

Sociology

Advanced GCE **A2 H581**

Advanced Subsidiary GCE **AS H181**

Reports on the Units

June 2010

HX81/R/10

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

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

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

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

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

© OCR 2010

Any enquiries about publications should be addressed to:

OCR Publications
PO Box 5050
Annesley
NOTTINGHAM
NG15 0DL

Telephone: 0870 770 6622
Facsimile: 01223 552610
E-mail: publications@ocr.org.uk

CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Sociology (H581)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Sociology (H181)

REPORTS ON THE UNITS

Unit/Content	Page
Chief Examiner's Report	1
G671 Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity	2
G672 Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity	7
G673 Power and Control	14
G674 Exploring Social Inequality and Difference	20

Chief Examiner's Report

H181

This was the end of the second full year for the new AS sociology specification and it was interesting to note that there was a higher candidate entry for G671 in January than in June, whereas the vast majority of candidates opted to sit G672 in the June session. As the following reports demonstrate, there continues to be a large variation in the performance of candidates; those who attained high marks were able to demonstrate that they understood, interpreted and evaluated sociological evidence with clarity and accuracy, using a range of sociological knowledge in the form of theories, studies, concepts and contemporary examples. 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. Having said that, candidates who rely heavily on contemporary examples at the expense of studies, concepts and theories tend to be awarded marks at a basic level, as this is not good sociology. The A grade and the E grade are set at very similar levels for both the AS units, demonstrating that candidates respond to both units in a similar way. Certainly, the detailed reports included in this document suggest that, across both examination papers, candidates seem to struggle most with the skill of interpretation and application. This skill is often about responding to the specific question or context and, given that candidates cannot prepare themselves for the exact nature of the questions, this is a skill area which is challenging.

H581

This was the second examination series for the A2 papers and the first awarding of the new A* grade. The majority of candidates answered all questions, or all question parts and the impression was that they were generally very well prepared for these examinations. It is pleasing to note that many students had a good awareness of current affairs and could use this to illustrate classic sociological debates. As with G671, G673 also had a higher entry in January than in June this year. The A2 examination papers are very different to each other: G673 requires two unstructured essay questions on one or more substantive topic areas; G674 is a structured examination paper, with a source item, combining sociological research methods with social inequality and difference. They are, however, each weighted equally at 50 per cent of the A2 course.

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

G671 Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments

This series, once again, saw a wide range of candidate performance, both between and within individual centres, although there were few very high achieving or very low achieving candidates. There is evidence that candidates are more aware of the assessment requirements of each question, and this may be the result of centres becoming more familiar with the G671 examination structure. There were very few rubric errors and the vast majority of candidates attempted to answer all four questions, which indicates that the questions were clear and accessible to all. There is some evidence that candidates performed better on questions 1 and 3 this series. It was, however, significantly noticeable that a large number of candidates struggled to answer question 2. There is a more detailed commentary on this question in the section below but it may be useful to clarify at this point the role and purpose of the pre-release material. The pre-release material is specifically related to question 4 on the examination paper, as this question contains the instruction “using the pre-release material...”. The focus of question 4 is always on sociological methods and the research process. The aim of this question is to enable students to discuss methodological issues in the context of a piece of contemporary research focused on culture, identity and/or socialisation (the pre-release material). The other three questions on the examination paper aim to test candidates on the specification content from this unit, which is outlined clearly and explicitly under seven key issues in the specification content. That is not to say, however, that the pre-release material can *only* be used for question 4. As the instructions on the front of the examination paper state: “You may interpret and apply the pre-release material as well as your own sociological knowledge for any question, wherever it is relevant and appropriate”. This is because the pre-release material is based around research into culture, socialisation and identity, which means that for any other questions (1–3) students asked 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 question 1, candidates could make reference to the high status associated with the steel worker identity or the breadwinner identity; for question 2 to how the loss of the workplace (steel factories) could potentially mean the loss of an important mechanism of social control and for question 3 to how being a steel worker was tied up with notions of traditional masculinity. Of course, students 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. In other examination series there may not be so many links to the pre-release material in questions 1-3 and students will need to be able to draw on a range of sociological evidence. It is pleasing to note that previous pre-release studies (such as Carolyn Jackson and Dan Burdsey) are being used as sociological evidence in questions 2 and 3.

Teachers’ tip:

Keep copies of previous pre-release studies, not just to use as mock examination practice, but also as part of a bank of resources to add to the range of evidence students could draw upon.

In relation to question 2, as stated earlier, many candidates had no accurate knowledge and understanding of mechanisms of social control, despite it clearly featuring in the specification. It is important to state that it is not recommended that centres try to “question spot”, as the main aim is to test candidates on the specification content. Teachers would be advised to plan their teaching around the seven key issues stated in the specification (particularly on the key content in the left hand side of the specification content), rather than using the pre-release material as a guide to what to prioritise.

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

On every question, in order to achieve marks in the highest mark band, candidates need to include a range of sociological evidence and to discuss this with some depth. This was particularly well done in responses to question 3, where many candidates were able to draw upon a range of sociological studies of traditional masculinity. A large number of responses, however, failed to include the required range and depth of sociological evidence. "Evidence" can include studies, theories, concepts and contemporary examples, although it should be noted that responses which rely heavily on contemporary examples will not score very highly as, on their own, contemporary examples are not good sociology. It is also worth noting that there is a difference between contemporary examples and anecdote. "Contemporary examples" means events in society either that can inform sociology but may not have been formally researched / studied or that are happening as sociologists are carrying out their research. For example, the current political debate about whether prison works could be used to illustrate formal / informal social control for question 2. 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 'all boys are influenced by watching programmes about cars on television because they get it into their heads then that they like cars'.

