

GCSE

Sociology

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J696**

OCR Report to Centres June 2014

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Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and the report on the examination.

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B671 Sociology Basics

General Comments:

This year's paper provided questions that were accessible to the whole ability range and there was evidence of candidates engaging well with the topic and often answering in detail. Candidates seemed to have understood the styles of different questions, the command words used and what was expected of them. Answers indicated that most areas of the specification had been taught thoroughly. A small number of candidates were not clear about closed questions, systematic sampling, secondary evidence, values and agents of socialisation.

Those candidates less well prepared tended to describe when they should have explained, and failed to follow the instruction to evaluate. As all areas of the specification are covered by the questions, centres are advised to cover the whole specification in their teaching.

Most candidates demonstrated some knowledge of sociological concepts and methods with many using knowledge and concepts from Unit B672, helping with their conceptual engagement. Essay technique was good generally with few candidates reporting to the use of bullet points for question 9

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A – Research Methods and Evidence

Q1

This was a true or false question testing candidates' sociological knowledge. Most candidates scored well here although some had not read the Source material carefully enough or didn't know what concepts such as 'qualitative' and 'systematic sampling' meant and thus lost marks. Centres are advised to give their candidates plenty of practice at this style of question prior to the examination. They can be incorporated easily into lessons as starters, reviews and/or plenaries for any topics being studied and will thus enable candidates to familiarise themselves with the format requirements as well as allowing them opportunities to review key concepts and terms.

Q2

This question is best approached as a question about representativeness and generalisability and candidates should therefore focus their critique on issues of sampling and the key word '**all**' in the question. This question was typically very well answered this year with most candidates scoring highly. The most commonly seen answers concerned the small sample size, the composition of the sample of A Level sixth former students and the fact the research was only completed in one place, Hull.

Marks will not be awarded here for those candidates who identify and discuss accuracy/bias issues. Centres are advised to give their candidates plenty of pieces of evidence to analyse for these types of issues - old legacy papers as well as past Basics papers should prove useful here but centres can also set their own question using a topical piece of data from, for example, the media to give candidates as much practice as possible. Candidates are well advised in this question to choose two points that are sufficiently different to allow them to demonstrate their sociological knowledge and understanding in their explanations and to ensure that they are not simply repeating themselves – several candidates, for example, used '...so it is not representative' as their explanation in both identified points.

Q3

There was a wide variety of responses seen by the examining team and the question appears to have differentiated successfully. Common answers for advantages were the ease and simplicity of the method, its reliability and the opportunity to spot patterns and trends and make comparisons. For disadvantages, candidates typically spoke about a possible lack of validity, inability to explain and expand on answers given and the low response rate. The command word, 'describe', was usually well focused on with only a very small minority of students in this session giving a one-word answer. Some students just gave generic methodological advantages and disadvantages that weren't focused on closed question questionnaires – it is crucial that candidates pay close attention to the method/evidence in the question and tailor their responses to this. Similarly, just stating that something provides quantitative or qualitative data with no further detail is not sufficient to credit.

Q4 (ai)(i and ii)

Most candidates were able to identify the interview in Source B as 'unstructured'. However, there were still several who confused it with a semi-structured interview and others that talked vaguely about open/informal interviews.

Q4 (aii)

The vast majority of candidates successfully identified the conclusion from the research although there was a minority that identified a type of data instead (i.e. qualitative).

Q4 (b)

Here the focus of the question is on issues of accuracy/validity and it is only answers discussing these issues that will score marks. There was a really good focus on these issues in this session indicating again that centres are making good use of the guidance and advice given in previous Principal Examiner's reports. Some students, however, are still losing marks because they discuss points that can't be credited, for example sampling, representativeness and generalisability. This should be avoided – centres are advised to give candidates plenty of practice with this style of question and make good use of past question papers – both the Basics and legacy papers.

The most common answers seen by examiners focused on the interviewer making his biased views known, that a teacher was present during the research and the illegality of the topic matter. Candidates often identified their point well, though some faltered on the explanation, and sometimes generic explanations were repeated, '...so is not accurate', for example. Some candidates' explanations were also brief or confused. Candidates should be encouraged to have a clear and separate sentence explaining each of their identified points.

Q5

It was really pleasing to see that only a very small minority of candidates seemed to misinterpret the question and answer this as an essay; candidates seem to have generally been very well prepared here by Centres. This is a standard question format and thus it is crucial that candidates are trained in how to answer it prior to sitting the examination and given lots of practice opportunities. The bullet point prompts appear to have aided candidates in this and helped them to focus on the issues of research and evidence that is required here.

