the best answers used evidence from gender, ethnicity, marginalisation, poverty, employment patterns and utilised studies by Marxist, Weberian and Feminist views.  Evaluation and analysis was generally weaker and tended to be juxtaposed rather than explicitly evaluating particular points.  Most commonly Functionalism and the organic analogy were often cited in evaluation.  There were some candidates who found it difficult to draw on specific evidence and therefore were only able to access level 2 at best.

4 (a) This question was answered reasonably well showing a good understanding.  The majority of answers identified two clear ways such as survival of the fittest or the link with social mobility.  The best candidates constructed an answer around particular ways using multiple sources of evidence and key terminology.  For the weaker candidates, examples and evidence seemed to be lacking leaving only basic points which were undeveloped.

4 (b) There was a broad range of responses with most candidates showing some understanding of sociological explanations of disability.  Typically answers related to the social model, Finkelstein, Foucault and discriminatory barriers.  Evaluation was more commonly criticising current material such as using the medical model to evaluate the social model or evaluating specific theories.  On occasion there was a lack of any sociological evidence resulting in level 2 answers at best.

5 (a) This question was generally well answered with believing without belonging and the idea of spiritual shopping being the most common. Evidence was good with sociologists such as Davie being used or the work of the Kendal project in conjunction with statistics being given. Typically the evidence was underdeveloped with both range and depth needed to achieve level 4. Weaker answers talked about the need for religion for older people facing the possibility of death but failed to use evidence in support.

5 (b) This question was generally answered reasonably well. The best answers included the appeal of New Religious Movements and the neo-Marxist views on radical religion appealing to deprived groups.  Some candidates also focused on older people and the role religion plays as a consequence of an aging population. This was then evaluated most commonly by other factors in religiosity such as gender, ethnicity or class.  Specific evaluation was not usually present with a more juxtaposed approach remaining the norm with the work of Modood or Beckford being quite common.

6 (a) This question was answered very well with church membership, the work of Davie or the difference between functional and substantive definitions being most common.  Most candidates were able to show two distinct ways and provide enough evidence in support to reach the top of level 3 or level 4.  The best candidates were able to provide depth and detail with accurate statistics and contemporary evidence also in use.

6 (b) This question was generally answered well with a variety of approaches used.  Typically the majority of the question revolved around the Functionalist position and the work of Durkheim, Parsons and Malinowski.  Some candidates also ventured into neo-Marxism and Postmodernism in answering the question.  Evaluation was often juxtaposed and highlighted the negative role of religion in society.  Most common was the work of Beckford and Hamilton as well as theoretical perspectives such as Marxism and Weberianism.  The best answers were able to be evaluative in tone throughout their essay interweaving criticism around specific points.

7 (a) This question was answered well overall with reference to a good range of studies and examples built around particular points.  The more frequently cited reasons were social exclusion and labelling and racism.  A range of evidence was used in support with studies from Hall and Gilroy proving popular.  The best answers articulated each reason and gave substantial evidence in support often using contemporary examples such as the 'Black Lives Matter' campaign in the USA.

7 (b) This essay was generally answered well with most candidates identifying a range of supporting evidence that school was important in forming identity.  Typically candidates worked their way through studies on gender, class and ethnicity and how they related to forming identity within school.  This led to a variety of studies such as Willis, Sewell, Bowles and Gintis and Cohen.  Weaker candidates tended to drift into inside/outside school debate and away from the question.  The majority of answers then evaluated by referring to how identity was formed outside of school within the family or in peer groups away from school.

8 (a) This question was generally answered well with the most common answers being the role of the media and the impact of education.  This was then explained in a variety of ways using evidence by Eisenstadt, Abrams, and Polemus.  Typically, candidates fully understood the meaning of the term social construction and were able to articulate how youth had specifically developed.  The best candidates were able to fully address the question with range and depth using examples and evidence to create a Level 4 answer.  For example, using the way advertising products such as 'Brylcreem' specifically targeted to youth and thus contributing to the role of the media in the social construction of youth.

8 (b) Most candidates managed to outline the Postmodern position using the work of Polemus, Maffesoli, Bennett and Redhead.  Too often, the depth for these studies was missing and Level 3 was typical for this answer in terms of knowledge and understanding.  The Postmodern view was contrasted with neo-Marxist, Feminist and Functionalist viewpoints arguing against the question but too often this were juxtaposed and did not explicitly evaluate or criticise.  A few candidates outlined the Postmodern position on deviant subcultures such as the work of Lyng and Katz.  The best answers had an evaluative tone throughout and had both depth and range in their understanding of Postmodernism.

# G673 Power and Control

**General Comments:**

As the last full entry for this unit, it was to be expected that many candidates would be able to display a wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of sociological theory, concepts and studies, showing that they had obviously prepared well for the examination.  In general, the understanding of most candidates was good, with many being able to identify and apply appropriate theories, and the strongest being able to make links between them, both evaluative and analytical.  This did vary between options and questions however.

