

**Sociology**

Advanced GCE A2 H581

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS H181

**Examiners' Reports**

---

**January 2011**

**HX81/R/11J**

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA) is a leading UK awarding body, providing a wide range of qualifications to meet the needs of pupils of all ages and abilities. OCR qualifications include AS/A Levels, Diplomas, GCSEs, OCR Nationals, Functional Skills, Key Skills, Entry Level qualifications, NVQs and vocational qualifications in areas such as IT, business, languages, teaching/training, administration and secretarial skills.

It is also responsible for developing new specifications to meet national requirements and the needs of students and teachers. OCR is a not-for-profit organisation; any surplus made is invested back into the establishment to help towards the development of qualifications and support which keep pace with the changing needs of today's society.

This report on the Examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the Examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this report.

© OCR 2011

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications  
PO Box 5050  
Annesley  
NOTTINGHAM  
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622  
Facsimile: 01223 552610  
E-mail: [publications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:publications@ocr.org.uk)

## CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Sociology (H581)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Sociology (H181)

### EXAMINERS' REPORTS

<b>Content</b>	<b>Page</b>
Chief Examiner's Report	1
G671 Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity	2
G672 Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity	6
G673 Power and Control	13
G674 Exploring Social Inequality and Difference	19

## **Chief Examiner's Report**

### **H181**

The AS sociology specification has been assessed a number of times now and it is clear that centres are becoming increasingly familiar with the structure and assessment requirements of each unit. There are very few rubric errors made by candidates which suggest that centres and teachers are effectively preparing students for the specific requirements of the examination papers. Both G671 and G672 saw an increase in entries. For G672, many of the entries were from re-sit candidates from the previous summer examination series, although there are an increasing number of candidates who are choosing to sit this unit first, before G671. Overall there continues to be a large variation in the performance of candidates; those who attained high marks were able to demonstrate that they understood, interpreted and evaluated sociological evidence with clarity and accuracy, using a range of sociological knowledge in the form of theories, studies, concepts and contemporary examples. On the other hand, low achieving candidates had a very basic understanding of sociological evidence, tending to rely instead on anecdotal and asociological material. The term 'sociological evidence' refers to concepts, studies, data, theories and contemporary examples and candidates are encouraged to use a range of these in order to demonstrate they have a wide-ranging knowledge and understanding. However, it should be noted that candidates who rely only on contemporary examples will not score highly because, on their own, contemporary examples are not good sociology. The A grade and the E grade are set at very similar levels for both the AS units, demonstrating that candidates respond to both units in a similar way. Certainly, the detailed reports included in this document suggest that, across both examination papers, candidates seem to struggle most with the skill of interpretation and application. This skill is often about responding to the specific question or context, and given that candidates cannot prepare themselves for the exact nature of the questions, this is a skill area which is challenging.

### **H581**

This was the third examination season for the A2 papers and candidates continue to respond to the new exam style questions in a positive way. The vast majority of candidates answered all questions, or all question parts and the impression was that they were generally well prepared for these examinations. G674 had a very small entry, which reflects the preferred order of most centres of teaching the content of unit G673 first, leaving the social inequality and difference unit until the end of the course. The A2 examination papers are very different to each other: G673 requires two unstructured essay questions on one or more substantive topic areas; G674 is a structured examination paper, which a piece of source material and questions which combine sociological research methods with social inequality and difference. They are, however, weighted equally at 50 per cent each of the A2 course.

There follows a report on each of the units from this session, with some suggested teaching tips for teachers, focusing particularly on the skills needed to achieve success in this specification. Teachers are encouraged to read the relevant sections and to attend INSET courses during the autumn term to gain further feedback should they require it.

# G671 Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity

## 1 General Comments:

Overall, once again this session saw a wide range of candidate performance both between and within individual centres. There were very few rubric errors and the vast majority of candidates attempted to answer all four questions which indicates that the questions were clear and accessible to all and that centres are getting more used to the format of this examination paper. Most candidates allocated the use of time effectively, spending the longest on question 4 which is worth just over half marks of the whole paper and a majority of candidates wrote between 6 and 8 pages of the answer book. 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. There was also a clear centre effect on this paper. Candidates who had been prepared well, even those who were clearly of weaker ability, managed to pick up marks on all questions, by following the assessment objective 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 pre-release material or armed with very little sociological knowledge for questions 1, 2 and 3. Quality of written communication is an issue for a minority of candidates. Poor spelling and handwriting has, in a small number of cases, affected the flow of a candidate's work to the point where it is difficult to even see what the candidate was attempting to say.

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 all answers. 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. However, it must be stated that answers which solely rely on contemporary examples as a form of sociological evidence often fail to achieve higher than the basic (level 2) mark band. For example, in question 2, those candidates who discussed media socialisation in term of adverts using slim models or celebrity role models such as Cheryl Cole did not score as highly as those who discussed McRobbie's concept of 'slimblondness' or Ferguson's notion of the 'cult of femininity'.

It is worth reiterating the point made in previous examiners reports about the role of the pre-release material for this paper. The pre-release material will always be directly related to question 4 as the instructions in this question includes the directive "Using the pre-release material and you wider sociological knowledge". If candidates wish to draw upon any aspects of the pre-release material for answering questions 1, 2 and 3 this will be credited, where relevant and accurate. For example, some candidates included reference to the pre-release material in questions 1, (by saying, for example, that dating adverts are an example of a consumer-based society in the sense of 'advertising' for partners) and 3 (reiterating Jagger's point that age is an important part of identity when it comes to finding a partner). It should also be stated, however, that should candidates only rely on the pre-release material, they will not score highly as their knowledge will be narrow and basic.

In terms of assessment objectives, Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) seems to be the strongest area; strong 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) seemed to be 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 good knowledge and understanding of how individuals are socialised into their age identity, but didn't focus explicitly on the importance of age as a source of identity.

*Teaching tip*

Devise a mark sheet, 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. Use examples of student's responses and ask other students to mark them, using the mark sheets.

## 2 Comments on Individual Questions

### Question 1

On the whole, this question wasn't particularly well answered. Many candidates explained the concept of consumer culture by using the word in the concept; for example, "consumer culture is when people consume things". Question 1 is always a concept question and candidates should be encouraged to write definitions which do not include the words in the question. Candidates who understood the core meaning of the concept were able to explain that consumer culture is where buying consumer products has become a social norm/value or helps to form people's identities. It's not just about individuals buying things – this is consumption not consumer culture. Candidates are expected to write for approximately five minutes on this question and high scoring responses were able to develop their answers by, for example, making reference to theorists (such as Lury), concepts (such as conspicuous consumption), or theory (such as post modernism). Examples offered included explanations about shopping as a leisure activity or debt becoming a social norm. Weaker responses tended to list examples of goods, such as new shoes or i-pods without explaining how these are examples of consumer culture. Another feature of weak responses was where candidates confused consumer culture with popular culture or global culture. Examples tended to be weaker than the definitions, one word or a list was often given and not explained. A proportion of weaker candidates just defined culture or even pieced together a definition that linked consumption with ethnic culture.

*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. You could do a classroom display with them all on.