This question was, in general, answered very well with many candidates being able to write responses that clearly identified primary methods and secondary evidence that might be used within the specific context of the investigation. Most candidates were also able to provide at least some description and additional detail for the choices they made but justifications were less successful. It's crucial that candidates are able to articulate why certain methods, samples, pieces of evidence etc. are being used **within the context** of the investigation. High level and accurate concepts were used and duly rewarded in the better L3 responses, demonstrating some excellent sociological knowledge and understanding (validity, rapport, representativeness, Hawthorne Effect for example). The question differentiated well in terms of outcome between candidates of various different abilities, allowing all to access it – most candidates scored within

Level 2. As one might expect, the level of justification for methodological choices differed quite widely with the lower end typically focussing on practicalities (e.g. quick and easy) whilst others were able to link choices to issues of validity and reliability. Lower level scripts were often limited in the marks that could be awarded simply due to lack of detail and development. Some candidates also neglected context, which is crucial in this question – candidates will not be able to score in level 3 without a context for the investigation. For example, this session some candidates had really thought about where would be best to complete their research in order to access the target population – referring perhaps to festivals, conventions, schools, concerts, youth clubs, social networking sites, blogs and forums. This allowed them to engage with the specifics of the hypothesis rather than just discussing generally. Most of the better answers made good use of the additional space provided within the answer booklet to develop further points and ideas.

Some candidates did not cover the required two primary methods and a piece of secondary evidence in their discussion, and centres are advised to remind candidates of meeting the essential requirements of a question. Some candidates referred to content analysis as secondary evidence, for example, but in the specification this is clearly a primary method. This immediately cost them marks. A lack of detail and depth on how the method or evidence would be used was also something noticed by the examiners. Quite a few good responses remained at the top of Level 2 because the third method/evidence was dealt with very briefly and its inclusion in the research plan was not justified. Focusing on these issues with candidates should really help to boost the marks awarded in this question.

Section B – Key Concepts in Sociology

Q6

This question was answered well overall with the majority of candidates scoring full marks and very few scoring zero. Few selected the red herring as an answer. To help candidates in learning their key concepts, centres may wish to consider asking candidates to compile their own key concepts glossaries based on the specification. Key concepts can also be used in games such as 'Articulate' as a lesson starter, mid-way review or plenary and ensures a real sense of clarity in student's answers whilst also being an activity that they really enjoy.

Q7(a)

This was answered well although some candidates clearly did not know what an agent of socialisation was and some repeated the peer group seen in the source. Some candidates are still not using the terms specified in the specification – family should be referred to, not parents, for example.

7(b)

This question successfully differentiated between candidates. Most were able to identify two ways that peer groups try to make their members fit in, referring to peer pressure, initiation, sharing norms and values, music and clothing. What proved more difficult, however, was for candidates to then explain, not describe, this identified point. The best answers linked the point made directly to how it enabled peer groups to make their members fit in – referring to conformity, sense of belonging, acceptance and cultural sameness.

Q8(a)

Most students were able to correctly identify an example of a female stereotype and the mark scheme was sufficiently broad to allow a wide range of possible answers to be considered and credited.

Q8 (b)

This question had mixed responses with some candidates not being sufficiently clear as to what is meant by the term 'value'. Several confused it with a 'norm' and some merely identified it. Centres are advised to ensure that all key concepts are given equal coverage and are exemplified when being taught.

Q8 (c)

This question was typically answered really well with most candidates being able to identify a formal agent of social control. A few confused formal and informal agents and so were not credited. Candidates do need to ensure that the agent they identify is then accurately described in terms of what or how it controls. For police, for example, candidates wrote about them having the power of arrest and/or being enforcers of the law.

Q8 (d)

Candidates really impressed examiners with the conceptual and sociological focus to many of the answers seen – a large amount of candidates identified ideas such as verbal appellations, canalisation and manipulation. However, this was an 'explain' question and thus to simply describe what the identified term meant did not meet the requirements of the question sufficiently. The best candidates showed clearly for example how girls being bought toy kitchens led to their future gender identity as housewives. In this sense, the question differentiated well. Centres are advised to ensure candidates are clear on the differing demands of the key command words such as identify, describe and explain.