Disappointingly, as in previous sessions, a significant problem for candidates in all options was their ability to focus their response on the question set.  This was particularly evident on Question 2 and 3 in the Crime and Deviance option and Question 4 and 5 in the Education option, where yet again many candidates were unable to use their knowledge to successfully answer a question for which they had not been specifically prepared.  It is expected that, at this level, candidates will be able to select and apply their knowledge to address the question set, rather than reproducing responses which they may have seen on previous papers, or completed as practice during their course.  Centres should note and pass on to their students that only knowledge which is specifically relevant to the view in the question is given full credit for Knowledge and Understanding.

A related point is that many candidates spent far too little time discussing knowledge relevant to the view in the question, sometimes giving only two or three sentences on this before moving on to discuss, often at length, opposing views.  This seems to be particularly evident in the Education option, in which questions 4 and 5 were very clearly asking for knowledge supporting a particular view, but for which many candidates wrote much more about opposing views. Centres should note that candidates gain very few AO1 marks for discussing material which is not specifically related to the view in the question.  This is made clear in the mark-scheme and in previous reports.  This issue was particularly noticeable in questions where a particular theory or view was identified in the question.  Whilst some of these candidates went on to score highly for Analysis and Evaluation, albeit at the expense of their Knowledge and Understanding marks, others merely presented alternative views with no link back to the view in the question at all – merely being rewarded for juxtaposition.  It is regrettable that many candidates who have written at length about various sociological theories and studies will have found that they did not score as highly as expected, because much of the material was not relevant to the question set.  This point has been made in successive reports, but is still not being taken on board by many candidates, unfortunately.

Lack of depth as well as lack of accuracy prevents many candidates reaching the very top levels, with names and ideas being listed but not explored.  There was also a tendency, particularly in the crime option but also in some other options, to mix ideas together, linking ideas of labelling in with functionalist or subcultural studies for example, and using Marxist studies to support functionalist ones.  Stronger candidates were able to recognise the difference in origin of such ideas but show that they do share similarities, which could often lead to very sophisticated analysis.  However, weaker candidates were clearly just very confused between theoretical positions.

Evaluation and Analysis was often demonstrated strongly, with the majority of candidates managing to link ideas together and show support or criticism within their arguments.  In some questions which were potentially quite wide, such as question 1 and question 2, it was not always clear whether candidates were intending to use the point as support or evaluation, and candidates should be encouraged to make explicit the way in which they are applying material. As mentioned in previous reports, using connectives such as 'however' does not necessarily

demonstrate evaluation if they are merely placed at the beginning of a section describing an alternative view.  Candidates must be encouraged to fully explain the basis for any disagreement, and how this demonstrates a weakness in the view in question.  Evaluation needs to be explicit and relevant, and fully developed.

The strongest candidates sustained their evaluation throughout their response, creating a critical commentary, which included strengths and supporting evidence as well as weaknesses – the wording in level 5 of the mark-scheme for AO2b makes it clear that this is required for the highest marks.  Some candidates spent a lot of time evaluating opposing views, which, due to lack of focus on the question at hand, gains little or no credit.

There are still some candidates who are clearly being encouraged to write very general introductions, defining crime and deviance, norms and values or the media, for example, and it has been previously noted in reports that such generalised introductions attract no additional marks.  Providing a sense of a debate on the issue in an introduction is creditable however, and some candidates did this well.  Similarly, conclusions which just repeat the arguments already made gain no additional credit, and candidates should be encouraged to reflect on the strengths of different arguments and reach a reasoned conclusion which relates back to the question, with an evaluative tone.

It should be noted that the legibility of handwriting continues to deteriorate year on year, and there were instances when it proved almost impossible to make out what the candidate was writing about.  Candidates should be encouraged to space out their writing to make it as legible as possible.

There were very few rubric errors, and the vast majority of candidates answered 2 questions from within the same option, with the exception of Question 7, which was sometimes combined with an option 1 question, often successfully.  Most did seem to spend equal time on both questions, and whilst some candidates clearly ran out of time, most managed to write detailed answers for both questions in the time allowed, though the amount candidates were able to write in the time allowed varied widely.

**Comments on Individual Questions:**

**Option 1 Crime and Deviance**
This was the most popular option, though not by much, with most candidates opting for questions 1 and 2.  Candidates generally had a very wide range of knowledge at their disposal, but many were unsure about how to apply it to the specific questions asked, which was unfortunate.

**Question No. 1**
Candidates interpreted this question in different ways.  Some took 'over-representation' to mean that some ethnic groups are falsely represented by the statistics and do not actually commit more crime than any other ethnic groups.  Such candidates tended to use ideas about institutional racism, police labelling, canteen culture, other police practices such as coughing and cuffing, and/or moral panics in support of this view.  They tended to link this view with interactionists and also Marxists, using Hall.  Others discussed why some ethnic groups are over-represented numerically in comparison to their numbers in the population – i.e. why they commit more crime than other ethnic groups.  These candidates looked at explanations for Black and Asian criminality, using left realism, subcultural views, the host-immigrant model, the New Right and also radical criminology, particularly the ideas of Gilroy.  Both approaches were fully credited, as were candidates who took a combination of both of these approaches.

