

Examiners' Reports

June 2011

HX81/R/11

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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.

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Chief Examiner's Report

H181

AS level sociology consists of two units, based around the core themes of socialisation, culture and identity. Approximately half of the total number of candidates for G671 enter in the January session, whereas the vast majority of G672 candidates enter for the May session. This pattern shows that most centres start their sociology course by teaching G671 and this is followed by G672.

Across both units, there are very few rubric errors and candidates are generally able to allocate their time effectively and attempt to answer all question parts. The assessment objectives are the same across both units and across the exam papers,

Candidates are tested on their sociological knowledge and understanding as well as their skills of interpretation and application. As the following reports demonstrate, 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.

Candidates with a very basic understanding of sociological evidence, tended to rely 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. Many candidates have a good knowledge of contemporary social issues and current affairs which they used well to illustrate their answers. Candidates who relied heavily on contemporary examples at the expense of studies, concepts and theories tended to be awarded marks at a basic level.

Key research concepts and the knowledge and understanding of these is used to differentiate between good and basic responses at AS level. The detailed reports included in this document suggest that, across both examination papers, candidates needed to be better prepared in the skill of interpretation and application. This skill is often about responding to the specific question or context.

H581

As with the AS, there were very few rubric errors and the majority of candidates answered all questions, or all question parts. Candidates were generally very well prepared for these examinations and had a good knowledge of the way in which the subject is assessed. Many candidates had a good awareness of current affairs and could use this to illustrate classic sociological debates.

As with G671, G673 also had a higher entry in January than in June this year, showing that the majority of centres start the A2 course by teaching the Power and Control unit.

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, with a source item, combining sociological research methods with social inequality and difference. G674 also requires that candidates draw upon their wider sociological knowledge of key themes around social inequality and difference. They are, however, weighted equally at 50 per cent each of the A2 course and they both have synoptic elements, particularly surrounding sociological theory and methods of enquiry.

G671 Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments:

This session saw a wide range of candidate performance both between and within individual centres. As centres become increasingly familiar with the structure of this examination paper, there is some evidence that candidates are more aware of the assessment requirements of each question. 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 Q4 has half the marks for the exam paper, they should be spending half the time answering this question. There is some evidence that candidates performed better on Q1 and Q3 compared to previous sessions. It was significantly noticeable that a large number of candidates could not answer Q2 in a sociological way. There is a more detailed commentary on this question in the section below.

It may be useful to clarify the role and purpose of the pre-release material. The pre-release material is specifically related to Q4 on the examination paper as this question contains the instruction "using the pre-release material...". The focus of Q4 is always on sociological methods and the research process, and the aim of this question is to enable candidates to discuss methodological issues in the context of a piece of contemporary research focused on culture, 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 Q4. 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 asking candidates to write about these areas may wish to draw upon the pre-release as a piece of sociological evidence. It may happen, as it did this session, that the pre-release material could be referred to in every question: For Q1 candidates could make references to the role of women in relation to the question on 'roles'; Q2 how the workplace may have an impact on women's identity; and Q3 – as an evaluation point to the concept of femininity.

Candidates who rely on the pre-release material as their only source of evidence are not going to score highly as they will be unable to display a 'wide range' of knowledge & understanding which is required for the top band. In other sessions, there may not be so many links to the pre-release material in Q1, Q2 or Q3 and candidates will need to be able to draw on a range of sociological evidence. It is pleasing to note that previous pre-release studies (such as Carolyn Jackson or McKenzie et. al.) are being used as sociological evidence in Q2 and Q3.

Teachers' 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 candidates could draw upon.*

In relation to Q2, a large number of candidates had little sociological knowledge of the workplace as an agency of socialisation, despite it featuring in the specification. It is not recommended that centres try to 'question spot'; particularly for Q1 and Q3 as, although there may well be some link with the pre-release, this may be a very vague connection as the main aim is to test candidates on the specification content. Teachers would be advised to plan their teaching

around the seven key issues stated on the specification (particularly on the key content in the left hand side of the specification content), rather than using the pre-release material as a guide for what to prioritise.

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. This was particularly well done in responses to Q3 where many candidates were able to draw upon a range of sociological studies of how the family socialises people into feminine identity. A large number of responses 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 of contemporary examples will not score very highly as, on their own, contemporary examples are not good sociology.

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 examples of the 'slut walk' protest marches to illustrate a point on Q3 about femininity. 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 "the workplace socialises people because it means that people can make new friends and get to know new people".

Most candidates allocated the use of time effectively, spending the longest on Q4 which is worth just over half marks of the whole paper. There is evidence that Q4 responses have improved in quality since the start of this new unit. Some candidates did experience timing issues; most commonly by spending too much time on Q1 which should be allocated approximately five minutes, or by spending too long on Q4 at the expense of the other three questions. There continues to be a clear centre effect on this paper. Candidates who had been prepared well 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 copying out large parts of the findings or armed with very little sociological knowledge for Q1, Q2 and Q3.

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 Q2, candidates who discussed the workplace as an agency of socialisation with reference to formal / informal social control and negative/positive sanctions, scored more highly than those who wrote about work-place uniforms.