Q9

Most candidates showed good time management skills here and were able to finish the paper and not jeopardise marks in this last question. The question differentiated between candidates of various abilities effectively but a number of one-sided answers were still seen, noticeably less than in previous sessions, which is encouraging. The question clearly asks for points for and against the claim and thus candidates cannot score highly if they fail to follow the rubric. Centres might want to present this essay question as the 'debate question' or the 'arguing question' and thus encourage candidates to never look at the claim from just one side. This is crucial for success.

The structure for this question was generally very good, with candidates mainly offering a balanced argument that was justified in a conclusion at the end. Candidates need to aim for range, detail, examples, development and conceptual engagement in their answers. Some candidates struggled to link the sanctions and rewards referenced in the question with specific agents of social control (both formal and informal) and thus talked rather generally and simplistically, preventing them from scoring highly in this question. The candidates that did engage with specific agents used this to their advantage, referring to the specific processes of control and using relevant examples and concepts to exemplify their case. So, if writing about prisons for example, their power to take away freedom and to deter others could be discussed. This could then lead to a discussion of both sanctions (loss of freedom, inability to make own decisions) and rewards (counselling, rehabilitation, education programmes) and thus be discussed both for and against the claim.

Answers typically ended with conclusions. Stronger conclusions picked a side and justified their reasoning based on the key points made during the essay, although also recognising that perhaps there is no simple answer and that the effectiveness of the sanction actually depends upon the individual in question (age, gender, status).

B672 Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments:

This year's paper provided questions that were accessible to the whole ability range and there was evidence of candidates engaging well and a number of questions were answered very well.

Most areas of the specification appear to have been taught thoroughly by centres with candidates showing good knowledge and understanding. The majority of candidates were able to access the one and two mark questions, although a small minority did struggle with them. Some candidates did attempt all six sections and some only answered the one and two mark questions, although this was fewer than in previous sessions. Most sections showed a variety of responses, with Crime and Deviance, Youth and Family being the most popular.

There were some extremely good scripts, with some candidates answering at a level above GCSE standard. These included concepts such as strain to anomie and correct use of theory. Examiners reported theory was used more this year than in previous sessions. Some candidates used theory incorrectly, often just dropping in the words New Right, Functionalism, or Marxist with either no explanation, or generic or wrong explanation. Theory should be used to stretch those at the top end, but in no way is an expectation at GCSE. It was pleasing to see so much empirical knowledge used.

Handwriting and spelling did present problems in a very small number of cases but it is worth noting that it is important candidates write clearly in the exam to prevent this impacting upon the interpretation of their work. In some cases the handwriting was so illegible examiners struggled to interpret answers.

Single mark questions

As last session candidates need to ensure that they are reading these questions carefully as some ask them to identify two things or to identify and explain one. Each topic may be different and therefore many lost marks in this regard – many of the candidates who were achieving close to 100% lost the last couple of marks from this mistake.

Candidates must not repeat ideas from the source.

Mix and match

On the whole these questions were well answered.

Eight mark questions

Answers rewarded with high marks clearly separated each idea and gave examples to illustrate points. Candidates gaining the highest marks formatted their answers to suit the question. For example, 'One idea is...', 'This is when ...', '...which means...', 'The implications of this ...'. A number of candidates failed to develop their answer further and should be focused on as an aspect of teaching. In addition on some of the questions noted below, candidates did not read the question carefully and misinterpreted what it was asking for. Tips/examples of how to improve on this are shown in the topic sections.

Twenty Four mark questions

At the top end, candidates have clearly strengthened their ability when writing a discursive essay. The teaching of connectives was clearly evident in the essays, which enabled students to demonstrate explicitly their understanding for and against ideas, assisting candidates in reaching the top level.

Fewer candidates used subtitles to illustrate a two sided argument, which restricts them on their AO3 marks; there is no need to do this if connectives are effectively taught.

In this session, the majority of candidates provided a conclusion as requested in the mark scheme for full marks on AO3.

Some very strong essays were held back by candidates not fully developing their ideas. They often had lots of evidence, but with little use of explanation or examples. This meant they had many ideas, but failed to gain full marks.

Timing continued to show improvement this year with most candidates using their time wisely spending 30 minutes on each section. However a few did spend far too long on their eight mark questions and thus did not have enough time to write a developed debate for their 24 mark essays, although it appears working in a booklet with a limited amount of space did help. It is still good practice to attempt the whole paper timed before the exam to prevent strong candidates completing the first two sections with high quality answers, some even gaining full marks for both, but then not having time to do well on their third section, which will lower their overall mark.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A – Family

This continues to be by far the most popular section answered on the paper.