Sometimes it was a struggle to understand how candidates were interpreting the question, and whether they were using a point to support or evaluate the idea of over-representation. There were some candidates who presented all their knowledge as supporting the view of over-representation, but offered no explicit evaluation, which unfortunately affected the Analysis and Evaluation marks. Some candidates seemed to misinterpret the question and spent overly long discussing crime statistics in a general way. It is disappointing to note that many candidates are clearly still being taught out of date information, for example, discussing the British Crime Survey, which was renamed in 2012 as the Crime Survey for England and Wales. Such inaccuracies were not penalised, but centres should try to update their knowledge on a regular basis. Some candidates also did not seem to understand the difference between CSEW data and the police recorded crime figures.

**Popular Studies**: Hall, Gilroy, Holdaway, Waddington, Reiner, Phillips and Bowling, Hood, Becker, Lea and Young, Murray.

**Concepts**: moral panics, institutional racism, canteen culture, coughing and cuffing, resistance, relative deprivation, marginalisation, over-policing, underclass.

**Question No. 2**
This question was popular, and many candidates were able to apply a wide-range of theoretical and empirical knowledge and score highly. The strongest responses focused well on the idea of differing norms and values being the reason for this group committing the most crime. The most common approach was to apply subcultural studies such as A.Cohen and Miller, and this was often done successfully. A range of other material was often used, sometimes as evaluation and sometimes in support of the question, and providing the reasoning was sound, it was all credited. For example, some candidates used left realist ideas about relative deprivation and marginalisation to support the view, suggesting that these would lead young working class males to form subcultures with different norms and values and thus turn to crime. Others used the same evidence to challenge the view that it was norms and values, suggesting that it was the inequalities which led to this.

Another fairly common approach, was to focus on the 'males' part of the question and discuss socialisation into masculine values, using Messerschmidt and Oakley for example. The most successful responses were those who stayed focused and fully explained how they were using the material selected. Unfortunately, many responses contained a wide-range of knowledge without specifically linking it to the debate about norms and values, or leaving the link very implicit, which impacted on their mark. For some it became a case of writing down every theory of working class crime they had learnt, in a list-like fashion. Candidates should always be encouraged to link points made explicitly back to the question.

**Popular Studies**: A.Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin, Merton, Miller, Lea and Young, Messerschmidt.

**Concepts**: subculture, status frustration, illegitimate opportunity structure, blocked opportunities, focal concerns, relative deprivation, marginalisation, hegemonic/hyper-masculinity.

**Question No. 3**
This was a less popular question and the majority of candidates who selected it struggled to remain focused on victims. Most attempted to apply left realist ideas on reasons for offending to explain victimisation, using concepts such as relative deprivation, marginalisation and subculture, and also making links to poverty and area, and using evidence from the Islington Crime Survey successfully. Some argued that criminals may be driven to crime from a left realist view, so could be seen as victims.

Weaker responses made little reference to victims beyond lip service and were really answering a different question, with some discussing solutions to crime at length, with no reference to victims. Others focused very little on left realists, writing at much greater length on feminist views on victims for example, without recognising that left realists agree with many of the feminist points about female victims. Weaker candidates also commonly mixed up left and right realists, or asserted that many different ideas came under left realism, for example Shaw & Mackay's ecological arguments or A.Cohen's ideas on status frustration.

**Popular Studies**: Lea and Young, Matthews and Young, Kinsey, Islington Crime Survey.

**Concepts**: relative deprivation, marginalisation, subculture, over-policing, square of crime.

### Option 2 Education
This option was not quite as popular as crime and deviance, but was attempted by many candidates. The questions were all quite straightforward and did not give rise to much confusion, but candidates did struggle to stay focused on the view in the question for questions 4 and 5, and the problems of pre-prepared answers and also including too much on opposing views were particularly seen in responses to these questions.

### Question No. 4
Many candidates chose this question, and generally the standard of responses was good. However, a number of candidates focused on labelling in a more general way and did not select evidence relating specifically to ethnicity. Therefore, Becker, Rosenthal and Jacobson and Keddie were often seen, none of which are directly related to ethnicity. Some candidates successfully applied the ideas in much more general or class-based studies to the labelling of some ethnic groups, others implied that these studies were about ethnicity, and weaker candidates did not make a reference to ethnicity at all. Given the wealth of research on ethnicity and labelling in schools, this was disappointing.

Another problem was the lack of focus on labelling, with some candidates just discussing in-school factors, ignoring the working of the question. Thus, the ethnocentric curriculum, speech codes and anti-school subcultures were presented by some candidates as knowledge, when, unless they were linked to labelling, they actually gained little credit, just as juxtaposed alternatives. Similarly, other factors affecting the achievement of different ethnic groups, such as material or cultural factors, only gained full credit for evaluation if used to explicitly challenge the importance of labelling. If they were just described, they counted only as juxtaposition, and many candidates devoted a lot of their answer to such material and its strengths and weaknesses, gaining very little reward for it. Thus, focus on the question was a significant issue affecting candidate performance here.