### Question 2

A number of candidates answered this question very well and backed up their points with explicit and relevant sociological evidence, usually focused around the process of socialisation, such as role models, imitation, stereotyping and focused their responses on how the media socialises individuals into a specific identity; such as gender or ethnic identity. Such responses were able to back up their points with examples of sociological studies and concepts. On the whole, these types of responses were generally good and were more likely to contain references to sociological studies such as Sewell's study on

black rap artists acting as role models or studies on the media and gender role socialisation (eg Gauntlett, Kilbourne and McRobbie). Weaker candidates answered this with little sociological knowledge, often giving not much more than implicit references to media portrayal of certain groups or images. This was often followed by anecdotal examples, such as pressure for young people to look like a thin model. A significant minority of candidates failed to distinguish between two separate ways and some failed to focus on media socialisation; instead using examples such as peer group pressure, or misinterpreted socialisation to mean 'socialising with friends'. AO2a was also weak on this question as many responses failed to adequately link their knowledge of the media as an agency of socialisation to the notion of influencing individuals. A final characteristic of weaker responses was to assess the extent to which the media is an important agency of socialisation. There are no evaluation marks awarded for this question so such responses were wasting time by doing this.

*Teaching tip*

As a revision activity, encourage your students to be able to cite at least two studies for each agency of socialisation.

### Question 3

This seemed to be the most difficult question for candidates in terms of providing relevant evidence to illustrate their answer. There were many sweeping generalisations and stereotypes, such as old people being lonely and middle aged being only concerned with raising children. Many responses were, therefore, anecdotal and consequently scored very few marks. Other weaker responses were not able to include any relevant knowledge on age, and tried to turn the question into one about gender or ethnic identity. These scored relatively low marks, because they were only partially relevant to the question. Better answers included a range of relevant knowledge and understanding in the form of studies, such as Laslett, McKingsley, Victor, Clarke and Warren and also concepts such as the oldest-old, active ageing, the fourth age and cultural characteristics associated with age. Some candidates did not interpret the question accurately, answering how various agencies of socialisation influence age, rather than how important age identity is. In order to score highly in AO2a marks, candidates needed to explicitly link their knowledge of class to the specific question. The stronger candidates had clearly been prepared for a question on age identity and were able to conceptually explain elements of the main age groups and linking it to areas such as the family and the workplace. For example, some good use was made of studies related to particular age stages; such as Hodkinson's work on youth sub-cultures or Willis' study of teenage boys. A number of candidates failed to include any evaluation points beyond the assertion that 'age is a very important source of identity' and it must be remembered that there are four marks available for evaluation. Stronger responses tended to include explicit evaluation points, for example, a postmodernist critique of the difficulty of differentiating between age categories, or the view that other sources of identity (such as gender, class or ethnicity) are more significant than age.

### Question 4

There was a wide range of responses to this question. A key differentiator in marking this question continues to be 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. It is not enough to be able to say what a key concept means; it needs to be used as a way of explaining a strength or weakness of the method. To reach the top of level 3 of the mark scheme for both AO1 and AO2b, responses needed to address the key

concepts in an accurate, wide-ranging and developed way. The high achieving responses tended to systematically explain what quantitative methods were, offering a range of strengths and weaknesses and including key concepts plus a wider range of concepts such as triangulation, social desirability, ethical concerns. There seems to be a significant centre effect in terms of how well the key concepts were understood. For example, there were centres where every single candidate misunderstood reliability by for example, claiming that only studying newspapers over a short time span is an issue of reliability, or not including homosexuals is unreliable.

*Teaching tip*

To help students understand the key concepts, clarify it by stating that reliability concerns the *method*; validity is about the *findings*, and representativeness/generalisability is about the *sample*.

Another characteristic of strong responses was the discussion of aspects of the wider research process, for example, sampling, operationalisation, ethics and the impact of these. Many candidates made good use of theory in their responses, linking Jagger's research to the positivist tradition and offering an interpretivist critique. However, there was a noticeable difference in the level of theoretical understanding. Weak responses wrote little more than 'Jagger is a positivist because she produced quantitative data which is scientific'. Stronger responses linked positivism to various aspects of Jagger's research; for example, hypotheses, and operationalisation as well as the statistical nature of the findings.

It is clear that some students had only a basic understanding of the pre-release material; for example, failing to explain what the method of content analysis is or by stating that the sampling method was stratified. 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 the pre-release material and, 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. A huge number of candidates started their answer to question 4 by summarising the research methodology, taken from the pre-release, for which they get no marks as it displays no sociological knowledge or skills. Likewise, there are no marks available for just copying out the findings. If the findings are used, it needs to be in relation to illustrating the strengths or weaknesses of the method.

It must also be noted that twelve marks are awarded for AO2a and in the question it is about how well the candidate contextualises their responses. The majority of candidates offer very generalised answers or just throw in the words from Jagger's aims. 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 (people searching for partners) on THIS particular topic (age identity)?" Those candidates who scored highly on this assessment objective engaged fully with the context in a sustained way by, for example, recognising the complexity of researching 'the importance of age' and ethical issues about a potentially sensitive subject area.

*Teaching tip*

As part of the teaching of the pre-release material, engage students in activities to get them to really understand the context, for example, ask them to write their own dating adverts and then to evaluate whether quantitative methods can ever measure identity in a post modern society.

## G672 Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity

### General Comments

The Family was by far the most popular option, followed by Youth, Religion and Health. An overwhelming majority of candidates chose to answer both Family questions and only a very small number of candidates opted for Health. Generally candidates used their time appropriately, producing approximately three quarters of a side of A4 for part (a) and at least two sides for part (b). Some candidates spent too long on part (a) answers and produced responses that were longer than those for their part (b) answers. Few appeared to run out of time on the second part (b) question.

Only a small number of candidates continued to ignore the rubric and 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, although there were a noticeable number of candidates with significant spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.

The key general points apparent in this session:

- Few rubric errors with most candidates completing the required number of questions
- More able candidates often seemed to score well in part b questions and less well in part a's
- Some candidates have little awareness of chronology of research for example writing about Durkheim as if he were studying contemporary youth subcultures, offering Marx's view of contemporary religious movements or suggesting that Talcott Parsons was a critic of postmodernism.

### Part (a) Questions

A significant proportion of candidates, while having some sociological knowledge, did not perform as well as they could on part (a) type questions because they were not writing to the requirements of the exam question. Many candidates correctly identified two points but offered insufficient explanation. Others offered rather unfocused answers where more than two points were covered although examiners were only able to give credit to the two most fully developed factors or reasons. A few candidates also wrote at great length on part (a) questions and left themselves insufficient time to write full length answers to one or both part (b) questions. Some candidates also wrote lengthy and unnecessary introductions to part (a) answers before actually proceeding to identify and explain their two points. Overall, the majority of candidates achieved marks in the middle of level 3 of the mark scheme for at least some of their answers with the most recurrent error being under-development of evidence. The most common issues that prevented them from achieving the top of level three or level 4 were:

- A significant minority of candidates still fail to focus on two points in part (a)'s either touching on three, four or more points or covering two points with a substantial degree of overlap
- Failing to fully explain their two points, often simply identifying and giving only a brief explanation
- Candidates need to be aware that to achieve the top mark band, answers need to be wide ranging and detailed and need to include theories and/or concepts and/or evidence. Many otherwise able candidates simply identified two points and offered one or two sentences of explanation
- Producing unnecessary preambles before answering the question
- Identifying and explaining only one valid point

- Identifying two points that overlap to such a degree that they can only be treated as one point
- Including explanations that had little relevance to the point identified
- Using time inappropriately on material not required by the question, for example, by including criticisms or evidence against their explanations
- Lacking focus on the question, with points not explicitly identified.