In terms of assessment objectives, Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) remains the strongest area; 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 Q3, candidates were able to offer good explanations of what femininity is and how it is changing but failed to focus on how the family socialises individuals into a feminine identity. It is also worth pointing out that a significant number of candidates are not offering any evaluation for Q3, which is worth 4 marks and candidates must be reminded that there is also an evaluative element to this question.

Teachers' 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 candidates work so that they are aware of being marked according to the three separate assessment objectives.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

In general this question was answered very well and the majority of candidates understood the core meaning of the concept of 'role' by relating it to expected patterns of behaviour of a person in a particular position. Some candidates confused the concept of 'roles' with 'status' by, for example, stating that "roles are about your position in society". This type of answer was awarded marks for being a 'partial answer' as it didn't focus enough on the idea of behaviour or norms associated with the position. Similarly, some responses took this as a question on 'gender roles' and whilst they tended to score highly for examples, failed to pinpoint an actual definition of roles in general. There were many candidates who achieved full marks for this question and most of these started by offering a clear one-sentence definition (2 marks), followed by some development of this by, for example, explaining that some roles are ascribed / achieved; or by explaining that individuals have different roles and that this sometimes leads to role conflict (this would gain another 2 marks). Four out of the eight marks are available for giving examples and a lot of responses used the examples of gender roles or occupational roles. Those who achieved the full four marks for examples were able to explain what the typical behaviour was related to that role. For example, the role of a father is traditionally associated with taking responsibility for financially supporting the family, or for disciplining children. There were a few very sophisticated answers which took a Marxist or functionalist approach to understanding roles and some candidates used the pre-release material to discuss changing roles.

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 spend approximately 5 minutes only on this question. There was also some evidence that some candidates (who had maybe studied the family topic for G672) wrote at length about 'The role of the family in society' and produced detailed answers which were well beyond what was required.

Teachers' Tip: Q1 is always a concept question taken from the specification content. Ensure that your candidates have detailed definitions and examples for each one. You could do a classroom display with them all on.

Question 2

A lot of candidates failed to display any sociological knowledge of the workplace as an agency of socialisation. The best responses used sociological concepts such as formal and informal social control; positive and negative sanctions; resocialisation and canteen culture. Some strong responses organised their answers around how the workplace socialises individuals into their gender or class identities; by doing it this way, some responses could include theoretical interpretations, such as Marxism and feminism. The most commonly cited studies were Mac an Ghail (relating the crisis of masculinity to a decline in the traditional manual workplace), Ritzer and Waddington, but on the whole, there was an absence of studies for this question.

Those responses which answered through focusing on how the workplace socialises individuals into their age, ethnicity, gender or class identities often failed to make an explicit connection to the workplace; instead, reverting to the impact of home and family and failing to link to processes at work. For example, some candidates stated that gender differences mean that males and females do different types of work. Or, popularly, women don't get top jobs because

of the 'glass ceiling' but they failed to tie that in with socialisation at work. Likewise, some candidates discussed Mir Song's research into the Chinese people restaurant business but failed to link this to workplace socialisation. Social class was dealt with in a similar way with ones class affecting the type of work one does rather than focusing on the processes within work that may socialise someone into different behaviours. Much of candidates' responses were therefore implicitly relevant only.

Those that purely relied on contemporary examples tended not to be able to demonstrate enough breadth or depth of knowledge to reach the higher mark bands. Weaker responses were confused and / or anecdotal, showing no real understanding of how the workplace socialises individuals, for example confusing socialisation with socialising with colleagues inside or outside the workplace.

Teachers' Tip: For each of the agencies of socialisation listed in the specification, encourage candidates to be able to write two ways in which it socialises individuals.

Question 3

A well answered question and many candidates were able to discuss a wide range of studies in relation to how the family socialises females. The most popular cited study was Oakley's work on gender role socialisation and many candidates discussed this in depth, even if Oakley's name wasn't specifically cited, including concepts such as manipulation, canalisation, verbal appellations. The best answers contained a wide range of evidence (not just relying on Oakley) and a real focus on how femininity is reinforced via the family as an agent of socialisation.

Another feature of stronger responses was the presence of explicit evaluation of the question. The most common approach was to note that there are a variety of femininities now and therefore it is too simplistic to argue that the family socialises individuals into one single femininity. This type of evaluation was often linked to feminism and/or postmodernism. Alternatively, some candidates questioned the importance of the family by arguing that other agencies of socialisation (especially the media), reinforces femininity. Where evaluation was weaker, candidates only evaluated in an implicit way by, for example, just stating there are different types of femininity rather than directly challenging the role of the family in socialising females. Some candidates spend too much time evaluating the view in the question whilst there are also a significant number of candidates who don't offer evaluation points at all and therefore loose four potential marks. Candidates need to be reminded that this question will always start with the instruction to '*explain and briefly evaluate*'. Candidates whose answers lacked an explicit focus on femininity, and offered knowledge about masculinity or gender identity in general didn't score so highly.

Question 4

There was a wide range of responses to this question. Although the question focused on qualitative methods, most candidates only discussed the method in the pre-release material of semi-structured interviews. Whilst this is a totally acceptable way of answering this question, many candidates were unclear about what a semi-structured interview actually is. It should be noted that in the specification, semi-structured interview falls under the 'qualitative data' section and, therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of this method should revolve around the qualitative nature of it, given that this was the focus of the question.