**Popular Studies**: Gillbourn, Gillbourn and Youdell, Wright, Mirza, Connelly, Jasper.

**Concepts**: self-fulfilling prophecy, master status, anti-school subcultures, resistance.

### Question No. 5
This was a popular question, with most candidates choosing it in this option. It was usually answered well, with a focus on Durkheim, Parsons and Davis and Moore, though many candidates struggled to make the link explicitly to preparation for work, writing more of a general functionalist account. The slight narrowness of the available material in support of the view in the question was recognised and accounted for in the marking of this response, and many candidates were able to reach the top 2 levels, though lack of depth, accuracy and focus on the question were the main issues which hampered candidates. Some strong responses included references to Saunders and New Right ideas, and some successfully linked to vocationalism. Many candidates wrote too generally about Functionalist views without relating their ideas to the preparation for work, or too briefly, spending just one paragraph on the Functionalist view before moving on to consider other, critical views. Durkheim, Parsons and Davis & Moore were used interchangeably by weaker candidates, with no clear understanding of who said what.

Evaluation was usually focused on Marxist views on the link between education and work. Very often significantly more time was spent on these views than the functionalist ones required in the question, with Bowles and Gintis, Althusser and Bourdieu commonly being discussed in depth. Many candidates seemed to forget that they were meant to be evaluating the Functionalist view, and gained very little credit for what was often pages of knowledge not related to the question. As in previous reports, it is strongly suggested that candidates are encouraged to apply any section about a competing view back to the view in the question both at the beginning and the end of the point, to ensure it is focused evaluation. Lengthy evaluations of Marxism were given by some candidates, which attracted little credit, unless they were linked to the Functionalist view. Some candidates also wrote at length about liberal and social democratic views, with similar lack of any focus, though New Right views were credited if used to extend or support functionalist ideas. Another problem for some candidates was that rather than evaluating the functionalist view, they evaluated the idea that education prepares young people for work, which again suggested a lack of focus on the actual question set. However, some centres have clearly taken heed of comments from previous reports, and their candidates produced highly focused, developed and sustained evaluation of functionalist views.

**Popular Studies**: Durkheim, Parsons, Davis and Moore.

**Concepts:** division of labour, meritocracy, equality of opportunity, universalistic standards, role allocation, sifting and sorting.

**Question No. 6**
This question proved less popular within this option yet was generally done very well by those who attempted it. Many candidates showed an impressive range of knowledge on educational policies and most were able to explicitly develop these in relation to the question. There were few areas of inaccurate understanding or confusion regarding policies, though there was some confusion as to which policies went with which administration/ideology. For example, there are still many candidates who mistakenly claim that Curriculum 2000 was a New Labour policy, when it was in fact introduced by John Major's Conservative Government.

Stronger candidates were able to confidently describe a range of policies introduced as part of ERA 1988, linking these to ideas on marketisation, competition and choice, in order to argue that they may benefit working class pupils, and the National Curriculum and Ofsted were also argued to help working class children due to standardising provision. Some candidates stopped at ERA, but many discussed New Labour policies at length, particularly SureStart, EAZs and EMA, applying these effectively to the question. There is often a lack of depth of knowledge about precisely what the policies involve, with some candidates providing a list rather than a discussion. However, most candidates were able to do particularly well in terms of evaluation, with other policies such as tuition fees, and also challenges to the policies discussed, often from Marxist perspectives, being very successfully utilised. For example, many challenged the benefit of parentocracy by making use of writers such as Ball & Gewirtz on 'choosers'.

**Popular policies/ concepts:** ERA, parentocracy, marketisation, OFSTED, the National Curriculum, SATs, league tables, Academies, vocationalism, apprenticeships, SureStart, EMA, EAZs, tuition fees, pupil premium.

**Option 3 Mass Media:**
All three questions seemed equally popular with candidates attempting this option, though media as an option was significantly less popular than crime and education. Some candidates who had clearly prepared for the crime option attempted question 7, and since there is a specification overlap here, many answered it very successfully. It did seem on the whole that candidates attempting this topic knew and were able to apply less of a range of evidence to support their theoretical knowledge, with many candidates using only 1 or 2 names across both essays, which contrasts sharply with those who attempted the crime and deviance option, for example.

**Question No. 7**
Many candidates took a media effects approach to this question, suggesting that they were not expecting this question or had not been taught that much about deviance amplification. Those who successfully linked material relating to the hypodermic syringe model, using Bandura and examples such as Jamie Bulger and Columbine, to the idea of amplifying i.e. increasing deviance were credited for this content. There were a significant minority of candidates who showed no understanding of what deviance amplification actually is. Some stronger candidates were able to explain the idea of deviance amplification in a more sophisticated way. However, even these responses often fixed straight onto the link to moral panics and then produced a response which went through various moral panics, often not linking back to the idea of deviance amplification that effectively, if at all. Good responses linked to theory, using both a Marxist and an interactionist take on deviance amplification, supporting these with studies, and staying focused on the process of deviance amplification throughout.