*Teachers' Tip for part (a) questions* – To achieve the top band marks for part (a) questions, two points need to be identified and then explained using relevant sociological evidence including theories, concepts and contemporary evidence. It is important that candidates be encouraged to select points that will enable them to show a range of knowledge and understanding. In part (a) questions, candidates need to identify two clear and distinct factors with explanations that do not overlap. Using a separate paragraph for each point identified and explained is a useful way for candidates to be clear that they have offered two different points. Candidates should be encouraged to write between  $\frac{3}{4}$  to one side of a page on a part (a) answer.

### **Part (b) Questions**

On part (b) questions it is pleasing to note that most candidates were trying to use knowledge of sociological concepts, theories and research in answering questions and most candidates made at least some attempt to evaluate eg by offering counter-arguments. However, a number of candidates wrote answers which offered narrow or under-developed empirical data which indicated knowledge and understanding but failed to explain this and apply it appropriately to the question.

On part (b) questions weaker answers tended to suffer from some of the following problems:

- Responses were generally better on theory oriented questions such as 1 (b) and 8 (b) than those which required empirical knowledge such as 2 (b) and 7 (b)
- Insufficient sociological knowledge that was narrow or stated briefly. Better candidates made use of sociological theories, concepts and/or studies
- Answers that were well informed sociologically but used material that was of only marginal relevance to the question on the paper
- Failure to interpret and apply sociological data, for example statistics and findings of sociological studies or examples from current events or broader social trends
- Some answers which were quite knowledgeable were rather list-like and failed to explicitly apply material to part b questions
- Relevant data selected but not applied to the question, leaving a list-like response that did not answer the question sufficiently
- One-sided answers that only considered evidence agreeing or disagreeing with the view
- Many candidates still see evaluation in terms of juxtaposing theories rather than offering a weighing up of the strengths and weaknesses of alternative arguments, theories or interpretations of evidence. Candidates need to be aware that for top band marks analysis and evaluation needs to be explicit and sustained throughout the answer rather than only appearing in the conclusion
- Part (b) answers that were only a little longer or even shorter than their part (a) answers. Candidates should be aware that part (b) requires a response that is at least twice as long as part (a), reflecting the marks allocated.

The skill of knowledge and understanding was the one where candidates were most able to achieve the top mark band. To do this they needed to include a wide-ranging and detailed knowledge and understanding of sociological evidence and clearly present knowledge of counter arguments.

*Teachers' Tip on Knowledge and Understanding* – To achieve the highest marks in the skill of knowledge and understanding candidates need to include sociological evidence ie theories, concepts and/or accurate contemporary evidence on various sides of the argument. Candidates need to show a detailed understanding and so must learn as much about the evidence 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 seemed challenging to a number of candidates, some of whom were able to produce responses with sound knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts, studies etc but that were not applied effectively to the question. Some simply listed evidence without reference to the question while some responses were characterised by their superficial, anecdotal approach.

*Teachers' 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. Using phrases like 'This study shows that...' that explicitly use the wording of the question can encourage application to the question.

The skill of analysis and evaluation is a testing area for candidates. Analysis involves breaking down an argument to gain a clearer understanding. This is an essential stage in the evaluation process. Most candidates offered some evaluative comments. However, a large number of candidates evaluated by juxtaposing arguments and theories without any exploration of strengths and weaknesses of evidence. A sustained evaluative approach throughout the answer should be aimed for, with candidates adopting an evaluative tone from their introductory paragraph onwards. Some candidates produced responses that only gained marks for evaluation in the concluding sentences whilst others evaluated only one side of the view.

*Teachers' Tip on Analysis and Evaluation* – Candidates should be encouraged to write in a way that shows that they have engaged with the different views involved in the question and that they understand the various elements that make up each of the views. Before an effective analysis and evaluation can be made, candidates need to understand how the different aspects of the evidence help answer the question. This process produces an in-depth understanding of sociological data that will then enable candidates to construct a clear set of arguments and an evaluation of these arguments. A sustained evaluative approach can be demonstrated by candidates writing an evaluative introduction, making some pertinent evaluative points about studies, theories and ideas, and summarising the different views in relation to the question. The candidate should aim to evaluate specific sociological arguments from more than one side of the view, based on the available evidence, methods and explanations. Candidates could be encouraged to use key evaluative terms that signal that they are evaluating the evidence or the argument at that point eg 'however', 'on the other hand', 'conversely', 'on the contrary', 'in contrast'.

### Comments on Individual Questions

- 1 (a) Most candidates had no problem identifying two reasons but explanations were often rather under-developed. A few candidates mis-read the question and discussed the increase in single parent households. The most commonly cited reasons were increase in divorce, greater economic independence/changing role of women and increased life expectancy/elderly population. Some also referred to changing social norms, young people leaving home for education and later age of marriage. Better answers made use of empirical data, concepts and theories to develop their answers

and made sure to explain in the context of the question. Some candidates made good use of studies such as Sharpe and concepts such as genderquake to develop points about the changing role of women.

- 1 (b) Most candidates had at least some sociological understanding of this question, though some answers were not well focused and devoted too much time to discussing family structures rather than role in society. Most candidates had some understanding of functionalist approaches typically citing Murdock and/or Parsons and discussing functions of the family. Many candidates attempted to apply ideas from other perspectives typically Marxism and/or feminism though sometimes these were less developed or misinterpreted. Some candidates also referred to postmodernism and the New Right though most of these struggled to apply them to discussing the role of the family in society. Evaluation was often rather under-developed on this question with many candidates simply juxtaposing functionalism with one or more other theories. However, some candidates were able to offer a number of relevant criticisms of functionalism. Evaluation of other theories was more frequently limited or absent altogether. A few candidates addressed the idea that the role of the family was changing typically in relation to Parsons' ideas about specialisation of family functions. A few candidates also linked this to postmodernism and argued that more diverse structures meant that the role of the family had also become more diverse.
- 2 (a) This was generally less well answered than 1 (a). A few candidates simply did not understand what extended families were, for example, confusing them with reconstituted families. However, most showed understanding of extended families but many answers were vague or commonsensical, typically simply stating that extended families gave emotional and financial support or looked after grandparents or grandchildren without developing on this. Some candidates also described different types of extended families for example beanpole or South Asian families without really focusing on ways in which they are important. Only a minority of candidates seemed aware of any research on extended families but a few made good use of studies such as Brannen or McGlone et al.
- 2 (b) This was generally less well answered than 1 (b). Weaker responses were often rather anecdotal offering generalised evidence about women becoming breadwinners and men becoming househusbands and new men. Such answers were often purely one sided with little or no questioning of the view. Better responses were able to offer some sociological evidence for and against though this was sometimes rather dated and narrow, eg Willmott & Young and Oakley. Some candidates also offered quite broad but superficial answers based on broad theories on the lines of 'functionalists would argue this and feminists would argue that'. There were, however, a minority of good or very good answers which went beyond housework and paid work to examine issues such as decision making, financial control, domestic violence and same-sex couples with references to relevant research. Some candidates also considered the question more widely considering the roles of grandparents and children and differences in roles between nuclear, lone parent and reconstituted families.
- 3 (a) Few of these were seen. Few responses supported their answer with evidence and most were more anecdotal in tone. Some candidates showed little understanding and a number of candidates did not seem well-prepared for this question. Better responses typically referred to functionalist views and the sick role and interactionist views on the labelling process.

