



## **General Certificate of Education**

### *Sociology 2191*

**SCLY4      Crime and Deviance with Theory  
and Methods;  
Stratification and Differentiation  
with Theory and Methods**

**Report on the Examination**  
*2010 examination - June series*

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## SCLY4

### General

Almost all candidates offered a response to all the questions in their chosen section although, from the brevity of some answers to the final question attempted, there was evidence of some candidates running short of time. Moreover, since their last answer was usually in response to the 33-mark essay question, brief answers here were more costly than elsewhere and a significant number of candidates fell well below par on this question. Centres should address planning and time management issues with their candidates as part of the essential preparation for this examination.

A further area for concern was the 'methods in context' questions. Many candidates and centres do not appear to have realised that an answer dealing solely with the features of the research method named in the question will not score many marks; the method must also be *applied* to the particular research issue to which the question refers. This is true both for the 15-mark essay questions and the 9-mark 'identify and briefly explain' questions.

### Section A – Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods

The great majority of candidates attempted the questions in this section.

#### **Question 01**

Most candidates were able to suggest several reasons why females commit less crime than males. The most popular reasons were socialisation, social control, domestic and work roles, the accomplishment of masculinity, and lack of opportunity. Good answers explained such reasons clearly (for example, by discussing the several different areas in which females are subject to patriarchal control) and then went on to link them explicitly to gender differences in offending. Less successful answers tended to offer a thin list of two or three reasons without drawing appropriate conclusions about offending. Some candidates spent more time explaining why males commit more crime rather than why females commit less. A good many candidates spent too much time discussing the chivalry factor and similar issues in a somewhat ill-directed effort to demonstrate that women commit more crime, perhaps even than men. Too many also were reduced to assertions about instinct or men and women's 'natural' characteristics.

#### **Question 02**

Many weaker responses were heavily reliant on material from the Item, applied in a simplistic and undeveloped way with at best limited reference to relevant studies, empirical evidence, concepts or theories. Instead, these answers often made reference to examples from various films, video games, etc, without offering sociological interpretation of such illustrations. Some candidates had clearly not studied this topic at all and many of these struggled to apply general perspectives such as Marxism or labelling theory, while lacking any substance on the media. Better responses began to deal with relevant studies of aspects of the relationship between crime and the media. Most often, these were accounts of Hall et al and/or S. Cohen in relation to deviance amplification, folk devils, moral panics and the like. The best responses considered a range of ways in which the media and crime might be related. These often took their cue from the Item but went on to develop conceptually detailed and wide-ranging answers dealing for example with left realist views on the media, relative deprivation and crime, right realism and situational crime prevention techniques involving CCTV, positivist laboratory research on media effects in relation to violence, copycat crime, cyber-crime, etc.

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**Question 03**

A significant minority of candidates clearly had no idea what a self-report study (SRS) is. A subset of these confused SRS with victim surveys. Aside from these, however, most candidates were able to identify one or more possible problems. Most commonly, these answers included the idea that respondents might conceal, exaggerate or lie about their involvement in crime. Many candidates also cited faulty memory or high refusal rates, while a few suggested low literacy levels or differences between what respondents and researchers might count as an offence. In each case, many candidates were not able to explain their favoured reasons satisfactorily. In some instances, candidates made little or no reference to offending and confined themselves to observations of a highly generalised nature, citing problems such as that SRS lack reliability, validity or representativeness (or all three), are biased, etc – in short, problems that might apply to a very wide range of research methods. These responses scored poorly.

**Question 04**

A minority of candidates knew little or nothing about overt participant observation (PO) and/or confused it with covert research. Nevertheless, most candidates were able to produce an account of the main advantages and disadvantages of overt PO. However, even the best of these were limited to a maximum of 8 marks unless they were able to apply some of this material to the issue in the question. Many candidates did make at least some reference to the police, but too often this was unrelated to the method. Where attempts to link to the method were made, they often remained non-specific. For example, many candidates made assertions such as that the police would act differently if they knew they were being observed. While no doubt true, this would be the case with most research subjects and hence the specific application of method to issue is more illusory than real. Some candidates did however make clear links between overt PO and investigating police attitudes, and quite a number used some of the research characteristics of the police cited in the Item. Unfortunately, more often than not these were only briefly linked to specific strengths or limitations of overt PO. The best answers identified a *specific* research characteristic, such as the nature of police work, police hierarchies or canteen culture, and then went on to offer a well-developed account of how this or that *specific* feature of overt PO might prove to be an advantage or a disadvantage in studying it.