Question One – Most candidates accurately identified examples of behaviour learnt from the she wolf. A minority did not follow the instruction ‘From the source’ some failing to score. Most could name two norms young children learn from their families, but some candidates were unclear on what a norm was, offering vague responses such as ‘how to act’.

Centres are advised to train candidates in following the instructions and ensure they are aware of the difference between norms and values.

Question Two – Most candidates could accurately match all four key concepts. However some candidates did use identity inaccurately.

Centres are advised to give candidates the list of key concepts for family from the specification. They need to ensure they have a working definition for each and revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Question Three – The majority of candidates could discuss unequal roles within the family. Often there was some excellent sociological evidence cited such as: breadwinner, triple shift and dual burden; also Edgell and lagged adaptation, feminism and Anne Oakley in particular. However many either did not have two clear different ways, or they failed to have a piece of evidence in each way or they did not develop their answer beyond an example of inequality, for example ‘wife does housework, husband does nothing.’ There is a clear divide between candidates who are using the mark scheme concisely, to use some evidence, explain the inequality and develop their answer. Repetition in answers was a major factor in preventing candidates from accessing full marks.

Question Four – All candidates engaged with this question and it differentiated well. Those most successful answers referred to the 1969 Divorce Reform Act and the 1984 Family Law Act, but also the Equal Pay Act 1975 and/or the Sex Discrimination Act 1975. Popular alternatives were secularisation, longer life expectancy, changing attitudes of women and societal acceptance of divorce becoming a norm. However for some this was their least well-answered essay. Common issues were a lack of evidence, a lack of ideas and misunderstanding the question. Some candidates wasted time discussing individual reasons for divorce that had no evidence of increase in contemporary society; for example, lengthy discussions of affairs and domestic violence and the rise of cohabitation as an alternative. Further weaknesses in the responses were that many referred to Functionalism and Parsons view that divorce is bad for society, which again led the candidate away from the actual specifics of the question.

Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content and understanding of the debate. For those who struggle they need to use the sociological ideas learnt in class even if they cannot recall the correct sociological language. Practice essay titles can be found on the OCR website for past papers.

Section B – Education

Question 5

Most candidates were able to analyse the quantitative data with a few failing to score as they did not take their ideas directly from the source or misread the question quoting just statistics instead of the accurate social class. Many were able to both identify and explain one reason why social class affects GCSE results, but some again misread the question, either failing to focus on class or giving two reasons with no explanation.

Question 6

Most candidates knew the concepts. The only one that caught candidates out was 'formal curriculum' instead of 'comprehensive schools'.

Candidates need to ensure they have a working definition for each key concepts for education from the specification and revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Question 7

There were some excellent answers, citing Ofsted, National Curriculum and League Tables. However a number of students wrote about pre 1988. Other common-sense answers referred to student's own schools, for example a seating plan. Candidates need a clear ability to separately identify and explain.

Question 8

Most candidates engaged with the debate on some level. Best responses looked at sanctions, gender socialisation, and Marxist and Feminist ideas, evaluating them with other agents such as family and peers. A clear way of answering was to debate the functions of education: socialisation, economic, selection. Some students did get confused and thought they were evaluating, when in fact they were agreeing. However ideas such as the hidden curriculum could be used for either side of the debate. Some candidates failed to use evidence to ensure they could gain more than basic marks.

Section C – Mass Media

Question 9

Most candidates were able to identify the two types of media used for bullying, although some were imprecise and lost marks. Many were able to cite another use of media, but some again did not read the question and discussed bullying despite it being in the source.

Candidates need to be clear on the different uses of media (Trowler offers some clear ideas for this)

Question 10

Most candidates were well prepared for this question.

Question 11

This question divided candidates. Weaker responses failed to clearly identify two different ways with overlap and confusion and a lack of sociological concepts, basing their answers on sociological examples. Best responses considered the candidates mainly used interactivity and self censorship. There was some confusion with media control as opposed to audience control. Again there was a lot of repetition, which stopped candidates gaining full marks.

As can be seen in the mark scheme there was a diverse and wide range of acceptable answers.

Question 12

This essay really divided candidates, and whilst all engaged on some level there was a clear distinction between those who had prepared and considered the debate versus those who tried to answer the question using common sense without examples or evidence. Best responses considered censorship, moral panics, bias and Libel. Good evaluation considered due impartiality, the place of the BBC and direct reporting by the public.

Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content. Practice essay titles can be found on the OCR website for past papers

Section D: Work

This section was only answered by a minority of candidates. There was an improvement in answers for the few that answered this section.

Question 13

Most candidates were able to find both sexism and equal opportunities from the source as well as being able to cite other forms of sexism not from the source.

Question 14

Most candidates were prepared for this mix and match. However a few misused alienation.

Question 15

Some excellent responses citing automation and economic cycle, but too many lacked specific knowledge and thus only were awarded basic marks. Candidates need to have an understanding of the causes of unemployment, with clear evidence.

Question 16

Whilst all candidates could engage with this debate weaker answers relied heavily on other agents of social control to evaluate or question with little or no evidence relevant to the workplace. Candidates seemed to struggle to grasp what the question was asking. They often referred to mood rather than behaviour. For example, 'if you have had a bad time at work you will be in a bad mood when you go out with your friends that night.' There were some excellent answers using specific sociology, focussing on specific ideas such as the role of work in socialisation, gender socialisation and the effects of developments such as extended hours or automation in the workplace.

Section E – Crime and Deviance

This section was as popular as family, with most centres answering it.

Question 17

Most candidates were able to analyse the quantitative data finding the gender and punishments that were relevant. A minority did not read the question carefully and cited just statistics. The majority of candidates were able to identify two other solutions to crime with ASBO and community service seeming the most popular.

Question 18

This question was well answered, although some candidates still confuse self-report studies and victim surveys.

Question 19

Best responses used different types of situational deviance such as cross cultural and historical deviance. However many candidates did not use different types of deviance relying on anecdotal answers without evidence or concepts. Many candidates also failed to develop their answers merely giving an example of one act showing when it was deviant and when it was not.

Question 20

Some candidates were particularly strong on this question and used a range of question specific concepts as well as a range of generic terms and supporting evidence. Most candidates understood the debate well and provided a well-balanced argument with a clear conclusion. Best responses considered a variety of formal agencies, how they control individuals and their function, debating these with either problems caused by formal agencies that lead to further crime, or the functions of other agencies of social control, discussing their success in controlling behaviour. Some candidates failed to do well as their work lacked evidence, preventing their mark going above basic or they do not understand the difference between formal and informal agencies of social control.

Section F – Youth

Question 21

Many candidates were able to discuss examples of media that has led to the disappearance of childhood with examples of other media not included in the source. However some candidates used illegal activities as examples of adult behaviour such as drug taking and failed to score.

Question 22

Most candidates were well prepared for the mix and match, although some used rite of passage inaccurately.

Question 23

This question divided candidates with those who scored well giving evidence such as laws that keep the distinction of childhood like the school leaving age; and biological distinctions such as puberty. Those who did not score well often were anecdotal and confused discussing Aries' work with little understanding.

Question 24

Candidates that chose this section often did really well on this essay. Many answers achieved full marks. This was strongest question for use of knowledge and understanding, many using boredom, peer pressure, status frustration, Cohen, Miller, sense of belonging, social networks and Williamson. Those who did not do well again were anecdotal and confused, which often led to repetition. A few misunderstood the debate and wrote responses discussing subcultures and not gangs.

B673 Applying Sociological Research Technique

General Comments:

B673, Applying Sociological Research Techniques in 2014 is now an established examination having now been offered for five years as part of the GCSE specification. However, this is the first year that it has had to be taken in the same (award) year as the other two units. It is now taken in the same examination session as B671, meaning it is answered in the second hour of a two hour-long session.

This paper continues to contribute 25% to the overall GCSE qualification. There has been an increase in entries making it similar to B671 and B673.

There continues to be a basic structure to the paper with Section A based on Investigation 1 and Section B based on Investigation 2 of the pre-release material. Section C consists of one question that requires a more extended response and can be based on either one of the two investigations or both. However, within sections A and B the format of the questions changes each year.

As with the other units in the specification, the B673 examination has questions structured to test the ability range from A* to G grade candidates. It is therefore anticipated that some candidates will find particular questions such as 6, 12 and 13, to be challenging. Conversely, all candidates should find some areas of the examination paper to be accessible, particularly the questions at the start of Sections A and B.