Strong responses were able to clearly identify the main features of semi-structured interviews as having an interview schedule/question framework but one which allows for some flexibility and discretion. A good technique in explaining what a semi-structured interview entails was to compare it to the other types (structured and/or unstructured) of interview as well as to compare it to a questionnaire.

Candidates who stated that semi-structured interviews were a 'mix of questions; some closed and some open-ended' had only a partial understanding of the method because this description could actually fit the criteria of a structured interview. Therefore, the stronger candidates were able to understand that a semi-structured interview tends to generate more qualitative data and would be favoured by Interpretivists. A key differentiator in marking this question was candidate's use of the key concepts as highlighted in the specification – validity, reliability, representativeness and generalisability. Candidates who did not explicitly use these concepts achieved marks at the bottom of level 2. Some candidates 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, wide-ranging and developed way. Even where candidates correctly discussed the key concepts, they were often not developed enough in explanation.

Candidates achieved high marks when they understood methodological pluralism or triangulation. In some cases whole centres included a generic discussion of these terms but they didn't always understand how to apply it to this context and make it relevant.

The high achieving responses tended to systematically explain the method, offering a range of strengths and weaknesses and 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, linking Gillespie's research design to the Interpretivist tradition and offering a Positivist critique. It is clear that some candidates had only a basic understanding of the pre-release material; for example, stating that semi-structured interviews contain lots of quantitative data, or that the research contains two separate methods. The questionnaire was only designed to find a sample; it was not a method used to generate the findings. Furthermore, it is clear from the findings described in the pre-release that the data gathered was mainly qualitative. Strong responses recognised the unique and detailed nature of the findings and used these to illustrate strengths/weaknesses of the method.

Teachers should be encouraged to spend some time teaching the content of the pre-release material in preparation for the exam. Many candidates wasted time copying out the pre-release material and describing the findings of the study. 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. The exam question will always require candidates to go wider than this; to address research issues, methods, process and concepts and using the pre-release as an illustrative example.

Twelve marks are awarded for AO2a and in this question it is about how well the candidate contextualises their responses. The majority of candidates offered very generalised answers or just threw in the words 'childfree' or 'women'. 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 (childfree women) on THIS particular topic (why women are choosing child-freedom)". 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 the sensitivity of the topic area and the difficulty of building rapport/trust in a way that encourages women to open up about their thoughts and identity. Candidates who did score more highly on this skill engaged much more fully with the context, often using the sample as an opportunity to explore the possible differences in the attitudes of different types of women (in relation to age, ethnicity, region etc) to childlessness. Others focussed on Gillespie and her personal characteristics and made a link to the context this way. There was a clear centre effect in terms of contextualisation.

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 that you would be unlikely to get such a personal, complex picture of their identity by using a closed-ended questionnaire.

Some centres had encouraged 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 candidates not to spend time describing the findings of other studies as this is a question about methods. There were a number of candidates who lost time by discussing the questionnaire used to generate the sample where the question was specifically on qualitative methods. It is important that centres don't teach a pre-prepared 'cover all' type answer; it is recommended that candidates are taught to understand this particular piece of research so that they can be confident and knowledgeable enough to address any question which comes up in the exam.

G672 Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments

Most candidates were able to show sociological knowledge and understanding by accurately referring to theories, studies and concepts. Others needed to explain ideas more fully and apply them so that the evidence they included was developed in a way that answered the question. The best answers were both wide ranging and detailed and showed a broad and in-depth knowledge 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.

Generally candidates used their time appropriately, producing approximately three quarters of a side of A4 on part (a) questions and approximately two sides on part (b) questions. Few appeared to run out of time on the second part (b) question. A 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.

Part (a) Questions

Many candidates correctly identified two points and could develop these using evidence. Others needed more focused answers that clearly identified and then explained each of the two points.

Candidates can improve their marks by making sure that they:

- Carefully select the two points that can be best supported with evidence
- 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 eg criticisms are not needed in part (a) questions as there are no marks for evaluation.

Teachers' 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 $\frac{3}{4}$ of a page on a part (a) answer.

Part (b) Questions

Most candidates were trying to use knowledge of sociological concepts, theories and research in answering questions. Perspectives based answers on the lines of 'functionalists would argue x while Marxists would argue y' need also to offer empirical data, examples or research to illustrate/support these arguments. Most candidates were aware of the need to include alternative perspectives and arguments as part of their evaluation. Some candidates, who juxtaposed different views, needed to explicitly evaluate evidence and arguments and use evaluative language to assist this process.

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 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 can be used in such a way that it supports or refutes an argument being made and avoids 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.

Teachers' 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 to some candidates who tend to list evidence without applying it to the question.

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. Including phrases that explicitly use the wording of the question can encourage application to the question eg 'This study shows that radical feminists view relationships in the family as oppressive to women'.

Many candidates demonstrate very good skills in analysis and evaluation. Others need to avoid 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.

Teachers' 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 eg 'however', 'on the other hand', 'conversely', 'on the contrary', 'in contrast', 'this evidence can be criticised because...'