**Question 05**

Many candidates seemed to find this question surprisingly difficult. Some weaker answers offered a general account of the strengths and limitations of various research methods while making little specific reference to the set question. Many candidates continued on the crime and deviance path, using examples only from this part of the specification, and relating each method to the study of crime. Others provided a limited account of reasons for the choice of method that focused entirely on theoretical considerations – essentially, a contrast between positivist and interpretivist approaches, presented with varying degrees of accuracy, detail and linkage to the features of particular methods. Alternatively, and especially among the weakest answers, a list of practical and/or ethical issues such as time, cost, access, harm or consent was offered, often with minimal discussion. Surprisingly few candidates considered the range of practical, ethical and theoretical factors in a systematic way. Many candidates focused solely or very largely on choice of method to the neglect of choice of topic. However, a minority did address both method and topic in a reasonably balanced way. A few of these offered a sophisticated analysis of the impact of factors such as funding bodies' preferences, theoretical perspectives, personal or career interest, current social problems and existing research literature upon sociologists' choice of topic. Lastly, a number of candidates wrote good answers to somewhat different questions, for example on sociology and values or sociology as a science.

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## **Section B – Stratification and Differentiation with Theory and Methods**

Only a small minority of candidates attempted the questions in this section.

### ***Question 06***

Most candidates were able to produce a reasonable account of class, often using Marxist concepts. Status was not handled so well, but many candidates were able to contrast it with class. Fewer candidates provided sound knowledge of power, though some linked it successfully to their explanation of class. Some weak answers were largely unable to move beyond a thin outline of class and could not offer a definition of either status or power. Many candidates were unable to make significant headway with the possible relationships between the three concepts. However, some very good answers contrasted Marxist with Weberian (or sometimes feminist or postmodernist) views, for example to debate an economic determinist explanation of the relationship.

### ***Question 07***

Most responses showed a reasonable understanding of functionalism. More basic answers gave a general overview of the perspective but often without specific or detailed application to stratification. Instead, some of these discussed functionalism in relation to other areas such as family or education, generally with fairly limited use of relevant concepts such as meritocracy, ascribed and achieved status, role allocation, etc. More successful responses applied functionalist theory explicitly to the understanding of social inequality. Candidates generally made considerable use of Item C in their answers, ranging from simply recycling or paraphrasing the material to some good development of points taken from it. Evaluation tended to be via a contrast with Marxist, feminist or other views, or use of sources such as Tumin as well as empirical material on differences in educational opportunity and achievement.

### ***Question 08***

Most candidates were able to score some marks for 'identification' on this question. Problems commonly identified included how to locate in the class structure those who do not have an occupation, differences in pay, status, etc that may exist within a given occupation, and whose occupation within a household was to be used as the basis for allocating its members to a social class. Unfortunately, some candidates struggled to express their explanations of such problems sufficiently clearly and adequately to score both the marks available for 'brief explanation'.

### ***Question 09***

Appropriate responses generally identified advantages such as that a large proportion of the population has an occupation, or its usefulness as a guide to other life chances such as income. These were not always adequately explained.

**Question 10**

Most candidates were able to produce accounts of some of the main strengths and limitations of questionnaires. Weaker responses tended to confine themselves to a general account and often made no specific reference to *written* questionnaires. Such answers also made little or no attempt to apply this knowledge to the particular issue of investigating experiences of disability, or even to that of stratification in general. However, most candidates did make some reference to the research characteristics of those experiencing disability as described in the Item. In some cases this was developed well and applied to written questionnaires. For example, the presence of carers was seen as potentially both an advantage in assisting disabled people to complete a questionnaire and a disadvantage in that the researcher could not be sure who was the real respondent. The best answers included a range of such research characteristics, for example lack of mobility, low literacy levels, and the wide range of disabilities. These were then explicitly linked to specific features of written questionnaires and an appropriate evaluation made as to the usefulness of the method in researching these characteristics.

**Question 11**

This was the same question as Question 05. Please see the report on this question on page 5.

**Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.