Although candidates are required to demonstrate their sociological knowledge, the paper is weighted towards the testing of skills. Candidates are examined on their knowledge and understanding of sociological research techniques but they also need to demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills of interpretation to the pre-release investigations made available in January of the year of the examination. Candidates are expected to have studied the pre-release material prior to the examination and to have gained a sound knowledge of it. A copy of the pre-release is made available to them for reference during the exam.

It was evident this year that most candidates were knowledgeable about the pre-release material and many had a good understanding of the methods and sources used. In particular, good knowledge of the methods was demonstrated in Question 13. Clearly, centres had undertaken successful work in the classroom to facilitate this.

Most candidates used sociological language appropriately but the concepts of validity and reliability used interchangeably continues to be a weakness. Centres should ensure that candidates have an understanding of and can define precisely all the concepts in the specification and in particular, those used in the pre-release material.

The more challenging skill of evaluation is demonstrated mainly by higher-level candidates but most candidates were able to find some flaws in the methods and sources in the pre-release investigations when a response required this. However, fewer candidates were able to identify strengths and this meant that balanced evaluation in Question 13 was rare.

This year there appeared to be some improvement in candidates achieving AO2 marks. It would seem that candidates are being taught to relate back to the investigations where required and this shows they are being prepared well for the exam.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question No.

Q1 (a) – Almost all candidates correctly identified Leeds.

Q1 (b) – Most candidates provided a work related aim to gain the two marks. Where two marks weren't gained, most wrote a simple question related to work rather than a clear aim. Only a few wrote something completely unrelated and these tended to be the candidates who were weaker overall. Candidates should be encouraged to understand aims as starting with, 'To find out...' to avoid producing either a question or a statement.

Q2 (a) – Almost all candidates correctly identified 58%

Q2 (b) – The majority of candidates correctly identified 89%. The most common incorrect answer was 11%, which is the difference between the correct answer and 100%.

Q3 (a) – Around 40% of candidates gained two marks correctly linking the term to research being able to be repeated with the same results. A small minority responded with, 'Where the research can be done again' or 'When the results are similar', which didn't gain full marks. The most common misconception was confusing the term with validity, where answers referred to, 'How truthful' the information is. A number of candidates answered 'how reliable a source is'. Candidates who did not perform well overall answered with 'something you can trust' etc. Just below 50% of candidates gained no marks for this question

Only a small minority of candidates demonstrated good sociology by referring to the need for all conditions / variables to be the same to repeat the research. Understanding of reliability is an area for improvement in teaching as this also impacts on other questions, especially Q13.

Q3 (b) – In general this was answered well. Almost 70% of candidates gained either two or four marks with the largest group overall gaining four. This was the first year that a reminder to provide information from the source to support the answer was added onto the end of the question.

Those who gained two marks were mostly responses that identified two conclusions but without further explanation for example. Candidates were able to identify a pattern in the data such as 'more women than men in caring occupations' but did not back it up with data from the table. Others provided statistical data without a conclusion.

Some candidates provided vague conclusions such as 'men do more masculine jobs' and 'women do more feminine jobs' or 'women do easier jobs', and these were not credited. When referring to the data, candidates lifted the numbers from the source but very few stated these were in thousands. Candidates were not penalised for this.

Q3 (c) – In general candidates found this to be a challenging question and almost 40% scored only 2 of the 4 marks available. Many were able to identify two ways the data could be inaccurate but did not follow this up with reference to the table to support it. Many referred to the data being 'adapted' followed by an explanation of what adapted means but without specific reference to the table. . Many responses referred to 'job types not being included' or 'only one example of each job included' but few supported this with examples from the source.

The most common incorrect response referred to the data as 'out of date' and as the investigation was carried out in 2011 and the table was dated 2013, this was not credited. Another common inaccuracy that caused candidates to lose marks was reference to the data being rounded to the nearest 1000 when it was actually rounded to the nearest 10,000. Credit was given for 'rounding' but this, even with explanation was limited to 1 mark.

Q4 (a) – Over 60% of candidates correctly identified semi-structured. Some referred to ‘overt’ or ‘covert’ interviews or other methods and were not credited.

Q4 (b) – This was answered well with the majority of candidates gaining two marks for identifying and explaining either structures or unstructured interviews. A much smaller number identified group interviews or focus groups and were credited. A few referred to informal or formal interviews and were also credited.

Q5 – A large majority of candidates were credited here. The largest group gained both marks. They were the candidates who identified both points of a hypothesis, making reference to this as being a testable statement or a prediction to prove right or wrong (prove/disprove). Some candidates did not achieve any marks as they had confused hypothesis with an aim or gave answers such as ‘what your research is about’, which were too vague to be credited.