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1 (a)

Excellent responses to this question included detailed explanations that showed a clear understanding of the ways in which demographic changes have an impact on family life. Some cited two different demographic changes and others explained positive and negative impacts related to the same change. A number of candidates had difficulty in identifying valid demographic changes and needed to have a clearer understanding of what these were so that they could develop their answer with relevant material. Some candidates, who were unclear

about what demographic changes were, wrote about changes in family life generally and could only be rewarded where there was some relevant material.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates had a good understanding of family diversity and the best responses discussed a range of sociological views, supported these with evidence and used evaluative language as they examined the different arguments. Other candidates needed to develop their knowledge of types of family diversity into a discussion that engaged with the question in order to achieve higher marks.

Question 2 (a)

This question was well answered. Many candidates were able to offer two clear reasons for the increase in single parent families and develop their explanations with a range of evidence using theoretical, empirical and/or conceptual sources. The best responses identified two distinct reasons that did not overlap in their explanation. Some answers needed to be more developed to show wide and detailed knowledge and understanding of why this family type had increased. Others needed to maintain their focus so that their answer was clearly linked to explaining the increase rather than examining views on single parent families.

Question 2 (b)

This question produced a wide range of answers. Many candidates showed wide ranging knowledge and understanding by discussing various different feminist views. The best responses supported these views with evidence and evaluated with critical analysis and counter arguments. Some responses were more generalised on feminist views and needed to examine a broader range of perspectives. Others knew of different feminist views and needed to develop this knowledge with supporting research.

Question 3 (a)

The best answers to this question showed a clear understanding of what lay definitions were and explained these using evidence. Candidates did not always accurately identify lay definitions. Some responses described theoretical views generally and could only be rewarded marks where there was some relevant material.

Question 3 (b)

Good answers discussed artefact explanations in detail and used evidence in support before examining counter views. Responses that were brief or unclear on artefact explanations and used most of their answer to discussing other explanations could not be rewarded highly.

Question 4 (a)

The best answers identified two distinct ways and used supporting evidence that showed a clear understanding of the question. Some responses were confused or uncertain on social construction and offered more generalised answers. Others referred to illness in general and needed to be more focused on mental illness. Responses that referred to films like 'One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest' needed to ensure that sociological evidence was also included in their answer.

Question 4 (b)

Most candidates approached this question by discussing different explanations of the role of health professionals. The best answers outlined the Marxist approach in detail and supported this with relevant research. This was then evaluated and counter arguments were examined to produce a wide ranging and detailed analysis. Many candidates needed to have a more developed section on Marxist explanations. Some were confused in their understanding of Marxist explanations and were better informed when explaining functionalist views.

Question 5 (a)

Many candidates had a strong understanding of the difficulties. Most candidates showed a good understanding and could have gained higher marks by developing their explanation with more evidence and relevant contemporary examples. Others selected explanations that overlapped and needed to be more clearly distinguished.

Question 5 (b)

Most answers to this question were well-informed. Many candidates were able to locate the view accurately and the best answers went on to develop this with supporting evidence. An evaluative tone was evident in many responses where there were explicit criticisms of some views and relevant counter arguments were discussed.

Question 6 (a)

There were many confident and valid responses which made use of theoretical, conceptual and/or empirical material to explain the appeal. Most candidates included two separate reasons with distinct explanations, some of which made use of relevant contemporary examples. Candidates with good responses could have made them into very good ones by developing their explanations.

Question 6 (b)

This question produced very good responses that showed a clear understanding of the debate. Some responses were good although narrow in focus. To achieve the highest marks answers needed to cover a wide range of aspects of the debate and support these with evidence for and against the view. The best answers concluded with a reasoned judgement that made some assessment of the different views involved.

Question 7 (a)

There were some excellent answers that showed range and depth of knowledge and understanding of the relationship between labelling and youth deviance. Most responses drew on relevant conceptual evidence to develop their answer. Some candidates could have achieved higher marks if they had identified two clearly separate ways that were explained with evidence that did not overlap.

Question 7 (b)

There was a variety of responses to this question including many that were excellent. Such answers located the view accurately and discussed supporting research. They also considered alternative views and those achieving the highest marks employed an evaluative tone throughout. This was most evident when the discussion moved between the different views involved. Some candidates were unclear on the meaning of resistance and needed to engage with this aspect of the question to be awarded higher marks.

Question 8 (a)

There were a number of different approaches to this question with many strong answers that identified two distinct ways and used supporting evidence that showed a clear understanding. Some responses were confused or uncertain about the meaning of the question and produced more generalised answers that needed to engage with the question to get higher marks.

Question 8 (b)

This question was well answered and most candidates included counter arguments that referred to other factors such as gender and/or ethnicity. The highest marks were achieved where candidates considered a range of different issues related to class and school experience such as subcultures, labelling, parental involvement, economic status etc. Others needed to develop their answer with a broader range of evidence and include a balanced discussion to achieve more marks. While some of the more traditional material on this area is still relevant, the use of recent research alongside this helps to construct a wide ranging, contemporary discussion.

G673 Power and Control

General Comments

The standard this session was similar to January 2011 with most candidates displaying a wide ranging knowledge and understanding of concepts and studies. Sometimes the understanding lacked depth, however, so that the application and interpretation of these concepts and studies was not clearly explained. Sometimes studies were described at length but not applied to the question set.