Most candidates allocated their use of time effectively, spending the longest on question 4, which is worth just over half the marks of the whole paper. There is some evidence that question 4 responses have improved in quality since the start of this new unit. However, some candidates did experience timing issues; most commonly by spending too much time on question 1, which should be allocated approximately five minutes, or by spending too long on question 4 at the expense of the other three questions. There continues to be a clear centre effect on this paper. Candidates who had been prepared well managed to pick up marks on all questions by knowing the assessment requirements and using sociological evidence appropriately. However, candidates from some centres either had very little understanding of the role of the pre-release material (and copied out large chunks of the findings) or had very little sociological knowledge for questions 1, 2 and 3. Question 2 was noticeable here; there were whole centres where candidates did not attempt to answer this question, with some students writing comments such as "I cannot answer this question as I have no idea what social control is".

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 were dominated by common sense and anecdotal evidence. Candidates must be encouraged to back up their answers with sociological evidence, be it concepts, studies, relevant contemporary examples or theory. For example, in answers to question 2, candidates who discussed the education system as a mechanism of social control in terms of the hidden curriculum, positive and negative sanctions, the gendered curriculum, and references to studies such as Archer achieved much higher marks than those who referred to school rules and uniforms.

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. For example, in question 3, candidates were able to offer good explanations of what traditional masculinity is, but failed to explain how males are socialised into it. It is also worth pointing out that a significant number of students are not offering any evaluation for question 3, which is worth 4 marks, so candidates must be reminded that there is also an evaluative element to this question.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Q.1 In general this question was answered very well and the majority of candidates understood the core meaning of the concept of 'status' by relating it to 'position in society' or 'social standing' or discussing the idea of 'hierarchy'. Some candidates confused the concept of 'status' with 'identity' by writing, for example, that "Status is how others see you and how you see yourself". This type of answer was awarded marks for being a 'partial answer', as it did not focus enough on the idea of positioning. There were many candidates who achieved full marks for this question. Most of these started by offering a clear one-sentence definition (2 marks), followed by some development of this, for example by defining different types of status (achieved, ascribed, high, low) or by discussing the relationship between status and role (which would gain another 2 marks). 4 of the 8 marks are available for giving examples and a lot of responses used the examples of royalty (ascribed status) and David Beckham or Alan Sugar (achieved status). Those who achieved the full 4 marks for examples were able to explain how their examples relate to status. There were a few very sophisticated answers which took a Weberian or Marxist approach to understanding status and some candidates used the pre-release material to discuss status relating to traditional masculinity as an example. There were, however, some candidates who spent too long on this question, writing a 'one whole page' answer. This obviously has implications for later questions and candidates should be reminded that they should spend approximately five minutes only on this question. There were fewer weaker responses compared to last series but those which scored poorly tended to confuse status with social role and/or social class and failed to offer an accurate core meaning of the term.

Teaching tip: Question 1 is always a concept question taken from the specification content. Ensure that your students have detailed definitions and examples for each one. You could do a classroom display with them all on.

Q.2 As stated earlier in this report, this was a very poorly answered question, with many candidates choosing not to answer it at all, indicating that they had no knowledge or understanding of the concept of social control. They may have been confused by the term 'mechanisms', although this is taken directly from the wording in the specification. The best responses used formal and informal as their two mechanisms of social control and linked these to the socialisation process. Strong responses were very conceptual, for example by referencing positive/negative sanctions, the hidden curriculum, manipulation and canalisation, and even applying sophisticated theoretical interpretations, such as Marxism and feminism. Many responses used specific agencies of socialisation, such as the family, the media and, whilst these were creditworthy, many of these tended to focus on socialisation without making explicit links to social control. Some responses made reference to norms and values being mechanisms of social control and, whilst not strictly accurate, many were able to pick up some marks through the examples they used. Very few candidates used studies in this answer (such as, McRobbie's work on gender and control of girls' behaviour) but stronger responses were conceptual or theoretical. As stated earlier, those that relied on contemporary examples tended not to be able to demonstrate enough breadth or depth of knowledge to reach the higher mark bands. Weaker responses were confused and/or anecdotal, showing no real understanding of mechanisms of social control, for example 'social control is about self control with alcohol' or 'social control is about being in control of a gang'. Other weaker responses tried to argue that class/gender/ethnicity were mechanisms of social control, illustrating no real understanding of the concept.

Q.3 This was generally a well answered question and many candidates were able to discuss a wide range of studies in relation to the socialisation of males into traditional masculinity. The most popular cited study was Oakley's work on gender role socialisation and many students discussed this in depth, even if Oakley's name wasn't specifically cited. The best answers contained plenty of evidence and a real focus on how traditional or hegemonic masculinities are reinforced via the socialisation process. They included discussion of a range of relevant agencies of socialisation from the family to media and the workplace. Another feature of stronger responses was the presence of explicit evaluation of the question. The most common approach was to question the prevalence of traditional masculinity by using Connell's work on the range of different types of masculinity and Mac an Ghail's notion of a 'crisis in masculinity'. Where evaluation was weaker, candidates only evaluated in an implicit way, by stating that there are different types of masculinity rather than directly challenging the idea of how males are socialised into traditional masculinity. There is still a significant number of candidates who do not offer evaluation points and therefore lose 4 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 traditional masculinity, writing more instead about the 'new man', for example, or offering a generic answer about gender role socialisation, without specifically focusing on boys/males, or focusing more on class (working class) than masculinity.

Q.4 There was, once again, a wide range of responses to this question. Many candidates were unclear about what a semi-structured interview actually is. It should be noted that in the specification, semi-structured interview falls under the 'qualitative data' section and, therefore, the strengths and weaknesses of this method could revolve around the qualitative nature of it. Strong responses identified 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 to explain what a semi-structured interview entails is to compare it to 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. Stronger responses demonstrated 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 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 attempted to use the concepts but their answers were very confused, partial or undeveloped. To reach level 3 of the mark scheme for both AO1 and AO2b, responses needed to address the key concepts in an accurate, wide-ranging and developed way. The high achieving responses systematically explained the method (see above), offered a range of strengths and weaknesses and included key concepts. Another characteristic of strong responses was the discussion of aspects of the wider research process, for example, sampling, access, ethics and the impact of these. Many candidates made good use of theory in their responses, linking McKenzie et al's research design to the Interpretivist tradition and offering a Positivist critique. It is clear that some students had only a basic understanding of the pre-release material; for example, stating that semi-structured interviews contain lots of quantitative data, or that the sampling method was biased. It is clear from the findings described in the pre-release that the data gathered was mainly qualitative. Teachers need to ensure that they spend some time teaching the content of the pre-release material in preparation for the examination. One real problem is the number of candidates who waste time copying out the pre-release material and describing the findings of the study, which is inappropriate given 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 examination question will always require them to go wider than this, to address research issues, methods, process and concepts, using the pre-release as an illustrative example. It must also be noted that 12 marks are awarded for AO2a linked to how well the candidates contextualise their responses. The majority of students offered very generalised answers or just