Q6 – As the final question in Section A, this was a discriminator. Few candidates achieved level 3 and 25% of candidates gained no credit. Many (even high scoring candidates) misunderstood the question and repeated their answer from 3c, evaluating the methodology rather than considering how the evidence in the sources either supported or refuted the hypothesis. A large number did both and this resulted in an extended answer, using additional sheets, with much irrelevant information and reduced time for other responses.

There was a significant number of no responses to this answer, which would usually coincide with a no response to question thirteen in the same script.

It was generally only the higher scoring candidates who were able to use the wording of the hypothesis to explain clear links. Many missed marks because they didn’t make satisfactory links to the specifics of the hypothesis, which left them with generalised comments. Most of the links were implicit such as ‘attitudes’ rather than explicit reference to the hypothesis. Candidates were better at linking to the textbook rather than the table. Many candidates were able to identify at least one implicit link and gain two marks, and others gained four marks with one clear link and other implicit points made. Common answers used the statistics from the textbook and attempted to evaluate, for example 1940’s being the time frame linked to the hypothesis and then the data linking to 1960’s as not being relevant to hypothesis.

Candidates could be encouraged to develop evaluation skills for this type of level question as full marks could only be gained if a response identified at least one way the evidence supported the hypothesis and one way it did not.

Q7 (a) – As the first question in Section B, most candidates should have answered this question correctly. However, over 40% did not gain the mark by writing out the aim accurately. Possibly this was because the aim was included in the text rather than under the heading of, ‘Aim’. Centres may want to consider this for future preparation for this paper.

Candidates not relating back to the source properly by answering, ‘what jobs people do’ and other responses that did not relate to what causes people to enjoy or not enjoy their work caused some common inaccurate responses. Some candidates wrote down ‘the increase in automation and computerisation.....’ from the hypothesis in Investigation 2.

Q7 (b) – There were few candidates who did not gain any marks. Those who were credited were fairly evenly balanced between 1 and 2 marks.

Many were able to identify ‘primary research’ as research undertaken by the sociologists themselves. Those who did not get the second mark did not allude to collecting data or a primary method. Some candidates took a guess on primary and wrote ‘research completed first’.

Q8 (a) – Most candidates gained at least one mark. Those not credited referred to historical documents as ‘outdated’ or ‘out of date’. Some candidates wrote this but followed up with additional information such as how society or norms and values change over time, so were credited.

Many were able to give a clear description and chose the idea that times have changed. They did just enough to get the two marks. There were a number who didn’t get the second mark because they did not go onto describe that it means they may no longer be relevant to society today, and just stopped at ‘times have changed’. A small number of candidates gave an advantage of historical documents and were not credited.

Candidates could be encouraged to make more specific their identity point and then their description.

Q8 (b) – Most candidates were able to achieve at least one mark, and many scored both marks on this question. Where two marks were gained, a majority of candidates chose ‘bias’ and one ‘person’s view’. Responses not credited were such as, ‘diaries are always made up’. A small number of candidates gave an advantage of using diaries.

Q9 (a) – Most candidates correctly identified 10. Those who answered incorrectly stated 60.

Q9 (b) – Most candidates correctly identified shelf stackers.

Q10 (a) – Most candidates answered correctly.

10 (b) – Despite this being based on the difficult concept of alienation, many candidates answered well and most gained at least one mark. Candidates had obviously discussed this at length in class and knew what was required. The most common answer was being ‘powerless’ and supported by information from the source such as, ‘having to ask to go to the toilet’, or ‘pointless’ and ‘most people were rude and hung up’.

Those who scored one mark often just gave a concept or a description but not both, or alternatively, gave a mismatch of concept and description.

Just below 30% of candidates were not credited. Most of these candidates mistakenly used the statistical data from the source as their answer, for example quoting: ‘73% enjoyed working in the call centre’ and creating their own conclusions from that data.

Q10 (c) – Despite being a similar question, 10c was answered less well than 10b, with around half the candidates gaining no marks. This was usually because (similar to 10b) they made the mistake of quoting the statistical data as evidence of alienation. However, this seemed to be done more frequently in 10c, for example, 73% of employees said they were happy in their job and therefore can’t be alienated.

The rest of the candidates achieved at least one mark as they made reference to ‘enjoying their breaks and having mates at work’. The better scripts linked this correctly with belonging, being part of a community or not feeling isolated.

