

OCR Report to Centres

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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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Overview

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. 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

The comments from the principal examiners on the two A2 units show that candidates are becoming increasingly familiar with the structure of these examinations. 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 large entry as the vast majority of centres enter candidates for this unit at the end of a two-year 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 keep an eye on the OCR website for details of on-line INSET provision.

G671 Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments:

This session, once again, saw a wide range of candidate performance.. It seems that as centres become increasingly familiar with the structure of this examination paper, candidates are more aware of the assessment requirements of each question. 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, Q2 and Q3 compared to previous sessions.

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 (1-3) 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 series, that the pre-release material could be referred to in every question: For Q1, candidates could make references to the 'Charver kids' and 'real geordies'; Q2 examples of contemporary masculinity in terms of the Charver kids and Real Geordies; and Q3 in terms of the importance of peer groups to the young men in the study. Candidates who rely on the pre-release material as their only source of evidence are not going to score highly as they will fail to display a ‘wide range’ of knowledge and 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 Jackson or Burdsey.) 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.

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 Q2 where many candidates were able to draw upon a range of sociological concepts and studies with regard to types of masculinities. “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. It is also worth noting that there is a difference between contemporary examples and anecdote. Contemporary examples mean events in society that can inform sociology but may not have been formally researched or studied; or events that are happening as sociologists are carrying out their research. For example, some candidates used the examples of 'The Mitchell brothers' or 'David Beckham' to

illustrate types of masculinity, or examples of gang deviance to illustrate peer group pressure. 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 "peer groups are important because we all need friends".

There is some evidence that Q4 responses have improved in quality over time. However, 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. Candidates who had been prepared well, managed to pick up marks on all questions, by knowing the assessment requirements and using sociological evidence appropriately.

On the whole there was a clear difference between the high and low achieving candidates. At the top end, there was a range of sociological evidence contained in answers to all of the questions. Such responses included relevant and detailed explanations including sociological studies, concepts and theories where appropriate. The lower achieving candidates were often unable to provide sociological knowledge and understanding and their answers became very anecdotal and common sense like. Candidates must be encouraged to back up their answers with sociological evidence; be it concepts, studies, relevant contemporary examples or theory. For example, in answers to Q3, candidates who discussed peer groups in terms of studies (such as Sewell, Mac an Ghail, Burdsey) and concepts such as peer group pressure, cultural comfort zones and negative/positive sanctions, scored more highly than those who wrote about friendship groups.

In terms of assessment objectives, Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) remains the strongest area; good candidates were able to offer a whole range of sociological knowledge, mainly in the form of concepts and studies, but sometimes making relevant use of contemporary examples and theory. AO2a (Interpretation and analysis) 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. 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.

Teaching tip: Devise a mark sheet (or request one from a fellow sociology teacher on the e-community), based on the published mark schemes that you can attach to your 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 'subculture' by recognising that it is a 'culture within a culture'. Most candidates explained the idea of having some norms and values distinct from the wider culture. However, many responses didn't focus on the 'sub' aspect and just described culture, which gave them only partial core meaning. 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 sub-cultures tend to share some similar norms and values, or that subcultures are evidence of a society's level of cultural diversity (this would gain another 2 marks). Four out of the eight marks are available for giving examples and some responses used the examples of 'Charvers' and 'Real Geordies' given in the pre-release. Those who achieved the full four marks for examples were able to explain what the typical norms and values were which made it a sub-culture. For example, the example of 'Charver kids' could have been explained by street / drinking culture; wearing of tracksuits, swearing etc. There were a few very sophisticated answers which took a Marxist or

functionalist approach to subculture, for example by quoting the work of the CCCS on subcultures.

There are some candidates who are spending too long on this question and writing a one 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 Youth topic for G672) wrote at length about youth subcultures and produced detailed answers which were well beyond what was required.

Teaching tip: Question 1 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

This question was generally very well answered. The vast majority of candidates were able to state two types of masculinity with some explanation. The best responses used sociological concepts such as Hegemonic masculinity or Complicit masculinity and referred to the work of Bob Connell. Some strong responses included a range of relevant studies, particularly in relation to hegemonic masculinity; the most commonly cited were Willis, Sewell, Jackson, but on the whole, there was an absence of studies for this question. Many responses included examples in their answers, such as David Beckham for complicit masculinity and Alan Carr for marginalised masculinity. Those that purely relied on contemporary examples tended not 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 different types of masculinity or trying to create two different types from hegemonic (eg 'strong' and 'tough').

Question 3

This was generally a well answered question and many candidates were able to discuss a wide range of studies in relation to the importance of the peer group in socialising individuals. The most popular cited studies were Sewell, Mac and Ghalill, Handel, Lees, Willis, Shain, McRobbie & Garber, Burdsey and Blackman. The best answers contained a wide range of evidence (not just relying on one study) and a real focus on the peer group 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 the peer group probably isn't as important as an agency of socialisation as the family. Where evaluation was weaker, candidates only evaluated in an implicit way by, for example, just stating there are different types of peer group influence rather than directly challenging the role of the peer group in socialising individuals. 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 lose four potential marks. Candidates need to be reminded that this question will always start with the instruction to "explain and briefly evaluate". Other features of weaker responses were that they lacked an explicit focus on the peer group and offering knowledge about the family instead.

Question 4

There was a wide range of responses to this question. Although the question focused on ethnography, most candidates only discussed the methods in the pre-release material of semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and the use of historical documents. Whilst this is a totally acceptable way of answering this question, many candidates failed to explain what an ethnographic approach is and it's always a good idea to stick to the wording in the question. There is still a degree of confusion around semi-structured interviews. 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 methods should revolve around the qualitative nature of them. 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 understanding 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 candidates’ use of the key concepts as highlighted in the specification - validity, reliability, representativeness and generalisability. Some weaker responses did not explicitly use these concepts and therefore achieved marks at the bottom of level 2. Others did attempt to use the concepts but were very confused, partial or undeveloped. To reach level 3 of the mark scheme, and beyond, for both AO1 and AO2b, responses needed to address the key concepts in an accurate, wide-ranging and developed way. Even where candidates correctly discussed the key concepts, they were often not developed enough in explanation. For example, many responses stated that "Semi structured interviews are unreliable because they cannot be easily repeated". This is an underdeveloped statement as it doesn't explain why they are not able to be repeated easily. Another feature of weaker responses was in candidates’ understanding of methodological pluralism or triangulation.