On occasions, knowledge and understanding was generalised. 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. However, this was not always the case as feminism was often explained with no differentiation between different strands within feminism.

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 1988 educational policies where many candidates wrote at length about pre-1988 policies without indicating how changes since 1988 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 application 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 Functionalism and Education often produced longer accounts of Marxism than focussing on the question. The material on Marxism was often not directly used to evaluate Marxism but was more description.

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. However, on occasions there was an over-reliance on contemporary examples, often described at length, which strayed into anecdote rather than being contextualised in terms of theory or concepts.

Often candidates demonstrated an impressive knowledge of statistical evidence in their responses, but sometimes these statistics were not sourced. Sometimes phrases such as 'statistics prove that ...' were utilised by candidates but without knowing the source. This 'proof' can be problematic. This is particularly the case with crime questions, where, of course, different sources of statistics (OCS, BCS, etc) produce different data.

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 evaluation became a rote response to every study or theory described, for example that the study was dated (which, of course, all studies are, to some extent). Candidates should be encouraged to explain *why* the dated nature of a study is a problem, for example evidence to demonstrate how a particular aspect of society has changed to therefore make the study less relevant.

To score well candidates need to evaluate throughout their responses and not leave evaluation to the conclusion. This can result often in underdeveloped and sometimes assertive evaluation. Repetition should be avoided as this adds 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.

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.

However, this varied according to the question. For example the questions on crime and deviance sometimes produced very long introductions relating to differences between the concepts of crime and deviance which created time-management problems in the main body of the essay.

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.

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

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

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This question was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to identify Marxism as the crucial theory to discuss. Many candidates were able to differentiate between traditional and neo-Marxism. Frequently, candidates were able to discuss crimes of the powerful, law creation and law enforcement. Stronger candidates also made links to the new criminology and even left realists, as well as studies relating to the police and also white collar / corporate crime. Application to the precise question was attempted by many, often just in the form of lip service however, and some answers became generalised essays on Marxism. Contemporary examples were utilised well in terms of corporate crime. In evaluations both feminism and left realism were frequently cited.

The most utilised theorists were: Bonger, Chambliss, Snider, Box, Miliband, Slapper and Tombs, Hall, Taylor, Walton and Young.

Question 2

Candidates were not as successful in answering this question due to two apparent reasons. Firstly, there appeared to have been too little knowledge in the topic area concerned. Some candidates simply did not know of any feminist explanations or specific studies that had investigated female victimization. Secondly, and possibly related to the first point, the question was misinterpreted by many candidates as 'offending' rather than victimization. Often little attention was paid to the specifics of the question and good general knowledge went largely unrewarded.

Very few candidates discussed different feminist theories, the tendency being to discuss feminism in a general way.

Good responses, however, demonstrated a sound understanding of perspectives such as Liberal, Marxist and Radical Feminism and were able to discuss studies/theories in relation to domestic violence, rape and sexual harassment at work.

The most popular writers referred to were: Dobash and Dobash, Stanko Smart, Walklake, Carrabine and Walby and Allen.

Question 3

This question was generally answered in a more focussed way than question 2. Typically this was a second response, however, and some candidates ran out of time due to the range of theories they wished to discuss.

Most candidates approached the question by beginning with the Chicago School and then moving on to more recent material. This approach generally worked well.

Most candidates were able to apply theories and concepts such as one of transition, opportunity theory, cognitive map theory, tipping in a clear and accurate way. Right realism was also frequently utilised but not always clearly applied to the notion of location.

Often methodological issues were raised in terms of the data utilised by the various explanations.

The most cited studies were: Shaw and McKay, Baldwin and Bottoms, Wilson and Kelling, Brantingham and Brantingham, Morris, Gill.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to focus on post-1988 changes.

Some candidates wrote about an impressive array of policies but ignored the issue of equality of opportunity. A few candidates focussed entirely on the 1988 Education Reform Act and did not explain later, particularly post-1997, developments. This meant that they did not engage with New Labour and their explicit commitment to 'make equality of opportunity a reality'.

Many candidates were able to explain a range of policies and highlight issues around choice, diversity and the national curriculum and the impact on equality of opportunity. Candidates would have benefitted from discussion of theory such as the New Right and Social Democratic theory.

The most popular writers utilised were: Ball, Machin and Vignoles, Leech and Campos, Furlong and Forsythe, Mitsos and Browne, Smith and Noble, Chubb and Moe.

Question 5

This question was often well answered with a clear focus on a range of cultural explanations. Issues were discussed such as cultural deprivation, cultural capital, language codes, immediate and deferred gratification, the significance of values and the role of subculture.

Some candidates wrote generalised accounts of social class differences in educational achievement without focusing on culture. Many responses examined material factors in some depth without relating these to culture.

Some candidates identified cultural explanations as only applying to home/family and missed opportunities to discuss peer-groups and subcultures.

The most often cited writers were: Douglas, Hyman, Sugarman, Bernstein, Bourdieu, Boudon, Willis, Marsland, Phillips, Feinstein.