threw in the words 'steelworkers' or 'identity'. 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 (redundant manual *workers*) on THIS particular topic (identity)?" Stronger responses in this area offered some very thoughtful comments about the sensitivity of the topic area and the difficulty of building rapport /trust with traditional males. 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 (feelings of guilt, frustration and helplessness) 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 it was being used to support or criticise a methodological issue but centres need to advise students not to spend time describing the findings of other studies, as this is a question about methods. There were a number of candidates who wasted time discussing the non-participant observation part of the study, where the question was specifically on semi-structured interviews. It is important that centres do not teach a pre-prepared 'cover all' type answer; it is recommended that candidates are taught to understand this particular piece of research so that they can be confident and knowledgeable enough to address any question which comes up in the examination.

G672 Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments

Scripts seen this series covered the range of mark bands, with a significant number achieving the top of level 3. Overall, there was a noticeably higher number of better responses than in last summer's series.

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 opted for Health. Generally candidates used their time appropriately, producing approximately three quarters of a side of A4 for part (a) and at least two sides for part (b).

A few candidates continued to ignore the rubric and answered either too many questions or only one question. Some candidates also attempted to answer questions on topics for which they had clearly not been prepared and these candidates did not perform well.

Overall, candidates fulfilled the requirements in terms of quality of written communication, producing work written in continuous prose and with clarity of expression, although there were a noticeable number of candidates with significant spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.

Part (a) Questions

A significant proportion of candidates, while having some sociological knowledge, did not perform as well as they could on part (a) questions because they were not writing to the requirements of the examination question. Many candidates correctly identified two points but offered insufficient or no explanation. Others offered rather unfocused answers where more than two points were covered, although examiners were only able to give credit to the two most fully developed factors or reasons. A few candidates also wrote at great length on part (a) questions and left themselves insufficient time to write full length answers to one or both part (b) questions. Some also wrote lengthy and unnecessary introductions to part (a) answers before actually proceeding to identify and explain their two points. Overall, the majority of candidates achieved marks in the middle of level 3 of the mark scheme for at least some of their answers. The most common issues that prevented them from achieving the top of level 3 or level 4 were:

- Failing to make use of sociological theories, concepts and/or contemporary evidence to develop their answers and demonstrate sociological knowledge and understanding.
- Failing to explain their two points fully, often simply identifying and giving only a brief explanation.
- Producing unnecessary preambles before answering the question
- Identifying more than two points
- Identifying and explaining only one valid point
- Identifying two points that overlap to such a degree that they can only be treated as one point
- Including explanations that had little relevance to the point identified
- Using time inappropriately on material not required by the question, for example by including criticisms or evidence against their explanations.
- Lacking focus on the question, with points not explicitly identified

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

Part (b) Questions

On part (b) questions it is pleasing to note that most candidates were trying to use knowledge of sociological concepts, theories and research in answering questions and most candidates made at least some attempt to evaluate eg by offering counter-arguments. However, a significant number wrote purely perspectives-based answers on the lines of 'functionalists would argue x while Marxists would argue y' while offering little or no empirical data, examples or research to illustrate these arguments.

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

- Insufficient sociological knowledge and responses that were mainly anecdotal or drawn from common sense (Better candidates made use of sociological theories, concepts and/or studies.)
- Answers that were well informed sociologically but used material that was of only marginal relevance to the question on the paper
- Failure to interpret and apply sociological data, for example statistics and findings of sociological studies or examples from current events or broader social trends
- Relevant data selected but not applied to the question, leaving a list-like response that did not answer the question sufficiently
- One-sided answers that only considered evidence agreeing or disagreeing with the view
- Juxtaposed arguments or evidence with little explicit evaluation (Better answers offered critical comments, weighed up arguments and evidence and drew a reasoned conclusion about the view.)
- Part (b) answers that were only a little longer or even shorter than their part (a) answers (Candidates should be aware that part (b) requires a response that is at least twice as long as part (a), reflecting the marks allocated.)

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

Teachers' Tip on Knowledge and Understanding - To achieve the highest marks for knowledge and understanding, candidates need to include sociological evidence, ie theories, concepts and/or accurate contemporary evidence on various sides of the argument. They need to show a detailed understanding and so must learn as much about the evidence as they can to be able to write about it in an informed way. Teachers should aim to select teaching material that will best facilitate this process and use evidence that gives depth and detail.

The skill of interpretation and application seemed challenging to a number of candidates, some of whom were able to produce responses with sound knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts, studies etc. but that were not applied effectively to the question. Some simply listed evidence without reference to the question, while some responses were characterised by their superficial, anecdotal approach.

Teachers' Tip on Interpretation and Application- To achieve the highest marks in the skill of interpretation and application, candidates need to select and apply different types of data including theories, concepts and/or contemporary evidence on various sides of the argument. Candidates should aim to identify the most relevant data and then show how this relates to the question, highlighting patterns and trends, supported with evidence where appropriate. Using phrases like 'This study shows that...' that explicitly use the wording of the question can encourage application to the question.