The high achieving responses tended to systematically explain the method (see above), 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 strong responses included a wide range of concepts related to the research, such as empathy, rapport, Verstehen, social desirability, demand characteristics and Fitness for Purpose. Many candidates made good use of theory in their responses, linking Nayak's research design to the Interpretivist tradition and offering a Positivist critique. It is clear that some candidates had only a basic and often inaccurate understanding of the pre-release material; for example, stating that semi-structured interviews contain lots of quantitative data, or that the research contains quantitative data in the form of a content analysis. The analysis of the local history was in keeping with the ethnographic nature of this research; it helped to build up a fuller picture of the social life of a small groups of young men in Newcastle. 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 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 describing the findings of the study, once again, it should be reminded that this is stimulus material, not source material. The philosophy behind the pre-release material is to give candidates the opportunity to look at some real research in depth but the exam question will always require them to go wider than this; to address research issues, methods, process and concepts and using the pre release as an illustrative example.

It must also be noted that twelve marks are awarded for AO2a and in this question it is about how well the candidate contextualises their responses. The majority of candidates offer very generalised answers or just threw in the words ‘young working class males’. 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 (young working class males) on THIS particular topic (identity). 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 young men 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 young men. Others focused on Nayak and his personal characteristics and made a link to the context this way. Clearly some had been prepared to do this better than others.

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 trained candidates to make reference to other research which had either used a similar methodology or which was focused on a similar topic. This was rewarded where they were being used to support or criticise a methodological issue but centres need to advise candidates not to spend time describing the findings of other studies as this is a question about methods. It is important that centres avoid teaching candidates to present 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

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 at least three quarters of a page of the answer booklet for part (a) and at least three pages for part (b). Few appeared to run out of time on the second part (b) question. Very few candidates answered either too many questions or only one question. Overall, candidates fulfilled the requirements in terms of quality of written communication, producing work written in continuous prose and with clarity of expression.

Most candidates were able to show sociological knowledge and understanding by referring to theories, studies and concepts. Some needed to explain ideas more fully and apply them so that the evidence they had selected 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 and understanding of the topic. Some responses were brief and needed a wider focus on different aspects of the topic. Others covered a range of issues but needed greater depth or development of evidence to achieve higher marks.

Part (a) Questions

Most candidates seem to understand what is required by the instruction 'identify and explain', though many good responses did not develop their answers sufficiently to achieve level 4, 'very good' mark band. 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. A minority of candidates covered more than two points and a significant number of candidates did not clearly identify the two points they had chosen to address leaving this implicit in their answer.

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 ¾ of a page for a part (a) answer.

Part (b) Questions

Most candidates attempted 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' also need to offer evidence to illustrate/support these arguments, for example, in the form of a study, example and/or statistical data. Most candidates answered questions in a sociological rather than purely common sense manner and even the less

developed responses usually included some references to sociological concepts, studies and/or theories. Most 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 used in such a way that it supports or refutes an argument being made and avoid simply listing evidence
- Address different sides of the argument and support with evidence
- Offer critical comments about evidence weigh up arguments and draw a reasoned conclusion.
- Write an answer that covers at least 3 pages of the booklet.

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. Applying sociological material to the question can be enhanced by including phrases that explicitly use the wording of 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

Q1(a) Very good responses to this question were ones which included detailed explanations that showed a clear understanding of the functions of the family in society. The most commonly cited functions were primary socialisation and stabilisation of adult personalities. Some candidates very effectively discussed the function of the family in sustaining capitalism as one of their functions. There were some very good answers that considered how each chosen function of the family could be viewed by different perspectives eg Parsons' stabilisation of adult personalities and Zaretsky on sustaining workers or functionalist versus feminist views of socialisation. Some candidates included more than two functions eg all of Murdock's four functions and did not explain these in any detail, producing basic, undeveloped responses. Some, otherwise, very good responses did not explain the function *in society* and produced an answer that left this implicit or related their explanation to the function for the family or individual.

Q1(b) Most candidates had a good understanding of different views on the roles of men and women within the family. The best responses discussed a range of sociological explanations, supported these with evidence and used evaluative language as they examined the different arguments. Candidates were differentiated in terms of depth and range of knowledge with the best answers typically drawing on a wide range of perspectives including some or all of Marxism, Marxist-feminism, radical feminism, liberal feminism, postmodernism, functionalism and New Right. Some candidates responded by examining different aspects of family life and the roles taken within these areas. This was very effectively done by typically supporting arguments with empirical evidence. Weaker responses tended to give a rather common sense description of traditional gender roles in the family and then discussed a few changes in society which might have led to gender equality with little reference to sociological concepts or research. Some weaker answers that adopted a broad perspectives-type approach, typically compared functionalist, Marxist and/or feminist approaches but did not include much in the way of supporting empirical evidence and tended to simply juxtapose different approaches or only used a small amount of rather dated material eg Oakley and Young and Willmott.

Q2(a) This question was well answered with the majority of candidates able to offer two relevant reasons. The best answers tended to focus on factors relating to changes in the role of women/increased individualism/changing norms and values, often including reference to cohabitation and supported their answers with theories, concepts and/or empirical studies. The very best answers were often those which succeeded in weaving a range of concepts and theories together in one explanation eg some candidates discussed secularisation, confluent love and acceptance of cohabitation under the heading of changing social attitudes. A number of answers cited increased divorce rates but did not explain how this leads to a decline in the marriage rate.