Question 6

This question was well answered. Most candidates were able to consider the functions of education in relation to the economy, skills, meritocracy, role allocation and issues of selection. Some candidates, however, were able to describe functionalism accurately but did not address the issue of preparation for employment.

Most candidates were able to evaluate functionalism from other perspectives, particularly Marxism, but sometimes the explanation of the Marxist theories was more lengthy than the outline of functionalism.

Popular writers were: Parsons, Durkheim, Davis and Moore, Illich, Finn, Bowles and Gintis, Willis, Chubb and Moe.

Question 7

This question was well answered. Reference was made to theories and models outlining the argument that the effect on audiences is indirect. Most candidates were able to identify the differences between direct and indirect theories. The most common models/theories were the two step flow model, cultural effects model, 'drip-drip' model, uses and gratifications model, hypodermic syringe model.

Candidates needed to differentiate between direct and indirect effects and do more than simply describe models in a generalised way.

Strong responses were able to evaluate media research from a methodological standpoint, for example the difficulties of isolating variables.

The most popular writers identified were: Bandura, Katz and Lazarsfeld, Stack, Gauntlett, Packard, McQuail.

Question 8

Many candidates were able to focus on stereotypes and describe how theoretical explanations relate to why an age group is represented in a particular way. Typically this focused on young or older people but some candidates were able to consider variations such as gender, ethnicity and social class. Others were not clear about the meaning of stereotypes and simply focussed on changing representations of age.

A tendency for some candidates was to respond with many contemporary examples but without support in terms of theory, concepts or studies.

The most popular writers identified were: Hebdige, Hall, Muncie, Fawbert, Osgerby, McRobbie, Cohen.

Question 9

This was generally well answered with most candidates focussing on pluralist views that journalists and editors work autonomously, guided by professional values such as objectivity.

The role of the audience and issues of choice, interests and influence were also discussed by many candidates.

Most candidates utilised Marxist theory to evaluate pluralism and used postmodernism, particularly the concept of hyper-reality.

The most popular writers cited were: GUMG, Philo, Galtung and Ruge, Hall, Trowler, Baudrillard, Chomsky, Marcuse, Curran and Gurevitch.

Question 10

Very few candidates attempted this question but generally responses were well-focused. Most candidates were able to define and explain new social movements, often differentiating NSMs from old social movements. Some candidates would have benefitted from more of a focus on the issue of social change.

The most common theories discussed were collective behaviour theory, resource mobilisation theory, Marxism, post modernism and functionalism. Often contemporary examples were utilised well, particularly in relation to globalisation.

The most common writers cited were: Habermas, Scott, Giddens, Beck, Smelser, Marcuse, Torrance, Offe, Callinicos, Klein.

Question 11

Marxism was generally understood and the distinction between old social movements and new social movements was frequently drawn out well. Sometimes this was over-simplified, however, with an assumption that direct action is a wholly new phenomenon.

Frequently contemporary examples of political action were utilised well, in particular related to non-institutional forms of action facilitated by technological developments.

The most common writers cited were: Hallsworth, Beck, Melucci, Callinicos, Klein, Giddens, Habermas, Touraine, Marcuse.

Question 12

The concept of ideology was often not well understood and there was a tendency for candidates to describe political movements such as Fascism without relating them to contemporary politics and ideology. Most candidates demonstrated the continued significance of ideology but did not consider the arguments of writers proclaiming the end or death of ideology such as Fukuyama and Bell.

The most popular writers cited were: Marx, Freidman and Hayek, Dawson, Bell, Fukuyama, Armstrong, Heywood.

G674 Exploring Social Inequality and Difference

General Comments

Candidates were entered for the GCE A2 Unit 'Exploring Social Inequality and Difference' examination paper in the June session for the second time in 2011.

The standards attained were generally very 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, especially through the analysis of a research case study.

From the evidence of candidate responses, the source material and questions were easily understood 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 case study outlined within a short piece of source material. In this session the source material was based upon an ethnographic study of gender inequality within a youth sub-culture reported in the journal, 'Sociology' in 2009. The study essentially employed an interpretive approach and used mainly qualitative methods, as well as analysis of documentary and media evidence.

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, generalisable and replicable. 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 positivist, interpretive, realist and feminist approaches to methodology is also vital. It is important for candidates to encounter a range of research studies 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 general, the compulsory questions on sociological research were answered very well and there were some excellent responses that demonstrated a deep knowledge and understanding of different methods and types of evidence. Many candidates were aware of the uses of different methods and could evaluate different forms of evidence, based on the method of collection, the source and different theoretical perspectives. Application to the specific case study was often thoughtful.

The questions on gender were answered very well. Candidates demonstrated high levels of knowledge and understanding of different theoretical approaches to gender inequality in general and the concept of patriarchy in particular. Many candidates had a good grasp of the different approaches to feminist thinking, as well as other theoretical frameworks. The questions on age

were also answered well, with many candidates demonstrating a good knowledge and understanding of patterns of age inequality and advantage, as well as functionalist theoretical approaches.

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, and improved in comparison to previous sessions. To improve performance further 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.