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

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Q.1 (a) Most candidates were able to identify two reasons for the increase in divorce but a few identified reasons for individuals divorcing rather than reasons for the increase, e.g. domestic violence, infidelity, financial problems etc. The most commonly cited reasons were legal changes, changes in attitudes, secularisation, higher expectations of marriage and changes in the position of women; some candidates conflated one or more of these together into one reason. Development and explanation of points was minimal for a significant number of candidates and understanding of divorce legislation was often vague or inaccurate. Many candidates cited the 1969 Divorce Reform Act but simply said it made divorce easier or (incorrectly) that it allowed women to sue for divorce for the first time. The best answers tended to use concepts and theories, for example Giddens work on confluent love or Beck's notion of individualism, and explained how these related to the increase in divorce.

Q.1 (b) Most candidates had at least some understanding of functionalist views but some focused too much on the family structure or roles in the family, rather than applying their knowledge to the role of the family in society. Better answers tended to make use of the work of Murdock and Parsons, interpreting lists of functions with varying degrees of detail and accuracy. The concept of the 'warm bath' was much in evidence, again with varying degrees of detail and accuracy. The best responses recognised that Parsons' work focused on families in industrial society and considered the notion of the fit between the nuclear family and industrial society. Some candidates also drew on Fletcher's work to consider the idea of the family performing non-essential functions. Most candidates were able to identify at least one or two criticisms of functionalism and sometimes these were well illustrated with empirical material, eg studies of domestic violence, to support the view that functionalists ignored the 'dark side' of the family. Some candidates wrote extensively on other perspectives such as feminism, Marxism, New Right and postmodernism. Weaker responses tended to juxtapose these and not use them effectively to evaluate functionalism. Some candidates also seemed to have more knowledge of other theories, while their understanding of functionalism was fairly undeveloped. The best answers used material from other perspectives to criticise functionalism, feminist work on gender roles (eg Delphy and Leonard, Benston) or postmodernists on family diversity (eg Stacey). New right ideas were often cited in support (eg Murray, Dennis and Erdos) but many candidates were unable to distinguish functionalist and New Right approaches.

Q.2 (a) Most candidates were able to identify two types of family diversity, though a number (incorrectly) cited the nuclear family as a form of diversity and some cited types of household which were not families as forms of family diversity, eg single person households and the kibbutz. Many candidates simply cited types of families, such as lone parent, reconstituted, beanpole and extended. Often these were less developed, amounting to a simple description of the family type. Some candidates engaged in lengthy but rather tangential discussions of how different perspectives would view different family types. Better answers typically focused on broader categories of diversity with some of the best answers looking at structural diversity, ethnic diversity (eg drawing on work of Berthoud, Ballard etc) and sexual diversity (e.g. considering the impact of civil partnerships and other social policies and sometimes using Weeks, Dunne etc). Some candidates also referred to class diversity, but this was generally less well understood. Better answers also focused on how alternative families diverged from nuclear families, eg in gender roles, parenting etc.

Q.2 (b) Some candidates answered this question less well than question 1(b). Most candidates interpreted relationships as meaning conjugal roles and only a few chose to address issues such as cohabitation, marriage and divorce or issues of love and intimacy, which potentially related to the question. Weaker answers were typically very narrow, focusing on paid work and domestic labour and were either entirely anecdotal or contained only a small amount of (often dated) sociological research (eg Wilmott and Young and Oakley). Some candidates also wrote rather generalised perspectives-type answers outlining liberal feminist, radical feminist, functionalist etc approaches but lacking any empirical substance and often discussing perspectives' views on what relationships should be like. Better answers were broader and included more research, eg including issues such as decision-making (Edgell), finances (Pahl and Vogler), domestic violence (Stanko, Nazroo etc), fathering (Hatter, Burghes etc.), emotion work (Duncombe and Marsden), as well as more up to date research on division of labour, eg Npower survey, British Social Attitudes Surveys etc.). Some answers were rather list-like or mainly one-sided. Better answers offered a balanced evaluation with arguments on both sides. Some candidates also addressed methodological problems of measuring equality/inequality in division of labour, power etc. A few excellent answers were seen which covered a broad range of empirical material on different aspects, combined with theoretical analysis and concepts, and offered a balanced evaluation.

Q.3 (a) Few answers to this question were seen. Candidates tended to either look at patterns of morbidity and mortality by gender or at explanations of gender differences, eg learned helplessness, risk behaviour, labelling by medical professional etc. Some answers failed to identify clear ways in which patterns of ill health are influenced by gender and simply offered some generalised comments. Few responses were supported with studies and most were more anecdotal in tone.

Q.3 (b) There were some very good responses to this question. Most candidates adopted a perspectives approach, typically contrasting the functionalist approach with more critical perspectives such as Marxist, Weberian and feminist. Weaker candidates tended to include only one or two approaches and these tended to be underdeveloped and lacking in substantive evidence. Evaluation was typically by juxtaposition of approaches. The very good responses covered a range of perspectives, supported by studies, and they explicitly evaluated arguments. The best answers made good use of empirical material, eg male exclusion of women from medical professions, and approaches to reproduction and contraception to illustrate feminist approaches. A few candidates referred to postmodernism, eg Foucault, sometimes underdeveloped or only partially understood, but a few very good answers linked this to material on alternative therapies and the questioning of scientific medical meta-narratives.

Q.4 (a) Again there were very few answers to this question. Candidates approached it in a variety of ways. The most commonly cited features in good answers were the idea of health as relative, aspects of social patterning of health, eg class and ethnicity, and the idea of illness as a social process rather than a biological state. Weaker answers often touched on these issues but lacked clarity or were underdeveloped.

Q.4 (b) Most candidates approached this question by discussing the cultural approach and then comparing it with one or more alternatives, eg material/structural, social selection and artefact. Many candidates struggled to find substantive evidence to support the cultural view and weaker answers typically cited anecdotal material on diet and/or smoking. Most candidates were more confident on material factors and were able to cite some research to back it up. Understanding of social selection and artefact approaches was often partial or confused, with very few candidates being able to use these to clearly evaluate. Some candidates also mixed up cultural and structural, eg citing poor housing and work-related diseases as evidence of cultural factors. Overall, few good answers were seen but a small number of candidates were able to explain clearly the cultural approach with appropriate concepts and evidence and then use one or more of the other approaches to explicitly evaluate it.