Q2(b) This question produced a wide range of answers. Some responses showed both breadth and depth and discussed a variety of ways in which families were increasingly diverse. In the best answers, each aspect of diversity would be supported with relevant evidence and the section would often conclude with an evaluative comment that questioned the extent of diversity. Some candidates produced very narrow responses or answers that needed supporting evidence to develop them eg lone parents, reconstituted and same sex and asserted that this showed the existence of diversity. Some candidates prefaced their answers with a brief summary of the Rappaport's five dimensions of diversity but did not go on to develop these in their main answer. Some candidates adopted a perspectives approach, typically juxtaposing functionalist, New Right, Marxist, feminist and/or postmodernist approaches. Some answers seemed confused about the relevance of these theories to family diversity for example asserting that the New Right did not see any evidence of family diversity. A number of candidates either did not address the idea of diversity increasing at all or focused on debates about whether family diversity was good or bad rather than whether families in the UK were increasingly diverse. It is noticeable that, in

questions of this kind, candidates seem to struggle to offer counter views where they could refer to a variety of arguments that support the view that the extent of family diversity is exaggerated.

Q3(a) The best answers showed a clear understanding of relevant features of bio-medical approaches and tended to have an emphasis on treatment and cure, scientific understanding and the dominance of the medical profession. Some answers explained these features using concepts or empirical material and some referred to contemporary evidence in support, such as NHS healthcare initiatives. Overall, most responses seen, needed to be more developed in their explanation and make more use of sociological evidence. A significant number of responses made evaluative comments, some of which were relevant to demonstrating knowledge and understanding of bio-medical approaches but, from responses seen, this was generally not the most successful way of developing an explanation.

Q3(b) There were some very good answers to this question that discussed structural explanations in detail and used evidence in support before examining counter views. Most candidates understood the concept of structural factors and were able to point to relevant examples. In evaluation most candidates cited cultural explanations and these were often reasonably well developed. Some candidates also alluded to social selection and artefact explanations but often needed to be clearer in demonstrating their understanding of these as there seemed to be some confusion. Evaluation was often rather underdeveloped, mainly taking the form of juxtaposition of theories. Some answers offered a more wide-ranging set of counter arguments and included only a narrow discussion of structural views that demonstrated underdeveloped sociological knowledge and understanding. Most candidates needed to discuss a wider range of views overall and in a more sociological way using related concepts and studies in support.

Q4(a) This question yielded a range of responses with some that were well developed and showed good knowledge and understanding. The best answers typically identified the sick role and doctors' role as trained professionals as features and explained these with appropriate evidence, making good use of Parsons, for example. Some responses were brief and needed to be developed with evidence. Some candidates produced lengthy discussions of concepts such as the sick role without relating this to the role of health professionals or discussed other relevant concepts such as universalism and altruism but needed to demonstrate a clearer understanding of their relevance to the question. There were a number of responses that included evaluative comments about the role of health professionals and, in this respect, candidates needed to be more focused on the question to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of functionalist explanations.

Q4(b) There was a variety of responses to this question with some quite wide-ranging and others that were narrow and in need of development. The best answers addressed relevant sociological perspectives and typically supported these with a range of conceptual and empirical evidence. While most candidates showed some understanding of sociological explanations, answers were often rather narrow in their discussion and needed to include more in the way of supporting evidence, for example, some candidates referred to gender, poverty and work as factors but did not develop this beyond a more commonsensical approach. Some answers covered a range of explanations but these tended to need a clearer analysis of how these differed and needed to include more explicit evaluation.

Q5(a) There was a range of different responses seen on this question with most showing some sociological understanding. Better answers often centred on inclusive/exclusive definitions, the problems of operationalisation and whether some new religious movements and the new age could be defined as religious and the problems of measuring religiosity in an age where religion had become more privatised/individualised. Some candidates offered two problems which overlapped to a large degree eg people can believe without belonging and people can belong without believing and included explanations which were not sufficiently separate and distinct.

Q5(b) There were some strong answers to this question, where candidates demonstrated a wide-ranging and detailed knowledge and understanding of the Weberian view. Some of the very good answers not only understood Weber and used relevant concepts but also discussed material on Neo-Marxism, liberation theology, the Iranian revolution and/or civil rights to support Weber and were able to use other theories effectively in evaluation. A significant number of candidates needed to demonstrate a clearer understanding of the Weberian view as they sometimes confused it with Marxism. Most answers were able to offer at least a basic account of Weber but needed to include more supporting evidence. Some responses of this kind mainly centred on alternative theories such as functionalism and Marxism, often not using these to explicitly evaluate Weber. A few candidates also argued that in a secular society or era of postmodernity, religion's capacity to change anything was limited.

Q6(a) There were a variety of responses to this question. Better answers tended to focus on ways including relationship to the state/wider society, inclusive/exclusive nature of the membership, degree of hierarchy and requirements in terms of commitment. Such answers tended to explicitly contrast denominations with other types of organisations and made use of sociological concepts eg world accommodating or not claiming a monopoly of the truth. Some candidates were able to use relevant examples of denominations or to refer to sociological studies. A significant group of candidates needed to demonstrate a clearer understanding of denominations as they confused them with other types of organisations such as sects, cults or world affirming NRMs.

Q6(b) Better answers to this question endeavoured to relate sociological concepts such as anomie, racism, identity and relative deprivation to religiosity among ethnic minority groups and were able to distinguish how different ethnic communities had expressed their religiosity and reasons for this. Some answers also considered generational differences in religiosity in minority ethnic communities. Some responses needed to be more specific and less generalised in discussing ethnicity and some answers showed a basic knowledge and understanding that could have been developed with empirical evidence in their answers. In evaluation many candidates pointed to the importance of gender, class and/or age, while a few argued that religiosity was less related to ethnicity than formerly because ethnic minority young people were becoming hybridised/secularised and that even white people were often adopting religions associated with ethnic minorities such as Islam and Buddhism. Less developed answers tended to show narrow knowledge and offered more common sense ideas about religion and ethnic minorities in the UK. Some candidates discussed religion in other countries eg Iran, rather than among ethnic minorities in the UK.