- 3 (b) There were some very good responses to this question. Better answers were clear in their understanding of the structural approach and could also offer a range of counter arguments using other perspectives such as interactionist, cultural, biological etc. Weaker answers tended to only include one or two approaches and these tended to be underdeveloped and lacking in substantive evidence. Some weaker responses did not show a sound understanding of structuralist explanations and offered a response which conflated aspects of different approaches. Evaluation in such cases was typically by juxtaposition of approaches or neglected evaluation almost completed. Some candidates ignored the mental illness aspect of the question and gave a more generalised account.
- 4 (a) Again there were very few seen. There were a significant number of weaker responses to this question with candidates offering anecdotal or commonsensical answers. Some candidates showed a very good understanding and typically used evidence from sources such as Illich on iatrogenesis and disaffection with orthodox medicine. Some candidates located the rise in complementary medicine in the context of postmodern views on diversity and choice and empowerment of patients.
- 4 (b) There were some very good responses to this question with candidates producing a wide-ranging discussion of factors related to ill health and ethnicity. Such answers were able to use theoretical arguments and support these with empirical and conceptual material to demonstrate a detailed knowledge and understanding. Counter arguments tended to examine the gender and social class and better responses could discuss the interplay between them to go beyond a juxtaposed argument. Weaker answers were anecdotal in tone and used little evidence to support their points.
- 5 (a) There were only a small number of these seen. Some candidates did not seem well-prepared for this question. Better responses typically cited spiritual shopping and globalisation and were able to produce well differentiated explanations. Weaker responses tended to offer a generalised answer that did not develop distinct points. Some candidates offered no response to this question indicating that they had not been prepared for this aspect of the topic.
- 5 (b) There were some very good responses to this question where candidates were able to construct a wide-ranging discussion covering a variety of issues related to religiosity and gender such as participation, belief, spirituality and other aspects of behaviour. Such responses tended to be conceptually confident and empirically informed and made use of theoretical arguments from feminism. Some evaluation juxtaposed gender with social class and ethnicity and assessed the religiosity of other social groups. Some candidates extended the evaluation to include postmodern views about blurred boundaries and diversity and choice and neo-Marxist views on deprivation. Weaker answers were more anecdotal or narrow in the range of issues considered.
- 6 (a) This question was not generally well answered. Some candidates appeared to have little understanding of the key distinctions between the new religious movements and churches. Better answers tended to refer to aspects of membership and relationship to wider society. Good responses developed their explanation with evidence and examples. Some candidates produced only partially developed responses that failed to offer comparison between the two.
- 6 (b) There was a variety of responses to this question with some candidates showing very good knowledge and understanding. Some candidates were clear in their understanding of religious pluralism and were able to apply this to a discussion of the strength of religion in society. Such responses were also able to evaluate by

showing ways in which religious pluralism could be used to both support and refute secularisation. There continue to be a significant number of weak responses to this type of question, where the secularisation debate is contextualised within a particular aspect such as the rise of non-Christian, non-traditional Christian religions or, as in this case, religious pluralism, indicating that candidates are not well-prepared for such questions. Because of this, some candidates produce a pre-prepared answer on the secularisation debate that does not address the question.

- 7 (a) Very few really good answers were seen on this question. Few candidates seemed aware of any specific research on gender and subject choice. Some candidates spent far too long discussing how girls' attainment had improved without focusing on the question of subject choice or argued that differences in subject choice no longer existed. Weaker answers were often rather commonsensical and under-developed for example stating that subjects were seen as masculine or feminine. Better responses, while unable to cite specific research, drew on broader knowledge of issues such as gender differences in socialisation, peer group pressure/school subcultures, hidden curriculum and teachers' expectations to produce more conceptually informed answers.
- 7 (b) This question produced a range of answers with some really good answers. Some candidates had only rather narrow knowledge of research specifically on youth deviance and ethnicity, though some effectively applied studies such as Alexander and material from self-report surveys and the BCS. Some candidates also made use of material on ethnicity and school subcultures, for example, Sewell and Shain. Better answers often tended to discuss broader theories of deviancy, typically focusing heavily on labelling theory and associated concepts. Some answers made use of concepts such as illegitimate opportunities, status frustration, relative deprivation etc. Candidates were differentiated by how effectively they were able to apply these to the question with some simply producing lists of studies and concepts while others effectively applied them to discussing youth deviance and ethnicity. Evaluation was absent or underdeveloped in many scripts. Candidates who did evaluate typically did so by simply suggesting that class and/or gender were also important factors in youth deviance. Often candidates' knowledge of these issues seemed much more detailed than in relation to ethnicity. There were some very good answers which were able to discuss data on higher rates of offending amongst African-Caribbean youth and possible explanations of this and then questioned this using concepts such as labelling and moral panics, often focusing on institutional racism in the police and material on 'stop and search'.
- 8 (a) Most candidates were able to identify two reasons usually with some development in terms of evidence, theories and/or concepts. A few candidates simply described specific youth subcultures without accounting for their development. Some candidates also referred to the post-war baby boom without really explaining how this gave rise to a youth culture. Many candidates focused on the emergence of youth culture after the second world war typically giving affluence/consumerism, the extension of schooling and the impact of American youth culture as reasons. Some of these were quite well illustrated with material on Teddy Boys and emergence of youth styles in clothing, music etc. Other candidates opted to relate different theories of youth to the emergence of youth culture for example functionalists on youth developing as a bridge between childhood and adulthood or Marxists on youth as a form of resistance to capitalism or a magical solution. The best answers developed these ideas in relation to the question and with some detail with references to specific studies or were more conceptual.

- 8 (b) This question was generally well answered with most candidates having at least some understanding of postmodern views of youth subcultures. Many candidates were able to refer to writers such as Polhemus, Bennett and Redhead and used concepts such as neo-tribe, supermarket of style, eclecticism, hybridity, fluidity and the decline of class, gender and ethnic identities. Better answers were able to interpret these concepts in more detail using examples rather than just listing them. Most candidates showed awareness of other perspectives on youth subcultures, eg Marxism, feminism and functionalism, though sometimes these accounts were under-developed and/or simply juxtaposed with postmodernism. The best responses were able to offer some explicit evaluation of postmodernism and also explain how other theories might reject postmodern arguments but analysis and evaluation was generally the weakest of the three skills candidates displayed on this question.

## G673 Power and Control

### General Comments

The standard this session was similar to June 2010 with most candidates displaying a wide ranging knowledge and understanding of concepts and studies. Sometimes the understanding lacked depth, and the application and interpretation of these concepts and studies were not clearly focused.

On occasions, knowledge and understanding was generalised without directly applying the knowledge to the question set. This was particularly noticeable in responses to questions on crime and deviance.

Theories were better understood in this session and more explicitly applied to the question with a clearer understanding of differences within broad perspectives, for example the distinction between traditional Marxism and neo-Marxism in responses to the media questions.