Q.5 (a) There were only a small number of answers to this question and a number of candidates did not seem well-prepared for this question. A few good answers focused on characteristics such as literal interpretation of texts, conservatism and demanding a high level of commitment. However, few candidates were able to make use of appropriate examples or studies to illustrate points. Weaker answers showed no understanding of the term 'fundamentalism' and some confused it with functionalism to produce wholly inaccurate answers.

Q.5 (b) Most candidates adopted a perspectives approach comparing Marxism with one or more alternatives, e.g. functionalism, Weber, feminism and/or postmodernism. Weaker responses often included only a basic understanding of Marxism and lacked concepts. Better answers, while conceptual, often failed to make use of any examples or research to illustrate Marxist (or indeed alternative) approaches. Candidates were mainly differentiated in terms of use of alternative approaches, with some considering a range of other theories, although sometimes merely juxtaposing these without explicitly evaluating. Some candidates produced answers that, while well informed, appeared to be prepared answers on religion and social change, rather than addressing the question set.

Q.6 (a) This question was not generally well answered. Some candidates appeared to have little understanding and few seemed aware of relevant studies or concepts. Better answers tended to focus on how particular ethnic groups were associated with particular religions and how these religions gave a sense of hope or belonging. Some good responses used concepts like marginalisation, social exclusion and resistance in explaining the influence of ethnicity on religiosity.

Q.6 (b) This question was generally not well answered. Understanding of new religious movements was confused or partial in many responses. Some candidates produced what appeared to be prepared answers on secularisation with little or no reference to NRMs. Better responses made some reference to NRMs, eg referring to Wallis's typology, but knowledge of particular NRMs or studies was often very limited. Most candidates were aware of arguments for and against the view that religion is still strong but this was often fairly anecdotal and unsubstantiated. A few candidates produced answers that included references to a range of relevant research and data and showed understanding of key concepts such as disengagement, religious pluralism, resacrilisation etc.

Q.7 (a) A significant number of candidates did not understand the term 'hybrid subcultures' and simply referred to examples of youth subcultures, such as punks and skinheads. Some thought hybrid subcultures were ones that expressed resistance to capitalism through style. Many of those candidates who had some understanding struggled to identify and explain two distinct features. Some points were heavily overlapping, e.g. looking at hybridity in music and clothing but using the same example for both. Better answers tended to look at aspects of hybrid style with one other feature, eg breakdown of distinctions of class/gender/ethnicity or mixing of ethnic identities/white masks. The most cited examples were Bhangra / Bhangramuffins and Eminem but many struggled to use examples or they referred to ones that were not entirely appropriate, such as hybrid styles in media that were not strictly subcultures. Very few candidates used sociological studies or concepts but a few did refer to postmodernist theories.

Q.7 (b) There was a variety of responses to this question and some candidates produced well-informed answers. Weaker responses tended to discuss how youth culture might assist the transition to adulthood in generalised and anecdotal terms. However, most candidates correctly identified the view as functionalist, although understanding of the view was sometimes partial and underdeveloped. Nevertheless many candidates made effective use of the work of Parsons, Eisenstadt and/or Abrams to illustrate the view, although the role of peer groups in providing support in the transition from ascribed child status to achieved adult status was not always understood. Most candidates used material from other perspectives including neo-Marxist (e.g. CCCS), feminist and/or postmodernist (eg Bennett, Polhemus). This was often rather juxtaposed with functionalist arguments but some very well informed and conceptual answers were seen which used other theories effectively to evaluate functionalism. Disappointingly few candidates seemed able to use any examples of subcultures or empirical studies to support arguments and interpretation and application was generally the least developed skill. Few candidates distinguished between youth culture and youth subcultures in analysis and evaluation.

Q.8 (a) A range of responses was seen on this question. At the lowest level, answers tended to be anecdotal and common sense accounts, eg looking at how young people growing up on poor council estates were led astray by their peers or lack of parental socialisation. Better answers were able to use some concepts such as labelling, status frustration and relative deprivation and were differentiated in how well these ideas were explained and developed. A few excellent answers were seen which made use of a range of concepts and sociological studies.

Q.8 (b) Most candidates had some understanding of this question but knowledge was generally rather narrow. Weaker responses tended to discuss the question in a common sense or anecdotal way, looking at how ethnicity might influence friendships or cause bullying. Better answers used some concepts such as labelling, institutional racism and ethnic identity. Application of research was fairly narrow; many candidates referred to Shain's work in varying degrees of detail and accuracy and some also cited Sewell and/or Mirza but there seemed little knowledge of research beyond these studies by most candidates. Some candidates also discussed patterns of attainment in different ethnic groups. A common strategy in evaluating was to point to the importance of class and/or ethnicity and better responses referred to studies illustrating these points. Some candidates also pointed to evidence of the declining importance of ethnicity, eg spread of multiculturalism, equal opportunities and narrowing of some differences in attainment.

G673 Power and Control

General Comments

Most candidates performed to a good standard and displayed a wide ranging knowledge and understanding of sociological studies and concepts. Sometimes this was not effectively applied to the question set, however.

Theories were less well understood and sometimes, where a specific theory was indicated in the question, candidates wrote generalised accounts of a range of sociologists and theories unrelated to the actual theory highlighted in the question. This applied particularly to the questions on Functionalism.

This generalised knowledge also applied to background and historical knowledge which added little to the analysis of recent trends. This issue was particularly evident in the education question relating to post-1988 policy, where many candidates wrote at length about the Tripartite system.

Differences within perspectives were generally not well understood, with confusion between different types of Feminism and Marxism in particular.

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

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

For example, the education question of functionalism and economy often produced responses which ignored the issue of the economy.

Teaching Tip

Encourage candidates to develop a more holistic approach to revision so that material can be applied more specifically to the demands of the question.

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

Often local knowledge was displayed which demonstrated a thoughtful application of material to the question. This can be helpful in drawing out social policy differences, for example between England and Wales. However, often the examples were not sourced and became impressionistic.