Q7(a) Most candidates showed some sociological understanding of girl subcultures. Answers were largely differentiated in terms of the degree of detail in the response, the use of concepts and/or studies and the extent to which they focused on features rather than simply describing subcultures. Weaker responses often focused on two subcultures rather than two features of girl subcultures. Some weaker answers often referred to youth subcultures in general and tried to adapt them into female subcultures or just referred to subcultures generally. Some candidates prefaced their answers with lengthy discussions of how mainstream sociology had ignored girl subcultures before actually answering the question. Candidates typically identified a feature related to bedroom subculture and contrasted this with a feature of a more assertive girl subculture such as New Wave girls or ladettes.

7(b) There was a range of different responses to this question. Better answers typically began by outlining functionalist views on youth deviance in general and then developed their answer with functionalist concepts and studies relating to youth deviance specifically eg Merton, Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin and Miller. In doing so, some candidates needed to be clearer in their understanding as they confused these eg attributing the concept of status frustration to Merton or confusing strain theory with status frustration. Weaker responses tended to make basic points about concepts such as youth being a rite of passage or a transition from childhood to adulthood or about deviance being functional and needed more development. Some candidates confused

functionalism with other theories, often implying that labelling theory or studies of edgework supported a functionalist view. A number of candidates' answers needed to have a clearer focus as they were mainly or wholly focused on other theories with little or no reference to functionalism. Some candidates only evaluated by juxtaposing other theories and a few made relevant explicit criticisms of functionalism eg ignoring middle class and female delinquency and being out of date.

Q8(a) There were some excellent answers from candidates who demonstrated strong knowledge and understanding relating to the work of Polhemus, Bennett etc. and used relevant concepts such as supermarket of style and neo-tribes. Candidates also referred to the decline of class/gender/ethnicity as a basis for subcultures and fun/style replacing resistance/underlying meaning as the basis for subcultures. A significant number of candidates identified features of youth subcultures which would not be associated with postmodern society eg following a specific style, resistance to capitalism.

8(b) Most candidates demonstrated some appropriate understanding of the question. Better answers applied relevant studies of ethnicity and schooling, the most popular being Sewell, Mirza and Shain with some also referring to Connolly, Mac an Ghail and Modood. Some answers needed to be more balanced as they showed only a narrow knowledge of ethnicity and schooling and gave more coverage of other factors such as class and gender. Weaker answers often focused on only one or two aspects of ethnicity for example labelling and racism and needed to develop their answer to cover a wider range of factors and to distinguish between the experiences of different ethnic minority groups. Evaluation and analysis was not generally sophisticated with most candidates typically asserting that gender and/or class were also important and then offering varying amounts of evidence to support this. A few candidates also pointed to evidence that ethnicity and/or class and gender were less important than in the past. A small number of candidates were able to make explicit links in their analysis between class, gender and ethnicity for example by pointing to how studies such as Sewell or Mirza were not just about ethnicity but also issues such as class and masculinity/femininity.

G673 Power and Control

General Comments

A good knowledge and understanding was demonstrated by the majority of candidates there was sometimes a lack of focus on the specifics of the question set. This was particularly noticeable on the Crime and Deviance questions.

Most candidates displayed a wide ranging knowledge and understanding of concepts and studies. Skills of Interpretation and Application were of a good standard with material utilised being interpreted in an accurate way, beyond simply describing a study but attempting to demonstrate the relevance of the study. However, 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, for example, question 1 on Left Realism.

Theories were generally well understood and usually applied to the question in a clear way. There was often an 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. In terms of functionalism the arguments and ideas associated with Parsons, Durkheim and Davis and Moore were often not attributed to the right person. This was sometimes the case with Question 2 where theorists were confused with each other.

Some 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 educational policies since 1988 where candidates sometimes described at some length policies pre-1988, in particular the Tripartite system.

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.

Candidates should be reminded to respond to questions in a balanced way to ensure equal emphasis on the theory or explanation highlighted in the question. as well as to alternative theories/explanations. This was particularly evident in Question 1 on Left Realism where many candidates spent more time examining Right Realism than focusing on the question set. The material on Right Realism could have been utilised as analysis or evaluation but many candidates described the approach with no link to Left Realism. 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 'social class' in Question 4.

Interpretation and Application was a weaker skill area than Knowledge and Understanding 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. The awareness of the 2011 riots was strongly evident in questions on Crime and Deviance and the Mass Media. The recent 'phone hacking' issue was also applied well to Mass media questions. 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 strong 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. This was particularly the case with Question 5 where there were often lengthy descriptions of Marxist explanations of the role of the education system without linking the explanations to Functionalism.

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. Question 3 on victim surveys was a good example of this tendency with victim surveys in general being evaluated rather than specifying which particular victim surveys lacked validity or reliability.

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.

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.

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.

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.

There were very few rubric errors this session.

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

This was generally well answered. Most students were able to demonstrate a good knowledge and understanding of Left Realism. This was usually contrasted with Right Realism although, on occasions, the material on Right Realism became tangential as no link was made to Left Realism. Most candidates described the Left Realist explanations of crime in terms of relative deprivation, marginalisation and the development of subcultures. Sometimes, however this was at such a length that 'solutions' were dealt with very briefly or, in some cases, not at all. Some candidates linked the Left Realist views to policies developed by New Labour, such as the minimum wage, to demonstrate the influence of Left Realist ideas on government. This was generally done convincingly.

By way of evaluation most candidates utilised Right Realist arguments, such as the idea that Left Realists are 'soft' on crime. Also, Marxist arguments were popular as evaluation, for example the neglect of corporate crime.

The most common solutions identified were restorative justice, reducing inequality in society, tackling social exclusion and multi agency interventions. Most candidates referred to the issue of policing and contrasted military and consensus policing. Some candidates were aware of policies relating to the Youth Justice Board and initiatives around early intervention and prevention.

A minority of candidates did not focus on solutions at all but wrote lengthy accounts of explanations for crime utilising all the theories they knew.

The most frequent references were to Lea, Young, Matthews, Taylor, Currie, Islington and Merseyside Crime Surveys, Runciman, Murray, Wilson.

Question 2

This was generally well answered. Most candidates were able to accurately describe and interpret a number of explanations relating to female patterns of crime although some candidates interpreted the question as being about gender and crime so focused equally on males and crime. This was often not linked specifically to female patterns.