**Popular Studies**:  Cohen, Hall, Fawbert, Goode and Ben-Yehuda.

**Concepts**: Moral panics, folk devils, direct effects.

**Question No. 8**
This was a potentially narrow question, so was marked accordingly, with both knowledge of what is involved in the method of semiology, examples of studies using it and strengths of the methods all being credited as knowledge if used and applied effectively. However, many candidates had very little, if any, of this, with a large proportion of answers offering no research examples at all. The GMG studies on strikes were the most commonly used, and some stronger candidates included a range of studies and examples, some very contemporary, analysing portrayals of Islam for example.

Stronger candidates also made links to theory, referring to interpretivism and methodological issues such as validity, but also linking to Marxists and feminists and showing an understanding of the use of semiology to research underlying ideological bias. Weaker candidates wrote very little about semiology as a method, with no supporting evidence, and then juxtaposed longer descriptions of other methods of studying media, particularly content analysis and experiments, often making no evaluative links back to semiology. Such an approach gains very little credit since it does not relate to the question set. There were some candidates who had learnt about several studies using semiology but used these to criticise the method, picking out weaknesses in the research which was creditable for Analysis and Evaluation. It was a shame that they did not also discuss these studies more fully in terms of the strengths of semiology in these pieces of research, and the way they used the method, which would have gained them additional marks for Knowledge and Understanding as well.

**Popular Studies**: Barthes, GMG, Kilbourne, Mulvey.

**Concepts**: semiotics, signifiers, connotations and denotations, validity.

**Question No. 9**
The majority of candidates were able to successfully describe the neo-Marxist view on the social construction of the news, as distinct from other explanations. However, many candidates had very little evidence to support their brief description of the idea that media professionals construct the news from their narrow backgrounds. The GMG was quite commonly used, and there were often references to Gramsci and hegemony, but there was very little use of evidence beyond this. As noticed in several of the other questions, a common tendency was for candidates to spend a great deal more time and effort describing alternative explanations – namely Marxist and pluralist – supporting these with a lot more evidence and evaluating these, often in detail. It must again be noted that material such as this, which is not directly related to the question, gains very little credit, and candidates are misled if they believe that all of this tangential material will get full credit. They must be encouraged to answer the question set.

Stronger candidates were able to use these alternative theories to explicitly evaluate the neo-Marxist view, and to develop the evidence supporting the neo-Marxist view to include more range, using concepts such as gatekeeping, agenda-setting, news diaries and news values to successfully provide support for neo-Marxist position, and also linking in good examples and evidence such as Sutton Trust data about the social background of journalists.

**Popular Studies**:  Gramsci, GMG, Philo, Hall.

**Concepts**: Hegemony, hierarchy of credibility, news values, news diary.

**Option 4 Power and Politics**
This topic area was attempted by only a handful of candidates.

**Question No.10**
Most candidates were able to address the question quite well and since it was quite an open question it was tackled in different ways.  Weaker responses tended to describe different types of NSMs, giving examples but without much discussion of their role in society.  A few applied quite generalised theory, and stronger responses more explicitly discussed a range of different roles such as a search for identity, a response to globalisation or an alternative to traditional politics.  Evaluation usually came from contrasting these views, with some just presenting the alternatives without explicit evaluative comment.

**Popular studies, theorists, concepts:**  Klein, Marcuse, Melucci, Hallsworth, offensive and defensive social movements, identity, resistance.

**Question No.11**
This question was generally not answered well.  Most candidates who selected this question were able to identify a range of forms of direct political action, commonly describing riots, terrorism and demonstrations/protests.  Some then gave examples of these, though in the current climate, more contemporary examples might have been expected.  Unfortunately, most did not go much beyond this, and the sociological evidence to support and refute the view was lacking in most responses.  Some offered assertive accounts of the effectiveness of direct action over indirect action such as voting, often devoid of any qualification or evaluation, for example stating that terrorism was much more effective in achieving change than voting, and offering no critique of this.  Very few considered more sophisticated or contemporary examples of direct action, such as cyber-networking, and application of theory tended to be quite simplistic.

**Popular studies, theorists, concepts:**  Benyon, Bachrach and Baratz, riots, terrorism, 'ballot boxes of the poor'.

**Question No.12**
Stronger answers focused in detail on Weberian explanations of the distribution of power.  This was a narrow question by nature, so range could come from within Weber's ideas, especially on different sources of authority, using examples of each type to demonstrate depth of understanding.  Some candidates drew links with other views, particularly Mills, successfully using such ideas to support and extend Weber.  However, there was a tendency to juxtapose different views of power and for the Weberian views to be referred to only briefly.  Some candidates spent most of the essay discussing other views of power, particularly elite theory, with only a fleeting reference to Weber's views, and with little or no evaluative links.

**Popular studies, theorists, concepts:**  Weber, C.W.Mills, power, charismatic, traditional and legal authority, constant sum/zero sum.