Evaluation and analysis was the weakest skill area and was often entirely based on the juxtaposition of theories or studies. Key words and phrases were utilised more often, for example, 'however', 'on the other hand' 'an alternative view is suggested by....' but it was not always clear what the nature of the evaluation was. Candidates should be encouraged to consider the precise criticism being made when stating that someone disagrees with a concept/theory/study. Methodological evaluation, in particular, tended to be imprecise, with a common tendency to state that a particular study lacked validity and/or reliability, with no explanation as to why this was the case. These concepts were sometimes used incorrectly.

Where a theory was highlighted in the question, other theories were utilised in evaluation but sometimes this was not explicit, so that candidates were merely evaluating through juxtaposition, rather than demonstrating how an alternative theory was criticising or supporting a particular perspective.

In terms of evaluation, candidates should be encouraged to evaluate throughout the response rather than leaving it to the conclusion. Weaker responses tended towards assertion in their conclusions. Also, some candidates simply repeated points they had already made and thus added little to the main body of the response.

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

Introductions were more focused in this series, with less of a tendency to define obvious terms or to write at length about historical contexts not related to the specifics of the question.

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

Teaching Tip

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

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

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

Comments on Specific Questions

Question 1

Some candidates quite reasonably devoted space to a functionalist explanation of the nature and meaning of crime (why it is normal, functional, etc, and how it can become pathological), whilst others got more mileage out of a causal approach (why crime occurs... Merton, Albert Cohen and so on). Of course, thorough candidates did both.

Those who looked at Merton sometimes gave accurate accounts of his modes of adaptation, whilst others got muddled. Many gave good evaluation of *particular* aspects of these theories, specific to Merton for example, whilst others were able to identify the functionalist weaknesses in some of these theories, eg assumptions of consensus and shared beliefs.

Weaker responses simply used the question to run through perspectives on crime in general.

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

Some candidates appeared to have prepared for a theory question on Marxism so introduced some superficial information on functionalism before developing a detailed analysis of the merits of Marxist approaches.

Where there was development beyond Merton and Durkheim, it tended to be with subcultural theorists such as Cohen and Cloward and Ohlin; however few candidates were able to make the link to functionalism very clearly, either saying they were functionalists or that they were not and failing to showing an understanding of how they developed from functionalism.

Question 2

This was a popular question and stronger responses were able to display a wide ranging knowledge and understanding of studies and concepts.

A common approach in weaker answers seemed to be to write about all the theories candidates knew on crime and try to apply these loosely to ethnicity, with varying degrees of success. Some candidates had learnt specific studies, such as Gilroy, Phillips & Bowling and Hall, and it was good to see a few studies on Asians and crime, such as Abbas, appearing. The McPherson Report also featured, though some thought this related to Damilola Taylor, or that the police killed Stephen Lawrence.

Some weaker responses failed to differentiate between ethnic groups and were confused about exactly which group they were discussing.

Some candidates relied on Eastern European immigrants and drink driving for recent 'data' but this example does highlight how older studies and concepts can be applied positively (in this case Park's notion of assimilation).

Question 3

This was also a popular question and stronger responses demonstrated a detailed knowledge and understanding of Right Realism and were able to focus specifically on the issue of solutions, for example the 'broken windows' thesis.

Good responses distinguished between the New Right (eg Murray) and Right Realism.

Candidates often evaluated Right Realism by reference to Left Realism but weaker responses confused the two.

Most candidates did blur together Right Realists with the New Right, which was accepted, but this did lead to some confusion about what Right Realists actually argue about crime – for example, zero tolerance was frequently linked to the US three-strikes policy, which is not based on the same idea at all. Very few made any link to recent UK policies – few mentions of ASBOs were seen, surprisingly. There was some very good evaluation of these policies, often using Left Realists, though candidates who failed really to explain the Right Realists' ideas on crime and just focused on the solutions found it harder to evaluate them successfully. The contrasting explanations of the Left Realists made it easier then to compare their solutions to show the weaknesses of Right Realist solutions.

Question 4

This was a very popular question with some strong, wide ranging responses, with many relevant studies cited.

Statistics were often utilised to demonstrate how attainment has changed but often there were no sources for the statistics identified.

Many candidates merely listed reasons for the changes, with no supporting evidence at all. The most commonly used study was Sue Sharpe, but many candidates did not go beyond this. Some candidates also focused on outdated feminist studies explaining the underachievement of girls, which had limited relevance to the question relating to the change in attainment. If this material had been used to show how things had now changed it could have been more credit-worthy, but some candidates seemed to have no awareness that there had been any change since the early 1970s! There were also some strange misconceptions, such as the idea that before the 1990s, girls did not go to school or could not go to university!

A few candidates rightly noted that gender is not an essentialist category and argued that what applied to (white) middle class girls may not apply to others, but some took this as a stepping stone to write general answers on education in relation to class and ethnicity.

Question 5

This was also a popular question. Weaker responses just discussed the functionalist view of education in general, with little attempt to link it to the economy. Candidates commonly cited Durkheim, Parsons and Davis & Moore, but often used them interchangeably, showing little depth of understanding. Candidates commonly spent much more of the answer discussing the Marxist view, using Bowles & Gintis, Althusser and sometimes Willis, giving the impression that a question of the Marxist view would have been much more welcome and tackled more effectively. Often the Marxist material was creditable as little more than juxtaposition, and not really linked to functionalism at all. Very few candidates referred to vocationalism and any newer research, and those who did had trouble making this link to the focus on functionalism.

Stronger candidates were able to apply their understanding to contemporary debates around Britain's economic standing in the world and even, with this, to issues around globalisation.

Question 6

This was also a popular question and many candidates had a wide ranging knowledge of policies. However, often the issue of 'increased inequality' was overlooked.

More often candidates discussed how policies had sought to increase equality, and then evaluated this – still getting credit but occasionally losing focus or getting confused. An impressive range of recent policies had clearly been learnt and understood by some, and these were well linked to the question by a few good candidates. However, there were many candidates who either did not read the 'since 1988' part of the question, or had no clue when some policies were introduced. Thus there were lengthy discussions of the merits/limitations of the tripartite system, candidates who were convinced that private schools were introduced in 1988, and many candidates who spent most of the answer discussing banding and streaming, labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy, with no link to recent policies.