The closing gender gap was usually identified but some candidates failed to address the issue of changes in patterns and tended to write about quite dated material explaining why female patterns of crime are low. This often related to the role of housewife, mother, for example, using arguments from Parsons and the expressive role but failing to recognise changes to these roles.

Most candidates recognised changes and commonly discussed issues such as the role of Feminism, the 'genderquake', changing female experiences, the feminisation of the workplace, the emergence of 'ladette culture'.

Most candidates referred to statistical evidence and examined the validity of statistics on female criminality. This usually related to the OCS and the 'chivalry thesis'. Self Report Studies were often cited as an alternative perspective on the extent of female offending.

In terms of theories the most common approach was to examine explanations from feminist perspectives, although often there was confusion between the writers utilised, for example Carlen. Smart and Heidensohn were sometimes mixed up or attributed as all saying the same thing.

Postmodernism also featured strongly in terms of increased choice, opportunity and the impact of the Mass Media.

The most often cited studies and theories were Adler, Campbell, Heidensohn, Smart, Parsons, McRobbie, Wilkinson, Pollack, Carlen.

Question 3

This was generally answered well. Most candidates had a good understanding of the nature of victim surveys with the most popular reference being to the British Crime Survey, although very few candidates showed an awareness of the change to The Crime Survey for England and Wales (CSEW).

Most candidates were able to link victim surveys to sociological theories such as Feminism and Left Realism. Some candidates wrote about victim surveys in general without distinguishing between local surveys such as the Islington Crime Survey and the British Crime Survey so became confused when attempting to evaluate, for example claiming that victim surveys lacked generalisability because of their small scale.

Most candidates contrasted victim surveys with other data collection methods such as the OCS and self report studies. However, sometimes this became tangential to the question with equal weight being given to other methods.

The strengths of victim surveys in uncovering the 'dark figure of crime' were often referred to and also the use of victim surveys in identifying issues relating to policing, in particular in terms of gender and ethnicity.

By way of evaluation candidates often examined the limitations of victim surveys concerning corporate crime, victimless crime, crimes of the powerful. This usually was contextualised within the Marxist perspective.

Methodological criticisms were usually employed examining issues such as reliability, validity, representativeness and generalisability. Social desirability was also often referred to.

The most cited studies and writers were the Islington and Merseyside Crime Surveys, the British Crime Survey, Box, Lea and Young, Dobash and Dobash, Pearce, Sutherland.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the nature of teacher labelling and the impact on social class differences in educational achievement.

Most candidates were able to locate the view within the Interactionist perspective and were able to demonstrate an awareness of social class differences. Often, however the statistical evidence for these differences was not sourced.

Some candidates wrote generally about labelling without addressing the issue of social class so equal weight was given to labelling in relation to gender and ethnicity with no link back to the specifics of the question.

Most candidates focused on issues such as the nature of classroom interaction, the classification of pupils, the concept of the 'ideal' pupil, the nature of stereotypes, the self-fulfilling prophecy, streaming, setting and banding.

Candidates tended to evaluate by questioning the relative importance of labelling compared to influences outside of schools, for example material and cultural factors. Cultural capital was often cited in this context. Sometimes what started as direct evaluation moved into juxtaposition and some material became tangential to the question. A minority of candidates ended up writing far more about external factors than about labelling.

Some candidates questioned whether class is relevant compared to ethnicity and gender. Other evaluative points related to the small-scale nature of studies in to labelling and the lack of empirical support for concepts such as the self-fulfilling prophecy.

The most commonly used studies and writers were Becker, Rosenthal and Jacobson, Keddie, Cicourel and Kitsuse, Ball, Smith and Noble, Sharpe and Green, Rist, Hargreaves, Bourdieu, Bernstein.

Question 5

This was also a popular question and often well answered with a clear focus on Functionalist explanations of the role of the education system. Most candidates wrote about secondary socialisation and discussed concepts such as ascribed and achieved status, universalistic and particularistic standards and meritocracy.

Durkheim, Parsons and Davis and Moore featured in the majority of responses. The idea of schools acting as a 'bridge' between the home and the workplace was also written about by the majority of candidates. Most candidates wrote at some length about Davis and Moore and the notion of 'role allocation' and used this material to provide opportunities for evaluation, particularly through the criticisms by Tumin. The concepts of social solidarity and value consensus also featured in most responses, usually in relation to Durkheim.

Some candidates, although understanding aspects of Functionalism, wrote more about Marxism and produced unbalanced responses. The material on Marxism became tangential as it was not related back to Functionalism.

By way of analysis and evaluation most candidates utilised Marxism but also Social Democratic and Feminist views featured strongly.

Some candidates successfully related Functionalist views to more contemporary themes such as the New Right and vocationalism, the introduction of citizenship in schools and the development of faith schools.

The most cited studies and writers were Durkheim, Parsons, Davis and Moore, Hargreaves, Bowles and Gintis, Althusser, Willis, Tumin, Illich..

Question 6

This was generally not answered as well as the other questions on education. Many candidates were able to discuss some policies, typically the National Curriculum, league tables, NVQ, Apprenticeships, Sure Start and New Deal but often confused these or contextualised these wrongly in terms of dates and which governments introduced them.

Most candidates had a wide ranging knowledge of policies and concepts such as 'marketisation', 'parental choice', 'parentocracy'.

Also, a common feature of responses was a lack of focus on the issue of standards even where the knowledge and understanding was strong. Often policies were described accurately but no attempt was made to address the focus of the question or assertions were made that a policy had or had not raised standards but with no support from studies or theory.

Some candidates had an impressive knowledge of policies but included so many policies that they were unable to manage their time to interpret and apply the knowledge to the question.

Many candidates were able to contextualise the policies in terms of New Labour and New Right perspectives on education and a minority of candidates explored the impact of the ConDem coalition on policies already established.

By way of analysis and evaluation some candidates were able to utilise statistics relating to examination and SATs results. Others referred to the view that the literacy strategy has had a positive effect on reading and has helped to reduce gender differences in reading standards.