Sometimes candidates displayed an impressive knowledge of background and historical trends but failed to relate this clearly to the question set and therefore wasted precious time. This was particularly evident in the question on post-1997 educational policies where many candidates wrote at length about pre-1997 policies without indicating how changes since 1997 related to these earlier policies or, indeed, how more recent policies were a continuation of previous ideas.

Some candidates were able to describe a very wide range of studies and writers but often this detracted from their analysis of this material given the time constraints of the exam. This meant that they did not achieve as highly as their knowledge deserved as they were not able to explain the significance of the material selected in sufficient depth. Candidates should be encouraged to consider exactly why they are including a particular study in relation to the actual question set.

A common tendency was to respond to questions in an unbalanced way with greater emphasis being placed on alternative theories/explanations rather than on the theory or explanation highlighted in the question. This suggests an element of 'question spotting' where pre-rehearsed material was applied regardless of the demands of the question. This was also a feature of responses which overlooked key words or phrases in the question.

For example the question on self-report studies often produced longer accounts of the Official Crime Statistics and victim studies than focusing on the question.

Interpretation and application was a weaker skill area for most candidates although stronger responses continually related theories, concepts and studies to the question. Candidates should be encouraged to consider the material they have included in terms of how it relates to the question. Reflection in terms of asking themselves 'so?', 'therefore?' 'how does this answer the question?' should be encouraged.

Many candidates demonstrated an awareness of recent events and changes not covered in textbooks, which they applied imaginatively to the question. This was particularly evident in responses to questions on Crime and Deviance, for example policing and student demonstrations and education, and coalition government policies. In the latter example some candidates were able to draw out policy differences, for example between England and Wales.

Often candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge of statistical evidence in their responses, but sometimes these statistics were not sourced.

Evaluation and analysis were stronger in this session with key words more frequently utilised, for example, 'however', 'on the other hand', 'a criticism of this is'. Sometimes this then resulted in lengthy descriptions of alternative theories without relating back to the question and therefore becoming tangential to the theory or explanation or view highlighted in the question set.

Methodological evaluation was sometimes confused with a tendency to state that particular studies lacked validity and/or reliability without explaining why this was the case and, also, confusing the two concepts.

Sometimes candidates failed to evaluate throughout their responses and left evaluation to the conclusion, which resulted often in underdeveloped and sometimes assertive evaluation. Also, some candidates simply repeated points they had already made and this added little to the main body of their response.

Stronger responses used their conclusions to suggest further areas for research and to demonstrate possible gaps in sociological knowledge or the dated nature of sociological explanations given contemporary trends or events.

Introductions were generally well focused in this session with candidates clearly identifying the nature of the debate/issue raised by the question set. There was less of a tendency to define obvious terms or to write at length about the historical context to the question.

The balance between responses was still a problem for some candidates with, commonly, lengthy first responses and then insufficient time to fully develop their second answer.

*Teaching Tip*

Encourage candidates to practice writing essays in time-constrained situations to ensure that they can achieve a more equal balance between their responses.

The most popular questions were 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 with a large majority of candidates attempting these options, namely Education or Crime and Deviance.

Some rubric errors were present with candidates either attempting three questions or only one.

**Comments on Specific Questions**

**Question 1**

This was a popular question but many candidates were confused about the nature of self-report studies and the focus on offending. Often victimisation studies were interpreted at length with very little attention given to self-report studies. Many candidates were unable to discuss any actual self-report studies. Sometimes the evaluation of self-report studies tended towards a 'kitchen sink' approach with all self-report studies being described as lacking reliability, validity, etc, with these concepts often being confused.

Stronger responses identified the advantages of self-report studies in terms of providing insights into the 'dark figure of crime' including the location of criminal activity, incidents of offences in terms of gender, ethnicity and social class. The most cited examples of self-report studies were Farrington et al, Campbell and Graham and Bowling.

*Teaching Tip*

Over-reliance on a particular textbook can disadvantage candidates when a particular aspect of the specification is not covered in depth. The suggested time allocated to the 'definition and measurement of crime and deviance' is 8 hours (recommended scheme of work on the OCR website) but some candidates appeared unprepared for a question on self-report studies.

**Question 2**

This was also a popular question and most candidates demonstrated a clear knowledge and understanding of Left Realism. Victim studies, marginalisation, relative deprivation and subcultures were frequently discussed accurately. The alternative perspective of Right Realism was also analysed in most responses.

The most obvious flaw in many answers to this question was the covering of Left Realism in general, rather than a concentration on its *explanations* of crime and deviance; for example, many candidates gave quite lengthy accounts of the solutions to crime offered by Left Realism. Of course, there were times when a solution pointed directly to an explanation (eg, more jobs as a solution implies that unemployment is a factor in crime...).

Sometimes there was a tendency to a lack of balance in the responses, with a greater emphasis on Right Realism rather than a clear focus on the question.

Some candidates strayed from explanations of crime and deviance into lengthy discussions about solutions which added little to their responses.

The most utilised theorists were Lea and Young, Kinsey and Matthews.

**Question 3**

This was also a popular question with many candidates showing a sound understanding of the nature of social constructionism, relating to issues such as the crime statistics, differential policing practices and priorities relating to social class, age, gender and ethnicity as possible variables. Issues such as labelling, folk devils and moral panics, canteen culture, institutional racism, military policing, were frequently discussed.

On occasions candidates drifted away from the question into a focus on the media or the courts, unrelated to the police.

Imaginative reference to recent student demonstrations related to policing demonstrated an application of the notion of social construction to contemporary society.

The most common theorists and studies cited were Cicourel, Hall, Holdaway, Cohen and the Macpherson Report.

**Question 4**

This was a popular question. Candidates generally had a good knowledge and understanding of Marxism with issues discussed such as the legitimisation of inequality through the hidden curriculum, the nature of meritocracy, the correspondence principle, cultural capital and inequality relating to private education.

Sometimes there was confusion between social classes with middle class advantage being identified as the 'interests of the ruling class'.

Often the term exploitation was used incorrectly: Marxism does not see the education system as exploiting the working class because the education system is not part of the economy (it is part of the superstructure where it may legitimise the system of exploitation).

The most cited writers were Althusser; Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu, Willis and, in terms of evaluation, Parsons, Durkheim and Davis and Moore.

*Teaching Tip*

Encourage candidates to look for opportunities to counter-evaluate, for example when Bourdieu is criticised for being dated more recent studies such as Reay; Sullivan; Ball could be used to support aspects of cultural capital theory.

### **Question 5**

This was another popular question. Generally candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of processes within schools and differential educational achievement in relation to ethnicity. Most candidates were aware of statistical evidence, but sometimes sources of the statistics were not identified.

Candidates often referred to the impact of stereotyping, labelling and teacher expectations. Institutional racism was often discussed and the significance of streaming, setting and banding. The nature of the curriculum and ethnocentricity often featured in candidates responses.

By way of evaluation candidates often discussed the importance of outside school factors such as material and cultural factors in the home, language, etc, but sometimes these were not used as evaluation but were described in length without reference to the question.

A few candidates appeared to ignore the question and wrote almost exclusively about factors outside of schools.

The most common writers referred to were Gillborn; Wright; Coard; Pilkington; Fuller; Mirza; CRE; Pryce; Sewell; the Swann Report.