Q11 – This was generally poorly answered with only 25% of the candidates gaining both marks. It was apparent that despite being used in the pre-release, the concept of interviewer bias was not understood.

Most candidates answered this question with their main reference being towards the way the interviewer acts towards the interviewee rather than vice versa. Many focused on the interviewer ‘forcing’ interviewees to answer in the way they want, or manipulating the data to suit their study, responses which were not credited. Some simply took the words bias and interviewer and took a guess at the meaning.

Some were able to explain that interviewer bias can be where the interviewer asks questions in a certain manner, uses facial expressions and leading questions,, which results in the interviewee answering in a certain way. Candidates who answered from the opposite perspective generally gained two marks. There were some really good answers which demonstrated clear understanding by stating that the interviewee answers the questions in the manner they think the interviewer would like, with some candidates mentioning social characteristics or social desirability.

Q12 – This question was a differentiator and the majority of candidates gained two or three marks. What often prevented candidates from gaining higher marks was repetition of information or ideas in other points that they had made in the same answer. For example, candidates would talk about being able to see if job satisfaction was occurring, and would later go on to say ‘you could see if they were smiling’. A number of candidates did not clarify when they were making points related specifically to covert observation, and therefore lost marks.

Examiners often had to ‘unpick’ the response when two advantages of participant observation were given in the same point.

There were some candidates who were able to give three clearly different advantages and develop an explanation of these. The higher scoring candidates on this question were those who understood the need to identify three clear and unique points and provide a good explanation, related to the topic of job satisfaction. Common answers included ‘experiencing it first-hand’ and ‘more in-depth knowledge’.

Q13 – This essay style question is challenging and an opportunity for candidates to really demonstrate their sociological knowledge. Marks awarded covered the whole range but most candidates were credited in the bottom and middle of Level 2 (5 – 7 marks). The proportion of candidates who gained no marks was disappointing and significantly higher than in 2013.

Overall there was a good mix of answers to this question but several patterns emerged. Many answers fell into the Level 2 band because candidates made several references to aspects of the study but failed to develop them and explain further why this was an advantage or disadvantage, for example ‘the sample wasn’t good because it was one garage’. Many references were too simplistic and had a list-like feel to them rather than being used to create an argument. A significant number of candidates also made repeated reference to the same disadvantage. This was typically ‘sampling’ and ‘representativeness’, and therefore the variety of disadvantages discussed was very limited.

Another group was those who included many good and relevant references to the investigations but fell short of evaluation because they simply explained all the disadvantages of the primary methods. In many cases this was disappointing as some candidates clearly had a good grasp of sociological ideas and had an in depth understanding of the studies within the pre-release. It would seem that such candidates could benefit from more practice of developing arguments and conclusions. There were however, many candidates who, even if they struggled to develop points further, had clearly been taught about the importance of evaluation within their answer. Some candidates in this group, who were not always the higher scoring overall on the paper, managed to find advantages and disadvantages of each method as they went along and therefore give a more analytical and evaluative answer.

Candidates credited in the top band often considered all of the methods across the two investigations, making a number of good points about each. Although many focused too heavily on the disadvantages, there were also some balanced responses. Many candidates in the top band were also able to give a variety of well-developed points, particularly in relation to the covert observation in investigation 1 and the questionnaires in investigation 2.

Responses in Level 1 typically had very generic descriptive reference to the methods and occasionally the sample, with no application to the investigation or how effective the method was. At the top of this level, candidates described the advantages of particular methods but without application to the investigations and how it was effective in this context. For example, identifying a general advantage of covert observation rather than how it was effective in the investigations. Other responses credited in Level 1 simply described (or listed) the methods used in each of the investigations, again without application or answering the question.

Responses that were not credited were usually 'no response', discussed the secondary sources or made some general irrelevant comments about primary research.

It is possible that due to writing too much for Q6, some candidates ran out of time.

The main areas of strength demonstrated in Q 13 tended to be the knowledge of participant observations, and in particular the observer effect. Most candidates appear to have a good knowledge of this term and use it in the correct context. Along with this, candidates were able to identify correctly the methods used and had a good knowledge of them. It is clear that much work on this was undertaken in the classroom. There was some excellent use of sociological terminology, applied appropriately and used fluently. In particular, accurate use of terms such as triangulation and operationalising of variables, applied in the right context is particularly impressive.

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