The most utilised evaluation was that policies designed to increase choice and raise standards have led to greater inequalities as middle class parents use their cultural and material advantages to the benefit of their children but standards for working class children have declined relatively.

The most commonly cited writers were Ball, Gerwitz, Leech and Campos, Machin, Tomlinson, Bourdieu, Sutton Trust, Finn, De Waal.

Question 7

Most candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of the Marxist perspective and were able to apply this perspective to patterns and trends in media ownership.

Good use was made of contemporary examples and the most common reference was to Rupert Murdoch. Many candidates related Marxist ideas on control to models of the media, particularly hypodermic syringe model. This was done with varying success as some candidates moved on to a general discussion about models of media effects.

The majority of candidates were able to differentiate between traditional and neo-Marxist views and were generally stronger on neo-Marxism with good use of studies by GUMG. The background of media professionals was often discussed in relation to the concept of hegemony.

Most candidates were able to employ a range of relevant concepts such as hegemony, hierarchy of credibility, horizontal and vertical segregation, synergy, transnational ownership and globalisation.

By way of analysis and evaluation many candidates used neo-Marxism to criticise traditional Marxism. Postmodernism and Pluralism featured strongly with the emphasis on choice, diversity, the declining influence of the traditional media products, the significance of internet based communication.

Many candidates pointed to the growing number of journalists and presenters from minority ethnic backgrounds or who are women.

The most referred to writers were CCCs, Miliband, Bagdikian, Hall, GUMG, Gramsci, Marcuse, Curran, Fairclough.

Question 8

Responses were quite diverse as the stronger responses were related to theories such as Marxism and focussed clearly on social class representations, whereas some responses were assertive and impressionistic with little sociological content.

Some candidates wrote about media representations in general so included ethnicity, gender and age so much of this material was tangential to the question set.

The most common social class discussed was the working class and Marxist arguments relating to the representation of the working class featured most strongly. The distinction between representations of the traditional working class (the concept of nostalgia was often used here) and the portrayal of the working class today in a negative way was a common feature of responses. Representations of 'chavs', 'hoodies', 'NEETS' were featured in the context of the demonisation of the working class in contemporary society.

The middle class was less frequently discussed but neo-marxism was used to demonstrate the positive image of the middle class reflecting the background of most media personnel.

The upper class tended to be a greater focus for most candidates with a common focus on the representation of the monarchy in a positive light and the portrayal of the upper class in period dramas.

Analysis and evaluation assessed theoretical approaches in the light of empirical evidence and contemporary examples. Difficulties in measuring concepts such as stereotypes was referred to. The most common criticism in terms of theory was the postmodern view that the media no longer transmits representations of social differences in relation to social class and that class boundaries are increasingly blurred.

The most cited writers were Cohen, Fawbert, Swale, Lewis, Nairn, GUMG, Jhally and Lewis, Dodd and Dodd, Devereux.

Question 9

Most candidates demonstrated a knowledge and understanding of semiology and were able to refer to research that utilises the method to uncover the meanings of signs and codes.

A strong emphasis was placed on theoretical approaches using the method, mainly drawing on neo-Marxism and Feminism.

There was generally an awareness of the use of semiology in relation to both media texts and visual representations.

Weaker responses had a brief focus on semiology and a greater emphasis on content analysis or completely confused the two methods. Stronger responses were able to differentiate between the two or referred to semiology as a form of qualitative content analysis. GUMG was frequently discussed as an example of approaches which combine the collection of both qualitative and quantitative data.

Experiments were also discussed as an alternative approach but weaker responses did not use the method to evaluate semiology but simply juxtaposed experiments as another method and so the description of experiments became tangential to the question.

By way of analysis and evaluation candidates often referred to validity as a strength of semiology but also issues of bias and objectivity were raised. The researcher's interpretation compared to how the audience receives the message was also raised as a problem.

The main writers discussed were GUMG, CCCS, Barthes, Mulvey, De Saussure, Harper, Hebdige, Jackson.

Question 10

Stronger responses to this question were able to define direct action and illustrate their responses with reference to theory and examples. Weaker responses often confused direct and indirect action and/or relied solely on examples with no theoretical or empirical support.

Most candidates were able to identify types of direct action such as demonstrations, rioting, terrorism and the most common approach was to contextualise direct action in terms of New Social Movements. Frequently the differences between the methods of Old Social Movements such as lobbying and petitioning were compared to the direct action of NSMs. Stronger responses were able to use this distinction as an evaluative tool to point out that OSMs have also used direct action eg sit-ins, strikes.

Reference was made to contemporary examples of direct action in the activities of organisations such as Greenpeace, Occupy, Reclaim the streets etc. These were often contextualised in terms of theory and the influence of Marxism and Feminism.

Riots were often referred to and the discussion around rioting as political protest or simply criminal activity. The comparison of New Right and Marxist perspectives was often related to this issue.

The most often cited writers were Scott, Touraine, Melucci, Klein, Campbell, Back, Callinicos, Diani.

Question 11

There were a diverse range of responses to this question. The concept of global social movements was not always well understood and some candidates ignored the 'global' and just wrote about social movements in general.

Stronger responses explicitly focused on issues such as globalisation and its impact on economic and political relationships and the growth of NSMs in a global context. The significance of global mass culture was often discussed.

Most candidates differentiated between old and new social movements and examined the impact of globalisation on NSMs compared to the emphasis of OSMs in terms of the nation state.

There was often a reference to the debates around the impact of globalisation on culture and identity and whether global social movements are identity or economically driven. This was often discussed in terms of Fukuyama's end of ideology argument and the worldwide impact of liberal democracy compared to the Marxist arguments about anti-capitalism, such as articulated by Callinicos.

By way of analysis and evaluation issues were raised about the adequacy of explanations deriving from meta-narratives such as Marxism, whether OSMs were actually insular and not influenced by political thought and actions throughout the world (the impact of communism, for example), or whether the growth of global social movements has been exaggerated.