### **Question 6**

This was also a popular question but less so than questions 4 and 5. Many candidates displayed an impressive knowledge and understanding on policies such as New Deal, Academies, Beacon Schools, EAZs, EiCs, Tuition Fees, specialist schools, EMAs. Reference to earlier policy initiatives were often made relevant by discussing change and continuation in terms of post 1997 policies.

The location of the 'Third Way' approach in relation to New Right and Social Democratic views was often well understood.

Some candidates failed to focus on the question and wrote at length about earlier policy initiatives without relating these to the question.

Many candidates were able to demonstrate an awareness of recent developments in terms of the coalition government, particularly in relation to Tuition Fees and EMAs and some were able to compare Westminster policies with those of the Welsh Assembly Government.

Writers such as Ball, Leach and Campos; Tomlinson; Machin and Vignoles; Smith and Noble; Whitty; Smithers; Furlong and Forsythe were the most cited.

### **Question 7**

This was not as popular as questions 1-6, but was generally well answered. The view that the owners hold power and control of the media was generally located within traditional Marxism, but neo-Marxism was usually discussed as well. An impressive knowledge of the concentration of media ownership, global media empires, horizontal and vertical integration, diversification, etc, was frequently displayed.

By way of evaluation pluralism and postmodernism were most frequently utilised. Reference to the 'democratisation' of knowledge through the Internet was also common.

Weaker responses tended towards impression and anecdote with a lack of support in terms of evidence or reference to sociologists, for example, the influence of Rupert Murdoch in terms of government policy and editorial policy.

The most cited studies and writers were Miliband; Murdock and Golding; Hall; CCCS; GUMG; Philo.

### **Question 8**

This was generally well answered with most candidates showing a sound understanding of different types of content analysis and the relative strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches. Most candidates were able to describe studies in some detail.

Some candidates, however, wrote generalised accounts of the methodology without reference to specific examples of research. Sometimes reliability and validity were confused.

The most frequently used studies were those of GUMG, Philo, Ferguson, Lobban, Gauntlett and Best.

### **Question 9**

This was not, in general, as well answered as question 8 with a tendency towards generalisations and an over-reliance on contemporary examples with a lack of supporting evidence. Most candidates had a good awareness of negative stereotyping with explanations of why some groups are presented more negatively than others. Many candidates were able to show an awareness of how representations may vary across media products and outlets, for example, satellite as opposed to mainstream channels.

Many candidates referred to how minority ethnic groups may be presented in a limited range of stereotypical roles, are marginalised and may be seen in roles constructed from a white perspective.

The range of material within answers and the level of analysis could have been improved by looking at distinct categories of media (eg broadcast and print) or forms of representation (eg news versus entertainment).

By way of evaluation most candidates referred to globalisation, new technologies and media products, evidence of improvements in the representation of some minority ethnic groups.

The most cited writers/studies were Hall, Gilroy, Van Dijk, Malik, GUMG.

### **Question 10**

This was not a popular question. Most candidates were aware of competing definitions of power and were able to locate the view in the question within neo-Marxism. Many candidates demonstrated a good understanding of concepts such as legitimisation, discourse, hegemony, false consciousness, ideology, ideological and repressive state apparatus.

Weaker responses relied on contemporary examples unsupported by evidence or theory.

Most candidates, by way of evaluation, discussed pluralism and/or postmodernism.

The most cited writers/studies were Poulantzas, Gramsci, Miliband, Althusser, Marcuse, Foucault, Lukes.

### **Question 11**

This was also not a popular question. Postmodernism was generally well understood and most candidates differentiated between new social movements, pressure groups and old social movements.

Globalisation was frequently discussed, as was the notion of 'identity'. Weaker responses described examples of new social movements in some detail but without reference to postmodern explanations.

By way of evaluation, Marxism was most often employed, particularly in relation to issues of social class.

The most cited writers/studies were Habermas, Klein, Marcuse, Touraine, Meluci, Crock.

### **Question 12**

This was not a popular question. Most candidates were able to describe examples of riots and relate these to concepts such as marginalisation, exclusion, deprivation, policing, institutional racism. Marginalisation in terms of both social class and ethnicity were often discussed. Weaker responses did not differentiate between riots and other types of protest.

By way of evaluation, Conservative/New Right views were utilised with concepts such as cultural deprivation often cited.

The writers/studies most often referred to were Scarman, Gilroy, Lea and Young, Back, Cashmore.

## G674 Exploring Social Inequality and Difference

### General Comments

There were a very small number of candidates for this the third opportunity to sit this paper. It is expected that many more candidates sit this paper in the June series at the end of the two year course.

As last year, it is pleasing to report that the standards attained were generally good; candidates and centres are to be congratulated on their achievements.

The paper is designed to test candidates' knowledge and understanding of social inequality and difference, and the connections between sociological theory and methods of sociological enquiry within this context. The paper is synoptic and linked to the core themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. In addition the paper tests candidates' ability to interpret and evaluate sociological theory, research and evidence.

From the evidence of candidate responses, the source material and questions were straight forward to comprehend and understood well by candidates of all abilities. The vast majority of candidates were able to respond to the questions appropriately and demonstrate positive achievement. The paper also differentiated successfully.

In Section A candidates are expected to show knowledge and understanding of methodology and evaluate a research strategy within a specific context outlined within some source material. In this session the source material was based upon a study of ethnicity and the experience of work and education for different cultural and religious groups reported in the journal 'Sociology' in 2009. The study essentially employed a positivist approach and used statistical methods of analysis on secondary data gathered from the UK Government Census.

In Section A, in order to evaluate the research strategy, candidates are expected to use a range of methodological concepts and approaches. It is therefore essential that candidates are familiar with and able to apply some of the key sociological methodological concepts, including validity, reliability, representativeness, and generalisability. Centres should try to ensure that candidates know these key concepts and have had opportunity to apply them in the evaluation of research during their courses. Understanding theoretical approaches to methodology is also vital. It is important for candidates to encounter a range of research studies, related to the study of social inequality and difference, and have the opportunity to critically evaluate their methodology and findings during the course.

In Section B candidates are expected to show knowledge and understanding of substantive topics in Social Inequality and Difference and evaluate different theoretical perspectives, notably Functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, Weberian, Post Modern and Feminist.

In the choice of questions in Section B candidates revealed a slight preference for the question on social class inequality, as opposed to race and ethnic inequality.

In general, candidates seemed to benefit from careful preparation for this examination by centres. They had clearly undertaken stimulating, well designed courses that were effective in developing the skills to be tested. In addition, examination technique was generally good. To improve performance candidates should be encouraged to:

- Answer the question set and refer back to the question regularly; this especially helps candidates to demonstrate the skill of interpretation and application

- Use a variety of different forms of sociological evidence, which may be empirical studies, data, concepts, theory and contemporary examples
- Refer to sociological concepts, studies and theory wherever relevant
- Evaluate theories and research strategies by referring to both strengths and weaknesses.
- Avoid simple assertion, opinion and anecdotal evidence.

Candidates seemed to have sufficient time for the tasks. The vast majority completed all of the questions within the time allocated. There were very few rubric errors; only a very few candidates attempted both of the optional questions.