# G674 Exploring Social Inequality and Difference

**General Comments:**

This paper was the last full entry for this unit and, overall, the standard of achievement was good – Centres had prepared candidates well and there were hardly any non-responses within the paper. Candidates knew what to expect and, in the main, answered all questions to the best of their ability. Generally, they had prepared well for the exam and displayed a wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of the sociological issues covered in the specification. Studies and concepts were used frequently and accurately in most cases, as befits the final, synoptic paper in a 2 year course. Generally, candidates' theoretical understanding was good, with the majority able to identify and apply appropriate theories to the various questions.

The paper aimed to test candidates' knowledge and understanding of social inequality and difference in conjunction with sociological theory and methodology. It was pleasing to note the interaction between methodology, theory and research across the different subject areas displayed by many candidates this year. The stronger candidates were also able to make links between the different theories and to evaluate effectively although even weaker candidates did make some attempt to use theoretical knowledge at some level.

In the first section, the source material was based on a study of young people's use of social networking sites to develop relationships and share experiences and it seems that this source, together with the questions based on it were understood and accessible to the majority. Question 1 asking about the influence of ethical issues on the design of research did cause some candidates' problems (see below for more detailed commentary on this) and marks were adjusted accordingly. However, it seems that the problem was often a shallow understanding of what ethical concerns actually were and this led to an inability to apply that knowledge to the question asked. Actually answering the question set, rather than the question practised by candidates, is the key criterion for the highest levels of attainment in an A2 paper. The second question on methodology was answered very well as the well-practised formula of strengths and weaknesses of different methods has been honed over many years. This year's question on semi-structured interviews was done very well on the whole (probably the best set of responses on the whole paper) and the depth and breadth of wider methodological issues was impressive. What is still not done so well, however, is the application of this within the context of the research – so many candidates neglected to look at why it was or was not the best method for studying young social networkers and just provided a generalised commentary.

In the second section of the paper, the 4a and 4b option was more popular although a significant number did opt to answer 3a and 3b. Generally, both parts were answered well but, as detailed below, the main weakness in 3a and 4a was lack of substantive, named evidence in its various forms while the main weakness in 3b was the lack of depth and detail in the Marxist view on age inequality. The evaluation of that view was often more detailed. In 4b, the same weakness was slightly less apparent as some responses showed an excellent knowledge of the Functionalist view on gender differences and how they are seen to be functional for society.

Almost all candidates had enough time to finish the paper and answer all the questions, many starting with the long essays in 3b and 4b before returning to the shorter answers. Rubric errors were virtually non-existent.

**Comments on Individual Questions:**

**Question No. 1.**

This question was the one that candidates struggled to answer really well and fewer candidates than normal achieved full marks. There was a minority of high level answers but the majority achieved Levels 2 and 3. The question was worded slightly differently from previous questions and many found it difficult to adjust to this. A significant number of answers clearly showed a lack of knowledge regarding ethical issues and thus could not apply them to their answer. Very few candidates actually answered the question set i.e. how research design is influenced by ethical concerns. Also, because of the lack of knowledge surrounding ethical issues, there was an over reliance on the source and many ideas were lifted directly from the passage, meaning a significant number of candidates did not discuss anything beyond confidentiality, anonymity and the sensitive nature of the research. This, in turn, meant that many good candidates did not achieve above Level 3. Those that did go beyond the source and discuss issues about physical or psychological harm, informed consent, debriefing, right to withdraw and other relevant issues were able to attain higher levels.

To reach the higher levels of response, candidates needed to describe a wide range of undeveloped points (4+) or a range (3+) of developed points. A developed point would need an ethical concern (e.g. informed consent), how consideration of this would impact on the research design (e.g. using University students as the target population rather than younger children ) plus a link to key methodological concepts (e.g. representativeness as they were all social science students). This whole point would then need to be linked to the context of the research (how young people use social networks to develop relationships) in order to develop the point fully.

The best responses related their answers clearly and consistently to the source material, using the Robards and Bennett research to illustrate their answers. Candidates who did not refer to the source at all could only achieve Level 2 on Interpretation and Application. There was a qualitative difference between those who genuinely engaged with the context - e.g. by saying something like Robards and Bennett used interviews rather than questionnaires as a method so that they could check the body language of the interviewees and make sure that they were not getting upset or harmed by questions about romantic break ups- and those who just paid lip service to it by just repeating the topic of the research. Although 10/15 marks given in this question are for knowledge and understanding, the methodological concept has to be applied in a particular way.

**Teaching tip:** Ensure that students practise past questions and know to apply the various methods to the context of the source. Stress the importance of candidates discussing the issue/concept and applying it to the particular piece of research in the source rather than discussing it in general.