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. 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

Most candidates answered this question very well, revealing a good knowledge and understanding of semi-structured interviews 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 semi-structured interviews are generally regarded as a verbal conversation between the researcher and the participant, normally face-to-face, but may be through technology such as telephones, video and the internet. Normally a list of areas for investigation and discussion is drawn up in advance, which provides a guide for the interviewer rather than a fully pre-determined list of questions. Candidates also realised that the sample for semi-structured interviews tends to be small due to the time and costs involved. The evidence gathered may therefore be unrepresentative and make generalisation difficult. The method is generally regarded as providing high validity and low reliability, as there is scope for probing, reflection and clarification. However the method is more difficult to replicate. There is a chance that the checklist of topics does not include all relevant areas of research.

The method is often associated with interpretive and ethnographic approaches to social research, however some candidates recognised that positivist approaches could be accommodated through the use of closed or more structured questions alongside open-ended approaches.

Candidates often referred to concepts such as:

- meanings and experience
- interpretive
- ethnography
- verstehen – empathic understanding of beliefs, values and culture
- empathy
- rapport
- qualitative and quantitative data analysis
- sample size.

Candidates tended to describe a range of uses and advantages of semi-structured interviews. These usually included reference to the following concepts and issues:

- establishing rapport
- creating trust
- achieving verstehen
- improving validity
- gaining first hand primary data
- gathering qualitative and quantitative data
- ensuring understanding of questions
- pursuing new lines of enquiry
- keeping the research on track.

There were many different examples of studies that used semi-structured interviews taken from general background knowledge to illustrate responses, which is creditable.

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

Centres should encourage the use of both the source and their own knowledge and understanding.

Question 2

Most candidates answered this question well, revealing a good knowledge and understanding of ethnography 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.

Candidates generally understood that ethnography within sociological research is generally regarded as the gathering of data by participating in the culture of a social group and using a range of methods to collect evidence, often including directly watching and recording the behaviour of people, usually, but not exclusively, in their everyday lives and in natural settings. Interviews and documentary analysis are also associated with ethnographic research. Some candidates understood reflexive approaches, suggesting that ethnographic researchers should be aware of the way that their own experience, meaning and values might influence their interpretation of other people's culture and experience in the research process and that ethnographic researchers tend to reject the claim that it is possible to produce an objective, neutral account of social reality. As a result they should constantly seek to evaluate and check their interpretations in undertaking research, being clear about and explaining how their own perspectives might influence the progress of research, analysis, interpretation and presentation of research evidence and conclusions.

Candidates generally demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the key methodological concepts of validity, reliability, generalisability and representativeness through discussion of the view that ethnographic research is the best way to study this research problem.

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

- interpretive
- positivist
- realist
- feminist
- empathy
- reflexivity
- subjectivity and objectivity
- validity – accuracy/truthfulness/reality of data gathered
- reliability – comparability of data gathered
- generalisability – the ability to apply evidence and conclusions to the wider population
- representativeness – the degree to which the sample or participants are typical of the wider population
- sample size.

Most candidates discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the view that ethnographic research is the best way to study gender inequality in youth sub-cultures.

Candidates referred to methodological issues and concepts such as:

- the influence of the researcher's culture, values and experience on the quality of data gathered and subsequent uses
- objectivity and subjectivity
- sample size effects
- representativeness of studying one group in Scotland
- respondent validation
- desirable responses
- researcher effects
- researcher imposition
- subject and researcher biases
- fitness for purpose
- the researcher's personal and emotional responses to the culture of participants
- reflexivity.

Ethical issues were often raised, for example of confidentiality and the potential impact on the lives of those studied, including raising sensitive issues, especially of sexism. Many demonstrated a deep understanding of the issues facing sociologists gaining access to sub-cultures and the use of gatekeepers.

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.

The best responses related their responses clearly and systematically to the source material, using the research by Lumsden to illustrate their answers. Some candidates failed to use the source and inevitably restricted the marks that could be gained. Centres should stress the need to use both the source and their own knowledge and understanding.

Question 3

- (a) Candidates generally used their knowledge and understanding of patterns of age 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 different age groups. Some tended to describe age disadvantage and inequality and/or one age group in particular, for example youth, middle age or the elderly.

Aspects of age inequality that were identified and discussed by many candidates were:

- education and training
- employment and unemployment
- income and wealth
- health and welfare
- power and control at work
- patterns of crime and deviance
- promotion and career opportunities
- family position and relationships.

The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- childhood, youth, adulthood and old age
- status
- power
- transition
- life course
- access to work and employment
- ageism
- social exclusion
- marginalization
- dual labour markets and reserve army of labour
- access to power and political representation
- disengagement.

Candidates tended to refer to writers such as:

- Bond et al
- Vincent
- Oakley
- Gannon
- Hockey and James
- Pilcher
- Featherstone and Hepworth
- Blaikie
- Jenks
- McDonald et al.

Theoretical explanations for age inequality were often identified and discussed, mainly including Functionalist, Post modern and Marxist.

Candidates were most likely to outline some theoretical evidence and make 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 different age groups might experience different forms of advantage 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 age and focused clearly on the issue of advantage. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

To demonstrate an appropriate interpretation of the question, candidates needed to address the issue of advantage rather than simply describe the different forms of age inequality.

(b) Candidates were expected to outline and assess Functionalist approaches to explaining age inequality. The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- Socialisation
- Transition
- Archetypal patterns of youth
- Functional disengagement
- Life course
- Social construction of age groups and access to status and power
- Age stratification.

