

Sociology

Advanced GCE A2 7878

Advanced Subsidiary GCE AS 3878

Report on the Units

June 2007

3878/7878/MS/R/07

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CONTENTS

Advanced GCE Sociology (7878)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Sociology (3878)

REPORT ON THE UNITS

Unit	Content	Page
*	Chief Examiner's Report	
2532	The Individual and Society	1
2533	Culture and Socialisation	5
2534	Sociological Research Skills	13
2535	Research Report	18
2536	Power and Control	22
2537	Applied Sociological Research Skills	27
2538	Personal Study	32
2539	Social Inequality and Difference	35
*	Grade Thresholds	40

The Individual and society 2532

General Comments

There was a fairly even split between the questions chosen by the candidates. Some strong sociological answers were evident for both questions, although question two was marginally better answered. There was some sound subject knowledge, with use of studies particularly good in comparison with previous years. There was an ability to respond to the demands of different questions assessing different skills, however, a small minority fail to evaluate in question (c). Generally candidates performed well. There are still a very small number of candidates answering both questions.

Comments on individual questions

Question one

- 1 (a) This question was mostly well answered. The majority of candidates were able to identify two norms from the item. However, a small minority of candidates did refer to acceptable/unacceptable behaviour for one of their 'norms' rather than identifying a specific norm, and were therefore not rewarded for that point. A minority of candidates identified a norm that was not from the item and were not rewarded for that. Weaker responses list all the norms from the item, some with a generalised explanation.

Teacher's tip

Stress to candidates that this question is assessing their ability to interpret and analyse, therefore the norms selected must be from the item.

- 1 (b) Some candidates answered this well, referring to values such as educational achievement, the sanctity of human life and justice. However, a significant number answered this badly. Some candidates were unclear on what values were. There was also a lack of understanding on the difference between norms and values with some references to norms rather than values.

Teacher's tip

Stress the importance of using sociological language. Encourage candidates to learn key sociological concepts, what they mean, and to illustrate with examples. Team quizzes are an enjoyable way to remember these.

- 1 (c) This was answered well on the whole. There were some good responses and reference to a range of diversities. Many referred to ethnic diversity, but there was also some good use of sociological studies in relation to different class cultures. There was also reference to gender and youth. Where candidates referred to globalisation, this tended to be poorly applied to the question. Some candidates got confused with what it meant in terms of cultural diversity and contradicted themselves in their response. However, some were able to bring in globalisation as an evaluative point and argue that due to its occurrence, the contemporary UK is becoming less culturally diverse. Other candidates evaluated with reference to a common culture or to the fusion of different ethnic cultures so that they were no longer diverse, although they had been initially. Weaker responses described hybridity, but with little or no application to the question.

Teacher's tip

Encourage candidates to think about the material they are using and argue their point through in relation to what the question asks.

- 1 (d) There were some good responses to this question. Many were conceptual, referring at least to primary and secondary socialisation, norms and values. Some used Oakley on gender socialisation in support of the family. However, candidates then digressed on to gender socialisation completely and lost track of the question set. There were studies used, both from the family and other agencies of socialisation. Most candidates were able to compare the family with at least two other agencies of socialisation. Some applied the growth of professional childcare well. Weaker responses were simplistic, but stronger candidates demonstrated clear knowledge and understanding of the family, socialisation, and the degree of importance the family has in relation to other agencies. Some also referred to families in the past compared with the present. Many argued a case for the mass media becoming more important. Some gave a clear but one-sided view. A minority of very weak responses merely displayed a common-sense awareness with no sociological concepts, studies or theory.

Teacher's tip

Make sure that candidates are very clear on what prompts like discuss are demanding. There should be more than one viewpoint in a (d) response. Encourage candidates to get beyond an approach which juxtaposes two views. Rather, they should try to evaluate in a sustained way, making use of critical material throughout and engaging with the question.

Question two

- 2 (a) This was generally well answered. Candidates interpreted the item well and were able to explain the points identified at least partially. Occasionally more than two ways would run together.

Teacher's tip

Stress to candidates what qualifies as a 'way'. In this case one way is speech; another is housing, another education, another clothing, and finally lifestyle. These are all the ways referred to in the item. They only need two.

- 2 (b) This was generally well answered with good knowledge and understanding of upper class culture.

Teacher's tip

Make sure that candidates know how to lay this response out to their advantage. If they make a point, explain it, then clearly identify something else as their second point and explain it. This means the candidates are less likely to write a generalised paragraph with either more than two points or a response that leaves it unclear to the reader just exactly what their two features are.

- 2 (c) A minority of candidates answered this very well, showing a range of knowledge and understanding with explicit reference to peer groups and social behaviour and the application of conceptual and/or empirical evidence, clear engagement with the question and explicit evaluation. Generally, there was reference to peer pressure and the desire to fit in, but weaker candidates did not really explain this in terms of social behaviour. In terms of empirical evidence Willis was fairly widely used. Weaker candidates stated how social behaviour is affected by class, with a lack of focus on peer groups. Some candidates approached this by referring to social behaviour in two different contexts, for example, the street and at school. Others tackled it in terms of how it is done, for example by peer pressure and through a desire to fit in. Evaluation was most commonly made in terms of resistance against peers. There was also reference to the strength of other agencies to influence social behaviour.

Teacher's tip

Examine past papers with candidates to develop their skills in connecting two things, such as in this case peers groups and social behaviour.