**Question No. 2**

The majority of candidates answered this question very well, with many achieving full marks on all the skills. The majority of candidates showed a good knowledge and understanding of semi-structured interviews in sociological research and methodological matters connected to them. There was a wide ranging and accurate use of many sophisticated methodological concepts such as rapport, verstehen and researcher imposition as well as a detailed understanding of the different theoretical perspectives like Interpretivism, Positivism, Realism and Feminism (although the latter two were less frequently referred to or discussed). Many accurate evaluative comments were made, linking the method to such issues as validity, reliability and representativeness. However, there are still a significant number of candidates who do not really understand what is meant by reliability, often using it with its everyday, non-sociological meaning.

Most candidates understood that semi-structured interviews are essentially a qualitative method that usually collects in-depth, detailed and descriptive data rather than statistical, quantitative data and thus were able to point out that the main strength of this type of interview is its capacity for gathering both quantitative and qualitative data which enhances validity and, to some extent, reliability, at the same time. Most candidates were also able to comprehend that it is the open ended nature of this type of interview that was particularly suitable for this research topic because of the fairly new un-researched nature of social networks and their effect on identity. The vast majority of candidates also related the method to representativeness and generalisability after discussing the necessary smallness of the sample due to the practical constraints of time and cost.

It was pleasing to see that many candidates linked their evaluations of the method to the research undertaken by Robards and Bennett, often engaging with this context in a meaningful way. Nonetheless, it is probably true to say that fewer than 50% did this, the majority simply paying lip service to online social networking and class. Centres need to stress to students the importance of using the source in their answers in a meaningful way. Again, if a candidate failed to refer to the source at all, it would be impossible to attain higher than Level 2 in Interpretation and Application. It was also pleasing to see the number of candidates who used other studies from a variety of specification areas to illustrate their answers. This is testament to the truly synoptic nature of many answers.

There are always a few candidates who suggest an alternative method that could be used to research class and identity in online social networking and then go off at a tangent discussing the advantages and disadvantages of this alternative method. This is unfortunate as most of this would be irrelevant and therefore unable to be credited.

On the whole, centres have prepared students well for this question and many achieved full marks.

**Teaching Tip:**
Encourage students not to use "this improves validity and reliability" in the same sentence as it is very unlikely that whatever is being discussed, it is unlikely to improve both. Another technique to encourage is the inclusion and discussion of as many wider methodological concepts and theoretical perspectives as possible.

**Question No.3a**

It is pleasing to note that the range of evidence used by candidates to support the idea that some age groups experience age inequality in the contemporary UK has become both wider and more varied this year. Clearly most centres have improved the way they encourage students to answer the 3a/4a questions so that clearly separated areas of social life are apparent when their answers are read by Examiners. The most popular areas used for this question were health, employment, media and poverty, but several others such as crime, family and politics were also used. It is interesting to note that the vast majority of candidates used the young and the elderly as their age groups and only a tiny number thought about referring to the middle aged e.g. in the context of being a squeezed "sandwich generation". Again, there was a genuine synoptic element to the answers as evidence was drawn from all areas of the specification. Most candidates chose 3 or 4 areas to write about and this is enough – the candidates who wrote about 6 or more areas tended to be weaker as they did not have enough evidence to support all of the areas. It is possible to get full marks from 3 areas as long as each area has hard, substantive evidence to show the inequality.

Evidence is the key to high levels of attainment in this question (as it is in 4a) although that evidence can take many forms. The main forms are **empirical studies** e.g. Hockey and James, **concepts** e.g. the glass ceiling, reserve army of labour, **theories** e.g. Functionalists argue that youth is a transitional stage, **statistics** e.g. 18% of pensioners live in poverty or the minimum wage for 16-17 year olds is £3.87 and for 18-21year olds it is £5.30 and finally, **examples** e.g. old people are often depicted as grumpy and wrinkled on birthday cards. Some candidates provided mainly examples rather than "hard" evidence and these did not achieve as much credit as studies or concepts. It is important to cite sources for evidence so that the information can be validated. The most effective responses made appropriate use of all these types of sociological evidence.

One example of poor practice in this question was when candidates used evidence of class, ethnicity or gender and tried to adapt it to age e.g. young black men are more likely to be stopped and searched, thus hoping that the word young would make the evidence useful when talking about age inequalities. Another example of poor practice was writing far more than is necessary to answer this question, leaving insufficient time for completion of the 3/4b question in enough depth and detail for a top level response.

**Teaching Tip:** Encourage students to limit themselves to 3 or 4 areas of social life and to vary the type of evidence used in each area. It would be useful if they made a grid of different types of inequalities and listed some studies, concepts, theories, examples that could be applied to those areas.

**Question No. 3b**

This question on Marxist explanations of age inequality was quite popular with candidates despite the fact there is probably less material on it than on other inequalities such as class. Many candidates are to be congratulated on their ability to adapt Marxist thinking to age, using such ideas as reserve army of labour, ruling class ideology, power, scapegoating, exploitation and other concepts. The most common studies were Vincent, Castles and Kosack and Kidd.