Question 7

This question produced a wide range of responses.

Some sought to convert it to a general one on media effects – from hypodermic syringes and/or BoBo doll onwards. Others, wisely, saw in it the potential to explore the role of the media in the social construction of crime and deviance, with all its potential for references to moral panics, folk devils, deviancy amplification spirals and so on. Some candidates drew usefully upon the work on race and crime by neo-Marxist Hall. Though Cohen's mods and rockers study is dated it was applied relevantly to contemporary issues by many candidates.

Question 8

Most candidates who answered this were able to list content analysis, semiology and experiments and to evaluate each. The key word here is *list*, and many did not outline them as methods, but instead took it for granted, saying that, for example, 'experiment' was sufficient to count as an outline – no reference to control of variables, dependent and independent and so on; equally the process of content analysis was often simply outlined as 'statistical' or 'numerical'.

Having said that, it needs to be stressed that this paucity of detail did not stop some answers having strong evaluation based on practical, theoretical and sometimes ethical considerations.

Question 9

This was a popular question with those choosing the media option and some answers were very good. Those that received the higher marks distinguished, for example, types of Marxism and evaluated the theories of both by reference to pluralism or even postmodernism.

One tendency among the weaker answers was to view any constraint on the news, or evidence of its social construction, as support for Marxist views on the news – the nine o'clock swearing threshold was seen in these terms, for example, and so was the 'events list' of forthcoming stories (World Cup, Remembrance Sunday). Similarly anyone who noted inequality in the media, say Becker for example, was sometimes seen as implicitly Marxist.

Question 10

Power and politics is a minority option but those choosing it were often very well-informed and answers to this were good illustrations of this preparedness, at least in terms of overall knowledge. Where these well-informed candidates could have improved their answers was through directing their knowledge more explicitly to 'identity' and perhaps, in this, exploring different dimensions of it, from mere 'bumper sticker' identity to where it is closer to something like a master status. Additionally, given the level of knowledge about the theories of NSMs, many candidates had a surprising lack of knowledge of, or willingness to refer to, specific NSMs and the great variety of these.

Question 11

There were a number of good to excellent answers on this question about this distribution of power in society, often showing considerable familiarity with theoretical positions of elite theory, Marxism and pluralism. Insofar as any of the better answers could have been improved, a greater recognition of types of Marxism could have helped, as could more awareness of different types of pluralism (classic and elite/neo). Each of these theories, of course, evaluates the others but good answers went beyond – for example, into specific empirical support for, or criticism of, pluralism or into internal weaknesses of types of elitism. A refinement that some did not make was the difference between the concepts of ‘elite’ and ‘ruling class’.

Question 12

There were few responses to this question. Some were unbalanced, with the view in the question being outlined very briefly and therefore the argument that ideology is not dead being developed at length.

Strong responses contrasted the views of Bell and Fukuyama with other commentators and compared older social movements with new social movements.

G674 Exploring Social Inequality and Difference

General Comments

This is the second series that G674, Exploring Social Inequality and Difference, has been available.

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

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

In Section A candidates are expected to show knowledge and understanding of methodology and evaluate a research strategy within a specific context outlined within some source material. In order to do this, candidates are expected to use a range of methodological concepts and approaches. It is therefore imperative that they are familiar with and able to apply some of the key sociological methodological concepts, including validity, reliability, representativeness, generalisability and replicability. Centres should try to ensure that candidates know these key concepts and have had opportunities to apply them in the evaluation of research during their course. Understanding positivist, interpretive, realist and feminist approaches to methodology is also vital.

In Section B both questions were equally popular, with a slight preference for the question on gender inequality.

Candidates seemed to have sufficient time for the tasks and the majority completed all the questions within the time allocated. There were very few rubric errors. It is worth noting, however, that some centres had clearly advised candidates to attempt the questions with higher mark allocations first. Whilst this strategy might help some candidates to focus attention on those parts of the paper where gaining marks is statistically more likely, the time spent answering a question should relate to the proportion of the marks awarded. Some candidates were disadvantaged by spending a disproportionate amount of time on questions with most marks at the expense of the others. As a result, the overall pattern of marks awarded tended to be skewed, reducing overall performance. The best examination technique is to allocate time in proportion to the marks and not to neglect any of the four questions.

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

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

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

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

Most candidates understood that questionnaires are a list of pre-set questions devised by a sociological researcher that are related to the topic under consideration, in which the same questions are given to each person in a pre-determined order so that the same information can be gathered from each person in the sample. They also understood that questionnaires may be administered in the presence of a researcher, usually through face-to-face structured interviews, or in groups, or completed independently by respondents, when they can be distributed in a number of different ways, usually by post, telephone and e-mail via the internet.

Candidates recognised that questionnaires tend to collect quantitative data using closed, open-ended and fixed-choice questions, and Likert scales. Questionnaires were often associated with surveys, of which there are three main types – factual, attitudinal and explanatory. Usually, relatively large samples may be collected using questionnaires. Different sampling strategies may be used, for example random, stratified and cluster.

Candidates also related questionnaires to positivist and ‘scientific’ approaches to social research allowing data to be used in an objective way, which is more reliable than qualitative data. Researchers usually want to generalise from the data gathered. Data gathered using questionnaires may be used to test hypotheses and analysed using statistical techniques to explore the relationship between different variables.

Candidates tended to refer to concepts such as:

- social surveys
- operationalise
- open and closed questions
- samples
- Likert scale
- coding
- statistical analysis
- hypothesis
- quantitative data
- positivist

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

- practicality – large amounts of data may be collected from many different people relatively cheaply and quickly
- relatively little personal involvement on the part of the researcher and respondent – little danger or personal cost to either
- data easily quantified and analysed, possibly using computers
- value freedom
- objectivity
- comparability with other research studies and findings
- discovering patterns and trends
- used to develop theories, establish causal relationships and test hypotheses

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

- generalising to wider population more justified because of large samples
- representative
- subject and researcher biases
- respondent validation
- researcher imposition
- validity

Ethical issues were raised by many, for example control over the disclosure of information and confidentiality, and the potential impact on the lives of the respondents, especially when researching sensitive issues, including social class and cultural preferences.