The most cited writers were Hallsworth, Diani, Scott, Klein, Ritzer, Fukuyama, Marcuse, Callinicos.

Question 12

This question produced a mixed response as some candidates wrote generally about NSMs with little reference or understanding of the concept of ideology. Other responses were able to discuss ideologies in depth and relate specific ideologies to particular social movements.

Most candidates differentiated between NSMs and OSMs to examine the influence of different ideologies within different movements and different historical periods, for example the influence of social democratic, labourist and Marxist ideologies on trade unions compared to the influence of Feminism on many NSMs in contemporary society.

The emergence of new ideologies was often discussed such as Green politics and candidates often related these new ways of thinking to the issue of whether and what constitutes an ideology. For example is anti-capitalism an ideology or simply a development of Marxism?

The impact of globalisation was discussed and often related to the issues of culture and identity. This was commonly related to the idea that NSMs are primarily about identity rather than being ideologically driven.

Most candidates were able to describe different NSMs such as Greenpeace, Occupy etc but not all were able to relate these examples to ideologies. The stronger responses used examples that could demonstrate the continued influence of ideologies or they used examples to demonstrate that ideology was insignificant.

By way of analysis and evaluation a common approach was to refer to Fukuyama and the notion that ideology is no longer significant. The postmodern view that identity and culture are more important than ideology was also raised. The emergence of new ideologies of anti-capitalism and anti-globalisation was also used to suggest the continued importance of ideology.

The most cited writers were Touraine, Marcuse, Althusser, Fukuyama, Bell, Offe, Klein, Callinicos, Scott.

G674 Exploring Social Inequality and Difference

General Comments

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 and accessible to 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 were expected to show knowledge and understanding of different sociological perspectives or theories of research, for example feminist, positivist, interpretive and realist approaches, as well as research design and methods. This is achieved through the analysis and evaluation of a research strategy within a case study outlined in a short piece of source material. In this session the source material was based upon a study of class, gender and the experience of work reported in the journal, 'Sociology', published in 2009. The study employed unstructured, qualitative interviews as the main research method and raised a number of ethical issues.

In Section A, in order to evaluate the research strategy within the case study, 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, representative, 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 case studies 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 ethical issues, unstructured interviews, different methods and various 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 sensitive and thoughtful, especially in relation to the work setting, the use of unstructured, qualitative interviews and the ethical dimensions of the research.

The questions on both social class and gender were also answered very well. Candidates demonstrated very good levels of knowledge and understanding of functionalist approaches to social class inequality. Many candidates had a good grasp of different functionalist writers; other approaches to social class inequality were used perceptively to evaluate these theories. The questions on gender were also answered well, with many candidates demonstrating a very good

knowledge and understanding of evidence of social advantage for males, as well as a range of feminist and other theoretical explanations of gender 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 excellent. As in previous years, 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 hardly any rubric errors.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

The majority of candidates answered this question very well, revealing a very good knowledge and understanding of ethical issues and the way they might affect 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 were able to explain that ethical issues are generally regarded as aspects of research which may have an impact on the researcher, participants or interpretation and use of data which may not be considered appropriate or have moral implications. They are usually considered alongside theoretical and practical issues when designing, implementing and interpreting social research and data.

The ethical issues most frequently discussed were:

- sensitivity
- harm
- deception
- exploitation
- informed consent
- privacy
- confidentiality
- anonymity
- impact of sponsorship and funding
- bias
- immediate and long term impact on participants/researcher
- professional integrity and honesty
- covert and overt methods and their ethical implications.

The impact of ethical issues on research was usually discussed in relation to:

- reliability
- validity
- replicability
- representativeness
- generalisability
- sample size

- access and gatekeeping.

There were many different examples of studies that had obvious ethical issues 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 Hebson to illustrate their answers. Some candidates did not 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.

Candidates needed to focus on ethical issues and their effects upon sociological research but instead discussed the uses, or strengths and weaknesses, of the specific methods in the case study. Similarly, whilst the question asked candidates to outline and explain the effects of ethical issues, some evaluated the research method in the Source. The question is designed to test Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) and Interpretation and Application (AO2a), so material presented by candidates on evaluation cannot be credited. A very few candidates confused the terms 'ethical' and 'ethnic'.

Question 2

The majority of candidates answered this question very well, revealing a very good knowledge and understanding of unstructured interviews in sociological research, and related methodological issues, drawing upon the information in the source material and their own background knowledge to illustrate their responses.

Unstructured interviews within sociological research are generally regarded as an informal, conversation between the researcher and the participant, normally face-to-face, but may be through technology such as telephones, video and the internet. Normally the researcher does not use a structured list of questions or detailed list of areas for investigation and discussion, but the interview is open ended around the broad topic area, which provides a guide for the interviewer rather than a fully pre-determined list of questions or topics.

Candidates were expected to discuss the use of *unstructured interviews* for this research problem – that of class, gender and work. Most candidates were aware that unstructured interviews are more often associated with interpretive approaches, can be used to generate mainly qualitative data and evidence, and so can be used within an interpretive approach to research design.

Most candidates also demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the key methodological concepts of validity, reliability, generalisability and representativeness through their discussion of the view that unstructured interviews are the best way to study class, gender and work.

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

- interpretive
- positivist
- realist
- feminist
- qualitative and quantitative data
- empathy
- reflexivity
- ethnography
- subjectivity and objectivity
- validity – accuracy/truthfulness/reality of data gathered
- reliability – comparability of data gathered
- replication
- 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 clearly discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the view that unstructured interviews are the best way to study class and gender in work in a balanced way. In evaluation, candidates generally referred to methodological issues and concepts such as:

- the influence of the researcher's culture, values and experience on the quality of data gathered, its interpretation and subsequent uses
- objectivity and subjectivity
- studying behaviour in natural settings
- ecological validity
- sample size effects
- representativeness of the sample
- replicability
- respondent validation
- desirable responses
- researcher effects
- researcher imposition
- the Hawthorne Effect
- subject and researcher biases
- fitness for purpose
- access and gatekeepers
- reflexivity.