Candidates tended to refer to writers such as:

- Parsons
- Eisenstadt
- Cumming and Henry
- Pilcher
- Gannon
- Bond et al
- Vincent
- Oakley
- Hockey and James
- Featherstone and Hepworth
- Blaikie
- Jenks
- McDonald et al.

Age inequalities in different aspects of social life were often 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 age inequality and difference were usually explored and/or juxtaposed, for example Marxist, neo-Marxist, Weberian, feminist and post modern. The impact on age inequality of ethnicity, gender and class were sometimes compared or contrasted with age, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

Candidates evaluated functionalist explanations of age inequality well in many cases, presenting a range of strengths and/or weaknesses of these approaches to understanding age inequality. Arguments included:

- structural understanding of age inequality
- emphasizes the biological and cultural aspects of age
- may be applied to a range of different societies – universalistic
- highlights contribution of different stages in the life course to the functioning of society
- pessimistic about the contribution of the elderly to society
- underestimates conflict and power relationships between different age groups
- neglects gender, class and ethnicity
- postmodern critiques – creation of identity; individualized society; choice and diversity; reduction in age inequality.

Comparison of alternative theoretical explanations was usually undertaken in evaluation.

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.

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

Question 4

- (a) The majority of candidates answered this question well. Candidates generally used their knowledge and understanding of patterns of gender inequality from different units within the specification, as well as the G674 unit itself. Most candidates correctly focused upon changes in the pattern of gender inequality. Some candidates simply described disadvantage, particularly for females, rather than addressing the key issue of changes. The best responses tended to explore changes in both male and female patterns of advantage and disadvantage with a contemporary focus.

Aspects of social life for which changes in patterns of gender inequality were most often identified and discussed included:

- education
- employment
- income and wealth
- health and welfare
- housing
- political power
- patterns of crime and deviance
- portrayal within the media
- legislation.

The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- patriarchy
- status
- power
- culture and changing gender roles
- glass ceiling
- dual labour market
- class and occupational structure

- reserve army
- human capital theory
- segregation of jobs
- gender roles
- masculinities
- access to power and political representation
- media images and representation.

Candidates most frequently referred to writers such as:

- Oakley
- Firestone
- Millet
- Stanworth
- Greer
- Walby
- Abbott et al
- Hakim
- Barron and Norris
- McDowell
- Gilmore
- Connell.

Theoretical explanations for changing gender inequality most often identified and discussed included Marxist, functionalist, post modern, Weberian and feminist. The impact on gender inequality of ethnicity, age and class was sometimes compared or contrasted with gender, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

Contemporary examples most often cited were:

- Patterns of educational achievement that show females out performing boys
- Increasing numbers of females in higher level occupational posts
- Changing patterns of pay and income
- Access to female employment opportunities by males and vice versa
- Increase in female deviance and criminality in statistics
- Changing patterns of health eg females and smoking and life expectancy increasing generally
- Portrayal of gender in media becoming more diverse
- Changing roles in the family.

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 gender inequality was changing in 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 issue of change. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

- (b) The majority of candidates answered this question well. Candidates were expected to outline and assess the view that patriarchy is the main cause of gender inequality. Responses tended to compare and contrast different Feminist theories, as expected, and also use Functionalist and Marxist approaches to gender inequality. Post modern and Weberian perspectives were also introduced by some candidates.

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. Some weaker responses tended to describe different theoretical explanations of patriarchy and neglected evaluation,

The following concepts were often discussed:

- patriarchy
- gender
- sexual division of labour
- sexism
- glass ceiling
- vertical and horizontal segregation
- dual burden
- triple systems
- human capital
- socialisation
- capitalism and social class
- status
- power
- ethnicity and race
- fragmentation
- cultural differences
- individualisation
- identity.

Candidates referred to feminist and other writers such as:

- Walby
- Firestone
- Shulasmith
- Millet
- Hartmann
- Oakley
- Abbott
- Mirza
- Hakim
- Connell
- Marx
- Weber
- Parsons.

The impact on gender inequality of ethnicity, age and class was occasionally compared or contrasted with gender, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

As candidates were expected to evaluate the view that patriarchy is the main cause of gender inequality, and by implication feminist theoretical perspectives, the main arguments tended to include:

- Patriarchy recognises the role of male power and dominance in creating gender inequality in the workplace and throughout society
- Values female contributions to societies, celebrates female cultures and recognises the role of women in the workplace and elsewhere
- Provides a theoretical basis for addressing gender inequalities
- Helps to understand the linking of gender inequality across different aspects of social life – family, education, media, crime, etc
- Does not provide an explanation of the origins of patriarchy historically or socially
- The role of socialisation and biological influences not highlighted sufficiently
- Underestimates the importance of class, race, ethnicity and age in inequality
- Tends to underestimate the importance of concepts like status and power in understanding inequalities
- Underestimates the changing and fragmented nature of social and gender inequality, diversity and culture
- Doesn't acknowledge the way class and other aspects of inequality may reinforce each other, eg race and gender.

Comparison of alternative theoretical explanations was usually undertaken in evaluation.

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.

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

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