Candidates generally used data from the source material for illustrative purposes and/or from other sociological sources, from material associated with this unit, as well as other units in the Specification.

Uses and examples usually related to sociological research, for example the work of Peter Townsend and Ann Oakley.

The best responses related answers clearly and systematically to the source material, using the research by Savage et al to illustrate their arguments.

Question 2

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

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

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

Candidates usually referred to the quantitative methods of:

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

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

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

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

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

Most candidates discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the view that quantitative methods are the most useful for sociological research into social class and cultural differences.

Candidates generally referred to methodological issues and concepts such as:

- the influence of researcher values on quality of data gathered and subsequent uses
- objectivity
- subjectivity
- sample size effects
- representativeness of evidence and data
- generalisable
- validity
- reliability
- respondent validation
- desirable responses
- researcher imposition
- subject and researcher biases
- fitness for purpose

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

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

Question 3

(a) Candidates tended to draw upon their knowledge and understanding of patterns of gender inequality from different units within the specification. Aspects of gender inequality that were identified and discussed by many candidates were:

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

Candidates discussed differences between the genders and focused on females. The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- occupational structure
- status
- power
- access to power and political representation
- reserve army
- dual labour markets
- human capital theory
- segregation of jobs
- gender roles
- masculinities

Candidates often referred to writers such as:

- Oakley
- Firestone
- Millet
- Stanworth
- Greer
- Hakim

Some candidates were able to discuss different groups of females, for example differentiating by age, ethnicity and class, or family type, including married and/or single parents.

Theoretical explanations for gender inequality that emphasise the importance of patriarchy were often identified and discussed, including Marxist, neo-Marxist and Feminist. Alternative theoretical explanations of gender inequality and difference included functionalist and post modern. The impact on social inequality of ethnicity, gender and age was compared or contrasted with gender, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions, especially by the most able candidates. Differences in advantage/disadvantage between different groups of females were identified by many, especially at the higher levels of response.

Candidates were most likely to outline theoretical evidence and make some reference to empirical studies. Some introduced relevant data and contemporary examples to good effect. The most effective responses made appropriate use of all these types of sociological evidence. Candidates gaining the highest marks tended to describe how gender affected a range of

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

different areas of social life, supported by several different types of evidence, including empirical studies, data, concepts, theory and contemporary examples.

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

The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- Class and occupational structure
- status
- power and political representation
- reserve army
- human capital theory
- dual labour market
- sociobiology
- patriarchy
- 'malestream' sociology
- gender roles
- masculinities
- culture
- different approaches within feminist theory – radical, Marxist, Liberal, black, post modern

Candidates tended to refer to writers such as:

- Oakley
- Firestone
- Millet
- Abbott
- Hakim
- Stanko
- Greer
- Gilmore
- Connell

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

Some candidates simply described and juxtaposed different theoretical approaches. More effective responses used alternative approaches to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of feminism 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 explanations.

In assessing and evaluating feminist explanations of social inequality, candidates presented a range of issues, including how the theory:

- reveals the role of gender and patriarchy in the creation of social inequality
- shows how gender interacts with other forms of inequality
- shows how gender roles are influenced by socialisation and culture

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

- provides strategies for change to improve position of women
- is subject to political, cultural and value biases
- underplays other dimensions to social inequality e.g. class, age, ethnicity
- ignores contribution of biological differences to inequality
- doesn't allow for diversity and change in the position of gender and other social groups

Question 4

(a) Candidates generally used their knowledge and understanding of patterns of ethnicity and disadvantage from different units within the specification. Most candidates focused upon the relative advantages and disadvantages of different ethnic groups. Aspects of social life in which ethnicity and disadvantage 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

Candidates usually discussed differences between ethnic groups, although weaker responses tended to generalise all ethnicities or focus on one group in particular, for example Black Afro-Caribbean and Asian. The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- economic, cultural and social capital
- status
- power
- market situation
- life chances
- racism
- poverty
- discrimination
- prejudice
- stereotypes
- identity
- underclass
- labelling
- access to power and political representation

Empirical evidence from the Low Pay Unit, CRE studies, government statistics, BCCCS and other sources was often used.

Candidates tended to refer to writers such as:

- Marx
- Richardson and Lambert
- Castles and Kosack
- Weber
- Cohen
- Erikson
- Fenton

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

- Cox
- BCCCS
- Gilroy
- Alexander
- Hall
- Pilkington
- Modood
- Mirza
- Rex and Tomlinson
- Parkin
- Patterson

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

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

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

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

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

- class
- reserve army
- exploitation
- legitimation
- divide and rule
- resistance
- social closure
- racialised class fractions
- assimilation
- underclass
- situational constraints
- ethnic penalty
- institutional racism/discrimination
- fragmentation
- hybrid identities

Candidates tended to refer to writers such as:

- Castles
- Cox
- BCCCS

Reports on the Units taken in June 2010

- Hall
- Gilroy
- Pilkington
- Mirza
- Rex and Tomlinson
- Modood
- Miles

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

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

The evaluative points most frequently raised by candidates were:

- highlights economic aspects of inequality and class dimensions
- shows how occupation and work is affected by ethnicity
- shows how class and ethnicity intersect in inequality
- shows how racial prejudice can be used to promote ruling class ideology
- status and power are not given enough weight
- cultural differences not emphasised
- underemphasizes other dimensions to inequality e.g. age and gender
- neglects changing cultural patterns and diversity in post modern society
- out-dated analysis
- predicted revolution has not happened

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

OCR Customer Contact Centre

14 – 19 Qualifications (General)

Telephone: 01223 553998

Facsimile: 01223 552627

Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

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

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

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

© OCR 2010

