



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

2011 examination – January series

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SCLY4

General

Most candidates were able to answer all the questions in their chosen section. In many cases, the response to the last question (06 or 12) appeared to be rushed, with candidates obviously running out of time. Since this question carries more than one third of the total marks available, this often had a major effect on the grade achieved. Some candidates chose to answer 06/12 first; this often proved beneficial, since these responses were usually more thorough.

Although the responses to the 'methods in context' essay questions (05/11) are improving, with many showing some evidence of application, the short questions (03/09, 04/10) still present a problem for many candidates. Responses to these short questions often give a relevant identification, but the explanation lacks any application to the context specified in the question.

Section A – Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods

Crime and Deviance

Question 01

Many candidates answered this question quite well. Most candidates were able to examine some factors, typically relating to age, gender, ethnicity and/or locality. Poor answers were often based on stereotypical examples of frail women or elderly people, without any sociological justification for their comments. Better responses explained the stereotype and went on to show how research data disproved it. Some were able to link patterns and trends to sociological theory. Some answers included Marxist accounts of victims of social organisation/exploitation. Several candidates cited the work of Wolfgang and were able to refer to positivist victimology. The best answers were able to evaluate the positivist perspective, with reference to critical criminology. A common shortcoming was to list some factors, without trying to examine or explain them. Some candidates focused more on offenders and criminality than on victims, thus showing a misunderstanding of the question. These responses were better when a specific group was identified, eg young black males, and then developed in terms of their being victims, rather than focusing on them as offenders. In some responses, although the main focus was on offending and criminality, the candidate managed to make some limited links to victims. Some centres seem not to have taught this area of the specification.

Question 02

Most candidates knew something about this area. Weaker answers tried to use the material in the Item, but did not manage to develop it in relation to specific subcultural theories or studies. Some answers focused on labelling theory rather than subcultural theory and therefore scored poorly. Better answers were able to use A Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin and Miller, with Matza as a source of evaluation. The very best answers went on to contrast these with labelling, eg Young and S Cohen or Hargreaves, and Marxists such as P Cohen or M Brake. Some candidates were able to draw links between early subcultural studies and New Left Realism (via marginalisation and relative deprivation). Many candidates spent too long on Durkheim and Merton, and failed to recognise that Merton was discussing individual responses. Some candidates tended to treat this as a 'learnt-off-by-heart' list of knowledge, rather than focusing on the analytical and evaluative skills that were required. Evaluation was often presented as knowledge that had been learnt, rather than being tied into the specific requirements of the question. However, there were some excellent answers that scored full marks.

Methods in Context

Many answers to questions 03, 04 and 05 failed to put enough emphasis on the 'in context' and application requirements of this section. They therefore scored low marks.

Question 03

Overall, this question was poorly answered, usually because responses offered a general description of the limitations of official statistics with no application to green crime. These responses usually scored just one mark. A large number of candidates clearly did not know what green crime was. Of those who responded to the question, the most common answers were 'Not reported' or 'Manipulated by governments'. Good answers were able to link the problems of official statistics to specific examples of green crime or to issues of the definition of green crime; in some cases this included consideration of green crime as a crime of the powerful.

Question 04

Very few candidates scored the maximum six marks for this question. Again, many responses lacked application, in this case to the topic of criminal gangs. These candidates focused on covert observation and did not elaborate on the crime and deviance context, let alone the specific issue of gangs. Many answers explained covert observation, rather than identifying any advantages of it. Some identified an advantage, but without explanation, so often only scoring one mark out of three, as no link was made to criminal gangs. General comments about validity or qualitative data could apply to many methods and therefore did not specifically answer the question. Good responses linked the specific advantages of covert observation to the nature of criminal gangs. This was often done by discussing the lack of Hawthorne effect, and how this would mean that gang members would still carry out their criminal or deviant behaviour, and that the researcher would be able to observe this.

Question 05

This question was quite well answered in terms of assessing written questionnaires, though some candidates spent too much time describing the rules of questionnaire design, eg no leading questions, rather than on identifying advantages or disadvantages for the specific topic in the question. Most candidates realised that the method had to be linked to the context. However they interpreted the context as 'prisoners' rather than 'prisoners' experience of imprisonment', so application was not sufficiently specific. Many relied heavily on the Item, but failed to make sufficient use of it to explore the relationship between the particular method and its strengths and limitations for investigation into prisoners' experience of imprisonment. Many candidates were able to use sections of the Item to good effect, eg prisoners' low literacy levels, boredom, and problems of access, but often failed to sustain this focus.