However it is still worth noting that some centres had clearly advised candidates to attempt first those questions with higher mark allocations. Whilst this strategy might help some candidates to focus attention on those parts of the paper where gaining marks is statistically more likely, an uneven allocation of time significantly different to the proportion of the marks awarded per question is not helpful to candidates. There was evidence of some being penalised by giving a disproportionate amount of time to the questions with most marks at the expense of the others. As a result the overall pattern of marks awarded was likely to be skewed and therefore reduced overall performance. There is no doubt that the best examination technique is to allocate time in proportion to the marks and not to neglect any of the four questions required.

## **Comments on Individual Questions**

### **Question 1**

The majority of candidates were able to answer this question, revealing a good knowledge and understanding of operationalisation in sociological research, drawing upon the information in the source material and their own background knowledge from across the Specification to illustrate their responses.

Most candidates understood that operationalisation is generally regarded as the process of defining a concept or idea so that it can be measured in sociological research. It is an important part of planning and designing research in sociology. Abstract concepts have to be translated into a form which enables data to be gathered about the ideas being investigated. The method used often shapes how a concept may be operationalised. For example, observation and experiments usually record behaviour and actions whilst interviews and questionnaires record opinions and views.

Abstract concepts are usually turned into operationalised definitions with different components or dimensions that have clear indicators that can be recorded and usually measured. For example in the Source Material the concept of ethnic-religious background was, 'operationalised through religion and visible skin colour differences'.

Candidates tended to recognise that positivists methodological approaches needed to operationalise key concepts in order to ensure valid and reliable data that could be used for generalising and which was replicable.

Candidates tended to refer to concepts such as:

- measurement
- recording data
- data analysis
- quantitative and qualitative approaches
- patterns and trends
- abstract concepts
- operational definitions

- validity
- reliability
- practicality
- value freedom
- reflexive.

Candidates tended to describe a range of advantages of operationalisation. These usually included reference to the following concepts and issues:

- practicality – large amounts of data may be collected from many different people relatively cheaply and quickly
- data easily quantified and analysed, possibly using computers
- avoids confusion due to different interpretations of variables, their meaning and measurement
- value freedom
- objectivity
- comparability with other research studies and findings
- discovering patterns and trends
- generalising to wider population more justified due to large samples.

Examples of operationalisation drawn from the source included:

- ethnic-religious background being defined as religion and visible skin colour differences
- educational attainment as qualifications
- class as occupation
- gender as male or female
- age in years.

There were many examples of operationalisation used from general background knowledge

The best responses related their responses clearly and systematically to the source material, using the research by Khattab to illustrate their answers.

## **Question 2**

The majority of candidates answered this question well, revealing a good knowledge and understanding of using statistical trends and patterns in sociological research and related methodological issues, drawing upon the information in the source material and their own background knowledge from across the Specification to illustrate their responses.

Most candidates understood that the use of statistical trends and patterns is usually associated with quantitative approaches that reflect the view that sociological research should be based upon positivist or scientific methods of direct, systematic observation and the gathering of empirical evidence which can be used to develop statements about the nature of human behaviour similar to laws in science, which can be tested or falsified, for example through hypotheses.

Candidates generally understood that positivists believed that researchers should be as 'objective' as possible in their work; maintaining a neutral position in conducting research and not allowing personal views and values to bias the results, attaching importance to the replication of research by other investigators.

Candidates usually referred to the quantitative methods of:

- questionnaires
- structured interviews
- statistical data
- content analysis
- quantitative data analysis.

Most candidates related their responses to the research issues and methodological approaches found in the source material – that of the *relationship between ethnicity and experiences of education and work*. They also contrasted positivism to interpretive, critical, feminist or post-modern approaches to social research, showing knowledge and understanding of the key focus of the question through this discussion. Discussion of Durkheim, Weber, Merton, Popper and other positivist theorists was present in some responses.

Candidates tended to refer to methodological issues and concepts such as:

- correlation and causation
- variables
- quantitative methods
- statistical data
- patterns and trends
- subjectivity and objectivity
- value freedom
- validity – accuracy/truthfulness/reality of data gathered
- reliability – the degree to which the methods produced comparable of data if repeated
- replication
- falsification
- access
- target population
- sampling
- generalising.

Most candidates discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the view that analysis of statistical trends and patterns is the best way to understand ethnic inequality.

Candidates generally referred to methodological issues and concepts such as:

- the influence of the original purpose of official statistics on quality of data gathered and subsequent uses
- sample size effects
- representativeness
- generalisability
- subject and researcher biases
- fitness for purpose
- complexity of social life and difficulty in isolating the impact of different variables
- difficulties in establishing cause and effect
- not seeing reality of social life
- difficulties in exploring meanings and personal experience
- sensitivity to disadvantage and potential exploitation.

Ethical issues were sometimes raised, for example of confidentiality and the potential impact on the lives of those studied, including raising sensitive issues, especially of racism.

Many candidates also contrasted positivism to interpretive, critical, feminist or post-modern approaches to social research, showing skills of evaluation and analysis through this discussion.

### **Question 3**

**(a)** Candidates tended to draw upon their knowledge and understanding of patterns of racism and ethnic inequality from different units within the specification, as well as the G674 unit itself. Aspects of ethnic inequality that were identified and discussed by many candidates were:

- education
- employment
- income and wealth
- health and welfare
- housing
- political power
- patterns of crime and deviance
- mass media images and representation.

Candidates often recognised and discussed differences between minority ethnic groups. The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- race
- racism and institutional racism
- migration
- ethnicity
- nationalism
- globalisation
- ethnic penalty
- economic, social and cultural capital
- class
- status
- power
- poverty
- income and wealth
- social exclusion
- marginalisation
- dual labour markets
- situational constraints
- access to power and political representation.

Candidates often referred to writers such as:

- Banton
- Richardson and Lambert
- Castles and Kosack
- Rex
- Miles
- Cox
- BCCCS
- Lawrence
- Gilroy
- Runnymede Trust
- Said
- Alexander

- Cohen
- Pilkington
- Hall
- Modood
- Rattansi
- Malik.

The impact on inequality of class, gender and age was compared or contrasted with ethnicity by a few candidates, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions, especially by the most able candidates. Differences in advantage/disadvantage between different ethnic minority groups were identified by many, especially at the higher levels of response.

Candidates were most likely to outline theoretical evidence and make some reference to empirical studies. Some introduced relevant data and contemporary examples to good effect. The most effective responses made appropriate use of all these types of sociological evidence. Candidates gaining marks at the highest levels of response tended to describe how ethnicity and racism affected a range of different areas of social life supported by several different types of evidence, including empirical studies, data, concepts, theory and contemporary examples.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to the concept of racism and inequality. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

**(b)** Candidates were expected to outline and assess several sociological approaches to explaining ethnic inequality. Most candidates were able to describe these approaches at least simply with a few relevant concepts. The best responses did so comprehensively in a wide ranging and detailed manner.

The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- nationalism
- racism
- migration
- identity
- representation
- reserve army of labour
- underclass
- social exclusion and marginalisation
- globalisation
- class and occupational structure
- status
- power and political representation
- reserve army
- human capital theory
- dual labour market
- patriarchy
- culture.

Candidates tended to refer to writers such as:

- Cox
- Gilroy
- Bauman

- Goldberg
- Rattansi
- Malik
- Modood
- Hall
- Giddens
- Pilkington.