Ethical issues were sometimes raised, for example of confidentiality and the potential impact on the lives of those studied, including raising sensitive issues and ensuring absence of harm. Many demonstrated a deep understanding of the issues facing sociologists gaining access to the workplace where commercial and personal interests might be at stake.

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 Hebson 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.

Unfortunately a few candidates discussed other methods beyond the case study in the Source Material or contrasted unstructured interviews with many other research methods in their answers. The question was focused specifically on unstructured interviews and so much of the material presented in this type of response, unless clearly related back to the central issue of the 'fitness for purpose' of unstructured interviews for research into class, gender and work, tended not to be relevant.

Question 3

(a) Candidates generally used their knowledge and understanding of social class and life chances from different units within the specification, as well as the G674 unit itself. Most candidates correctly focused upon the relative life chances of different classes, including the upper, middle, working, underclass and elites. Some, however, tended simply to describe social class differences rather than focus on life chances.

Aspects of class that were identified and discussed by many candidates tended to be:

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

The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- class
- status
- power
- underclass
- poverty
- working, middle and upper class
- elites and underclass
- access to work and employment
- social exclusion
- marginalisation
- economic, cultural and social capital
- situational constraints
- social mobility
- class identity and culture
- dual labour markets and reserve army of labour
- access to power and political representation.

Theoretical explanations for social class inequality were often identified and discussed, mainly including Marxist, neo-Marxist, Functionalist and Weberian.

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 link class explicitly to the concept of life chances, often comparing classes, 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 life chances. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related back to the question.

Some candidates made very good use of contemporary examples, which tended to include:

- recent patterns in educational achievement
- unemployment and work experience in the economic recession/crisis
- reduction in welfare benefits
- recent changes in patterns of health across the social classes
- patterns of poverty
- increasing gap between rich and poor and the distribution of wealth.

Some candidates did not address the issue of life chances and simply described different forms of class inequality, which did not demonstrate an appropriate interpretation of the question.

(b) Candidates were expected to outline and assess functionalist approaches to explaining social class stratification. The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- rules
- norms
- shared values
- integration
- role models
- function
- social system
- meritocracy
- role allocation and performance
- rewards
- functional prerequisites/necessities/importance
- consensus
- structure
- social order
- class
- status
- power.

Candidates tended to refer to functionalist writers such as:

- Durkheim
- Parsons
- Davis and Moore
- Tumin
- Merton
- Eisenstadt.

Social class 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 social stratification were usually explored and/or juxtaposed, for example Marxist, neo-Marxist, Weberian, feminist and post modern. The impact on social class of ethnicity, gender and age were sometimes compared or contrasted with class, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

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

- emphasises social structure and consensus
- highlights social order
- useful to understand common patterns across different societies
- difficult to assess and measure functional importance
- underplays dysfunctions and inequality of opportunity
- neglects conflict, power and status
- neglects gender, age and ethnicity
- postmodern critiques – importance of identity and diversity; reduced impact of class

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 functionalism and each other, and also evaluated in a sustained and explicit manner throughout. The best responses also tended to conclude with a specific and clear assessment of functionalist and/or other explanations.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to an assessment of functionalist approaches to stratification. 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 presented evidence about male advantage and female disadvantage. The best responses tended to present a range of recent evidence about advantage with some contemporary examples and 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
- roles in the family – expressive and instrumental
- culture and changing gender roles
- glass ceiling
- dual labour market
- vertical and horizontal segregation
- reserve army
- human capital theory
- gender roles
- masculinities
- access to power and political representation
- media images and representation.

Candidates most frequently referred to writers such as:

- Oakley
- Greer
- Walby
- Pollert
- Abbott et al
- Hakim
- Barron and Norris.

Theoretical explanations for 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 ethnicity, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

Contemporary examples most often cited were:

- patterns of educational achievement that show males out-performing females in certain high status areas eg science and engineering
- sexism in teacher/pupil interaction and the curriculum
- changes in the occupational structure and impact of recession
- larger numbers of males in higher level occupational/political posts
- access to male dominated employment opportunities restricted for females and vice versa
- higher levels of male deviance and criminality in statistics
- patterns of health eg male life expectancy/health worse generally
- portrayal of gender in media becoming more diverse but still male dominated
- 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 male advantage 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 male advantage. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

Some candidates did not address the issue of advantage and simply described different forms of gender inequality, which did not demonstrate an appropriate interpretation of the question.

(b) The majority of candidates answered this question well. Candidates were expected to outline and assess feminist explanations of gender inequalities.

Responses tended to describe and evaluate feminist explanations and then compare and contrast alternative sociological theories, usually functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, Weberian and postmodern.

Most candidates were able to describe a range of feminist approaches at least simply with a few relevant concepts and studies. The best responses did so comprehensively in a wide ranging and detailed manner. Some weaker responses tended to describe feminism in a generalised way or a range of gender inequalities, but neglected evaluation and assessment, which was the focus of the question.

The following concepts were often discussed:

- gender
- sexual division of labour
- sexism
- glass ceiling
- concrete ceiling
- leaky pipe
- patriarchy
- vertical and horizontal segregation
- dual career
- triple systems
- human capital
- socialisation
- rational choice theory.

Candidates often referred to feminist writers such as:

- Walby
- Firestone
- Shulasmith
- Millet
- Stanko
- Benston
- Ganon
- Hartmann
- Oakley
- Abbott
- Collins
- Mirza
- Hakim.

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.

Gender 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.

As candidates were expected to evaluate feminist explanations of ethnic inequality, and by implication other theoretical perspectives, the main arguments tended to include:

- recognises the role of male power and dominance in creating gender inequality in the workplace
- values female contributions to societies, celebrates female cultures and recognises the changing role of women in the workplace
- 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.
- doesn't 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 of feminist explanations of gender inequalities. Some candidates simply described and juxtaposed different theoretical approaches. More effective responses used alternative approaches to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of different feminist explanations and each other, and evaluated in a sustained and explicit manner throughout. The best responses also tended to conclude the answer with a specific, clear assessment of feminist and/or other different explanations.

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

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