Candidates should be aware that just dropping in the word 'prison' was not enough to make a valid link to 'prisoners' experience'.

Overall, more practical than ethical or theoretical points were made.

Theory and Methods

Question 06

This proved to be a challenging question for many candidates. Most showed some knowledge and understanding of the positivism/interpretivism debate, but some focused solely on theory rather than on methods. On the other hand, some candidates concentrated on research methods in general, with limited links to positivism or interpretivism. While many candidates could explain what positivism was, many reworked the question to suit their knowledge, eg some answered the question 'Is sociology a science?' and others answered 'Can sociology be value free?' While these responses were part of a legitimate answer, they needed to be focused on the question set. Evaluation was often undeveloped and amounted to juxtaposition of the two perspectives. Good answers were able to balance a theoretical discussion of the nature of society and the nature of science, with an evaluation of a variety of methods. It would have been good to see a greater range of sociological studies and their methods; many candidates restricted themselves to Durkheim vs Atkinson.

Section B – Stratification and Differentiation with Theory and Methods

Very few candidates opted for this section and the following comments are based on a very limited number of responses.

Stratification and Differentiation

Question 07

Most candidates were able to give a reasonable account of the life experiences of people with disabilities. These accounts were usually linked to poverty rather than to exclusion. Many responses focused on a discussion of employment prospects and lack of opportunities. Most answers focused on physical disabilities and aspects of access; this was often linked to employment. Better answers also discussed social exclusion. These answers considered issues such as housing and health as well as employment to give a greater breadth and depth of response.

Question 08

Most candidates were able to identify some problems of using occupation as a measure of social class. Weaker answers looked at a few examples; plumbers and footballers featured heavily. Better responses were able to deal with issues such as dual-income families and the changing position of women in the workforce. Others began to deal with issues such as wealth, status and power in relation to social class and used these to evaluate occupational measures.

Methods in Context

Many answers to questions 09, 10 and 11 failed to put enough emphasis on the 'in context' and application requirements of this section. They therefore scored low marks.

Question 09

Overall, this question was poorly answered, due to a lack of application of the specified method to the topic of the experiences of the long-term unemployed. Most scored just one mark for identifying an advantage of the method. Good answers were able to link the problems of participant observation to the specific issue of the experiences of the long-term unemployed.

Question 10

Again, many responses lacked application to the specified context. Some candidates focused on participant observation and did not elaborate on the stratification and differentiation context, let alone the specific issue of the experiences of the long-term unemployed. Many answers described or explained participant observation, rather than identifying any disadvantages of it. Some led on to an identification of a disadvantage, but without explanation, so often only scoring one mark from three for each identification, as no link was made to the experiences of the long-term unemployed. Very few scored six marks. These responses identified and explained two disadvantages of using participant observation to study the experiences of the long-term unemployed.

Question 11

Many responses focused on the natural and relaxed nature of unstructured interviews, but with very limited application to the relationship between domestic responsibilities and career opportunities. Most candidates realised that the method had to be linked to the context, but interpreted this as 'women' and 'gender roles' rather than the particular issue in the question. These answers therefore lacked development. Many relied heavily on the Item, eg part-time employment and/or childcare, but failed to sustain this focus to explore the strengths and limitations of the specified method for an investigation into the relationship between domestic responsibilities and career opportunities.

Overall, more practical than ethical or theoretical points were made.

Theory and Methods**Question 12**

This proved to be a challenging question for many candidates. Most showed some knowledge and understanding of the positivism/interpretivism debate, but some focused solely on theory rather than on methods. On the other hand, some candidates concentrated on research methods in general, with limited links to positivism or interpretivism. While many candidates could explain what positivism was, many reworked the question to suit their knowledge, eg some answered the question 'Is sociology a science?' and others answered 'Can sociology be value free?' While these responses were part of a legitimate answer, they needed to be focused on the question set. Evaluation was often undeveloped and amounted to juxtaposition of the two perspectives. Good answers were able to balance a theoretical discussion of the nature of society and the nature of science, with an evaluation of a variety of methods. It would have been good to see a greater range of sociological studies and their methods; many candidates restricted themselves to Durkheim vs Atkinson.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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