Ethnic inequalities in different aspects of social life were used to illustrate answers, such as education, employment, income and wealth, health and welfare, media, housing, political power, and patterns of crime and deviance. Alternative theoretical explanations of ethnic inequality and difference were explored and/or juxtaposed, for example Marxist, neo-Marxist, functionalist, Weberian, feminist and post modern. The impact on inequality of gender, class and age were often compared or contrasted with ethnicity, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

Some candidates simply described and juxtaposed different theoretical approaches. More effective responses used alternative approaches to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of each and evaluated in a sustained and explicit manner throughout. The best responses also tended to conclude the answer with a specific, clear assessment of different explanations.

In assessing and evaluating different sociological explanations of ethnic inequality, candidates tended to present a range of issues, including:

- provides understanding of ethnic inequality in relation to identity, changing cultural patterns and social networks – post modern approaches
- useful to understand experience and meanings of ethnic groups – interpretive approach
- useful to include emotional and subjective elements of human experience – interpretive approaches
- highlights importance of different experiences of different ethnic groups
- underestimates other dimensions to inequality and their inter-relationship – gender, age and class
- focuses on structural aspects of ethnic inequality
- emphasises impact of class and economic factors – Marxist approaches
- emphasises status, power and political processes in inequality – Weberian approaches.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to the concept of ethnic inequality. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

#### **Question 4**

**(a)** Candidates generally used their knowledge and understanding of patterns of social class advantage and disadvantage from different units within the specification, as well as the G674 unit itself. Most candidates correctly focused upon the relative advantages of the middle class. Aspects of social life in which class and advantage were most often identified and discussed included:

- education
- employment
- income and wealth
- health and welfare
- housing
- political power

*Examiners' Reports – January 2011*

- patterns of crime and deviance
- portrayal within the media.

Candidates usually described middle class advantage, although weaker responses tended to generalise about all classes or attempt to describe all classes.

The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- economic, cultural and social capital
- status
- power
- market situation
- life chances
- wealth and income
- poverty
- discrimination
- prejudice
- stereotypes
- underclass
- labelling
- access to power and political representation
- old boy networks
- private education
- different social classes – ruling, upper, middle, working, lower, underclass
- occupational structure
- professionals
- social exclusion
- marginalisation
- fragmentation
- embourgeoisement
- proletarianisation
- social mobility
- class identity and culture.

Empirical evidence and data from the Low Pay Unit, the Census, government statistics, Social Trends and other sources were often used.

Candidates tended to refer to writers such as:

- Marx
- Weber
- Parsons
- Westergaard and Resler
- Scott
- Lansley
- Saunders
- Braverman
- Lockwood
- Goldthorpe
- Savage
- Devine
- Murray
- Giddens
- Gallie

- Bourdieu
- Charlesworth
- Skeggs
- Pakulski and Waters.

Different theoretical explanations for class inequality were often identified and discussed, including Marxist, neo-Marxist, functionalist, post modern, Weberian and feminist. These alternative theoretical explanations of social inequality and difference were explored and/or juxtaposed. The impact on inequality of age, gender and ethnicity was sometimes compared or contrasted with class, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

Candidates were most likely to outline theoretical evidence and make some reference to empirical studies. Some introduced relevant data and contemporary examples to good effect. The most effective responses made appropriate use of all these types of sociological evidence.

Candidates gaining marks at the highest levels of response tended to describe how ethnicity affected a range of different areas of social life supported by several different types of evidence, including empirical studies, data, concepts, theory and contemporary examples.

Contemporary examples used included:

- Impact of economic recession on middle class position
- Continuing importance of private education and health
- Increasing inequality in the distribution of wealth and income
- Access to jobs and internships through the old boy network in many professions
- New taxation regimes hitting higher earners
- Less emphasis on middle class crime eg fraud, tax evasion, etc.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to the concept of middle class advantage and inequality. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

**(b)** Candidates were expected to outline and assess the view that social class is becoming less significant in the contemporary UK. Responses tended to focus on Post Modern and Marxist approaches to class inequality. Most candidates were able to describe these and other approaches at least simply with a few relevant concepts. The best responses did so comprehensively in a wide ranging and detailed manner.

Most candidates described and evaluated Post Modern and Marxist explanations of ethnic inequality using the following concepts:

- class
- reserve army
- exploitation
- legitimation
- divide and rule
- resistance
- social closure
- underclass
- situational constraints
- fragmentation
- identity
- hybrid identities
- diversity

- cultural differences
- individualisation
- consumption
- risk society
- status
- power
- gender inequality
- ethnic inequality
- patriarchy.

Candidates tended to refer to Post Modern and Marxist writers such as:

- Lyotard
- Baudrillard
- Pakulski and Waters
- Beck
- Westergaard
- Bradley
- Giddens
- Miles
- Marx
- Weber
- Bourdieu
- Goldthorpe
- Lockwood
- Savage
- Devine.

Changing or continuing class inequalities in different aspects of social life were used to illustrate answers, such as education, employment, income and wealth, health and welfare, housing, political power, and patterns of crime and deviance. Alternative theoretical explanations of class inequality and difference were explored and/or juxtaposed, for example functionalist, neo-Marxist, Weberian, and feminist. The impact on inequality of age, gender and ethnicity was compared or contrasted with class, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions by a few of the most able candidates.

More effective responses highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches and evaluated in a sustained and explicit manner throughout. The best responses also tended to conclude the answer with a specific, clear assessment of one or more theoretical approaches.

Candidates were expected to evaluate the view that social class is no longer significant in the contemporary UK, presenting a range of strengths and/or weaknesses of this view and different theoretical interpretations of social class in society. Arguments tended to include:

- Reflects changes in post industrial societies, especially over greater material wealth and knowledge based economies
- Recognises diversity and a variety of different dimensions to social inequality – gender, ethnicity, age, race, culture
- Emphasizes importance of culture and status in patterns of inequality
- Acknowledges the changing and fragmented nature of social inequality
- Underestimates the importance of class and wealth in inequality and determination of lifestyle and identity
- Lack of empirical evidence – often based on assertion

*Examiners' Reports – January 2011*

- Ignores evidence for the hardening of class inequality due to increased inequalities of wealth and income, the power of the 'super rich' and international corporations (Westergaard)
- Doesn't acknowledge the way class and other aspects of inequality may reinforce each other, eg race and gender
- The role of political processes in addressing inequalities is underestimated
- theory may be applied to many societies – universalistic
- under-emphasizes social structure and stability.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to changing concepts of class and inequality. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
**1 Hills Road**  
**Cambridge**  
**CB1 2EU**

**OCR Customer Contact Centre**

**14 – 19 Qualifications (General)**

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: [general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk](mailto:general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk)

**[www.ocr.org.uk](http://www.ocr.org.uk)**

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance programme your call may be recorded or monitored

**Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations**  
**is a Company Limited by Guarantee**  
**Registered in England**  
**Registered Office; 1 Hills Road, Cambridge, CB1 2EU**  
**Registered Company Number: 3484466**  
**OCR is an exempt Charity**

**OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)**  
**Head office**  
**Telephone: 01223 552552**  
**Facsimile: 01223 552553**

© OCR 2011