The 15 marks for Knowledge and Understanding in this question are mainly achieved for a description of aspects of the target theory (Marxism) in considerable depth, detail, sophistication and accuracy. To attain the highest level on this skill, the response needed to describe at least 3 theoretical/conceptual aspects of the Marxist view on age inequality, referring to a wide range of concepts and studies. Many candidates did not do this and only wrote one short paragraph/point on Marxist views; hence, they were only able to achieve Level 2 or 3 on AO1. It is clear that Centres prepare candidates to evaluate at length and throughout their responses in this question but it would be good practice if candidates were also encouraged to write in more detail on the target theory in order to maximise their AO1 marks e.g. a paragraph on reserve army of labour with appropriate concepts and 1/2 studies, and similar paragraphs on scapegoating and exploitation would be enough to gain full marks if there were enough depth and detail.

Regarding evaluation, there were many examples of good practice demonstrated where candidates knew that there were 20 marks for this and used a whole spectrum of other theories to criticise the Marxist view on age inequality. It was impressive that these evaluations were often specific to the question rather than just general evaluations of Marxism as a theory. Many answers showed sustained evaluation throughout, giving an analytical and reflective tone to the response.

Some candidates simply described and juxtaposed different theoretical approaches in a list like manner instead of using alternative approaches to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of the Marxist approach. Sometimes, an addition of a short phrase such as "Functionalists would totally disagree with the Marxists about age inequality because they argue that…" or "However, Functionalists would see age inequality as a positive rather than a negative aspect of social life because…

**Teaching Tip:**

Encourage candidates to draw up a grid containing 3/4 points on each target theory for each inequality so that they can maximise the marks for AO1. Also provide candidates with a set of useful phrases to use to introduce their evaluative points so that they don't simply describe or juxtapose.

**Question No. 4a**

The majority of candidates chose this option over the age inequalities question as gender inequality continues to be the most popular option on G674. The majority of candidates answered this question well, using their knowledge and understanding of gender inequality from different units within the specification. It was pleasing to see that the majority of candidates systematically referred to both males and females in their responses, rather than just discussing females.

The most popular areas chosen to answer this question were employment, family, education, media and crime but many other areas were also used to illustrate different inequalities. Most answers included a wealth of concepts such as glass ceiling, dual labour market, human capital theory, horizontal and vertical segregation, chivalry thesis, instrumental and expressive roles – far more than were used in the 3a option. This meant that many candidates were able to gain high levels of achievement.

The same points mentioned in Question 3a above apply to 4a as well – this question depends on named, solid sociological evidence in order to gain most marks and vague , general comments such as "women do a lot more housework than men" will not gain as much credit as Seager used time diaries to research the relative number of hours that men and women spent on home and work related tasks. Women were found to spend more time on domestic activities and to have less leisure and rest time than men. Stronger candidates packed their answers with good evidence whereas weaker ones tended towards anecdote and common sense that did not go above Level 2.

One point that is worth mentioning in relation to research wherever it is used by candidates is that it is often referred to out of any time context; so, for instance, some candidates referred to Oakley's Housewife study of 1974 as if it had been done recently, with no recognition that things may have changed since the research was done.

**Teaching Tip:**
As for 3a above plus encourage candidates to be aware of the historical context of classic pieces of research – another study often quoted in this response was Willis's "Learning to Labour" of 1977 as if it had taken place in the last few years.

**Question No. 4b**

There were many high level responses to this question and the great majority of candidates were able to identify the target theory as Functionalism. In contrast to 3b responses, probably over half of the candidates answering this question were able to provide 3 or 4 clear separate points on the Functionalist view that gender differences were functional for society, thus maximising their Knowledge and Understanding marks. The most commonly used aspects were expressive and instrumental roles (Parsons), Durkheims's division of labour, human capital theory, Davies and Moore and role allocation, as well as warm bath theory. Often these were well linked to the question of how Functionalists thought gender differences were functional for society. Some candidates did confuse "functional for society" with "functional for individuals" but not many. Both the New Right and Hakim were frequently used to support Functionalist views in this area.

The main weakness seen by Examiners in this question, as with 3b, was the lack of detailed knowledge on the Functionalist view, sometimes by candidates who then went on to evaluate the view very effectively.  It sometimes appeared that they were not aware that depth and detail are needed on the target theory and perhaps they thought that evaluation was the most important part of the question.  As with 3b, a minority of candidates only described or juxtaposed alternative theories rather than offering a critical view of the target theory.

The main alternative theories used to answer this question were various strands of Feminism although they were not always used to link to the question by discussing whether gender differences were or were not functional for society.  Many candidates also used a Marxist approach and stated how gender differences might be functional for a capitalist society and how this only benefitted a few rather than the whole of society as Functionalists suggest.  A significant minority who discussed Marxism did not make this crucial distinction about capitalist society and so ended up arguing that Functionalists and Marxists agreed on the view in the question.  A distinguishing factor of the very good responses was that such candidates were able to relate all theoretical approaches to whether gender differences were in fact functional for society as a whole whereas many responses ignored this part of the question.

**Teaching tip:**
Encourage students to write short essays on the different theoretical perspectives' views of the various inequalities so that they learn to appreciate the depth and detail needed to answer similar questions before any evaluative commentary begins.

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