- 2 (d) There were some very good answers here with appropriate use of conceptual, empirical and/or theoretical knowledge and sustained evaluation. A range of concepts were used. Fragmentation was well used. There was knowledge of a range of studies. There were some strong responses that explained social change well in terms of class identity. In terms of theory, Marxism was used. Post-modernism was particularly well applied. Some candidates had knowledge and understanding of social class in general, but were unable to focus specifically on class *identity*. Weaker responses were overly descriptive

Teacher's tip

Make sure that candidates read the question carefully. For example, in this case it is important not to merely spot the term social class and dive straight in. Rather there is a need to focus upon the identity aspect too.

Culture and Socialisation 2533

General Comments

The overall standard of responses for this session was good with evidence that many candidates were well prepared in terms of knowledge and understanding of relevant studies, sociological concepts, statistical evidence and theory. It was also noticeable, however, that there continued to be a number of centres whose candidates almost all produced very weak answers, lacking in any sound sociological material.

The Family continued to be the most popular option, followed by Mass Media, Religion and Youth and Culture. An overwhelming majority of candidates chose to answer both Family questions. Only a small number of candidates opted for Religion and Youth and Culture. There were few rubric errors with the most common being that candidates answered only one question. A small number of candidates answered four questions. Where four questions were attempted, answers tended to be brief and lacking in evidence whereas answers to only one question were typically very long and detailed. Generally candidates used their time appropriately, producing approximately three quarters of a side of A4 for part (a) and two sides for part (b). Few appeared to run out of time on the second part (b) question.

It was noticeable that there continued to be a significant number of candidates performing quite poorly on part (a) questions, including some who had produced quite strong part (b) answers and this seemed due, in part, to poor exam technique. The most common issues were:

- Candidates identifying more than two points
- Candidates identifying two points which overlap to such a degree that they could only be treated as one point.
- Candidates failing to fully explain their two points often simply identifying and giving a brief explanation.
- Candidates failing to make use of sociological theories, concepts, studies and/or statistics to develop their answer and demonstrate sociological knowledge and understanding
- Candidates using time inappropriately on material not required by the question, for example, by including criticisms or evidence against their explanations.

Teachers' Tip - *To achieve top band marks for part (a) questions, points need to be identified and then explained using relevant sociological evidence including concepts, studies, theory and/or statistics. In part (a) questions, candidates should be encouraged 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.*

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

- Candidates had insufficient sociological knowledge and responses were mainly anecdotal or drawn from common sense. Better candidates made use of sociological theories, concepts and/or research.
- Some candidates produced answers that were well informed sociologically but they used material that was of only marginal relevance to the question on the paper.
- Candidates failed to interpret and analyse sociological data, for example statistics and findings of sociological studies or even examples from current events or broader social trends.
- Candidates produced one-sided answers that only considered evidence agreeing or disagreeing with the view.
- Candidates produced balanced answers but these simply juxtaposed arguments or evidence with little explicit evaluation. Better candidates offered critical comments, weighed up arguments and evidence and drew a reasoned conclusion about the view.

- A number of candidates wrote part (b) answers that were no 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.

Overall, most candidates were able to gain a reasonable number of marks for evaluation in part (b), and although this skill continues to be a testing area for candidates, most made some attempt to refer to counter arguments. A large number of candidates evaluate via 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 – *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'.*

The skill of interpretation and analysis appeared challenging to a number of candidates, some of whom were able to produce responses with sound knowledge and understanding of concepts, studies etc. but who were unable to apply this effectively to engage with the arguments involved. Some simply listed evidence and made no attempt to apply it to the question.

Teachers' Tip - *To achieve the highest marks in the skill of interpretation and analysis candidates need to select and analyse different types of data including studies, theory, sociological concepts and/or statistical 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.*

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 errors of spelling, punctuation and/or grammar.

Comments on Individual Questions

OPTION 1 THE FAMILY

- 1)
 - (a) Most candidates were able to identify two ways. The most common responses covered the burden of care on family members and the use of grandparents for child-care. Some candidates also focused on the reduction in birth rate/family size/ or women's later age at childbirth as an aspect of an ageing population. However, the vast majority of responses were quite anecdotal with few candidates able to make use of empirical evidence. Better answers tended to refer to sociological concepts such as the modified extended family, the beanpole family or feminist ideas about the burden of care falling on women. As a result, a significant number of candidates were only awarded marks within the level 2 band or at the bottom of level 3.
 - (b) The question produced a very wide range of responses. Weaker responses typically focused on just one or two aspects of diversity, for example class and/or ethnicity or simply listed a number of family types and asserted that these were evidence of diversity. Better answers were able to discuss trends in family life, sometimes drawing on statistics, and considered reasons for the emergence of more diverse families. Many candidates referred to New Right ideas but some assumed that because New Right thinkers were ideologically opposed to diversity that they disagreed with the view in the question. A small number of candidates offered theoretical explanations of diversity, typically, drawing on the ideas of Giddens and post-modernist writers and linking them effectively to the question. Most answers to this question were somewhat unbalanced and weak on evaluation and a significant number were only awarded marks for evaluation in band 2. Where candidates were able to question the idea of diversity they typically referred to functionalist arguments about the functional need for the nuclear family. Some candidates also drew on writers such as Chester pointing to the persistence of neo-traditional elements in family life.
- 2)
 - (a) This question was generally well answered and differentiated candidates effectively. Most candidates were able to identify two ways, typically focusing on women's greater involvement in paid employment and men's greater involvement in domestic work and childcare. A number of answers were more anecdotal and limited in terms of explanation but better candidates were able to make use of concepts such as symmetrical family, lagged adaptation, feminisation of the workforce, the decline of hegemonic masculinity, the crisis of masculinity and the new man. Some candidates referred to relevant theories or empirical studies for example Sharpe's work on changing attitudes of young women or Connell's work on masculinity. A few candidates approached the question differently and considered the idea that gender roles had become more symmetrical as their first way and then pointed out that other writers had argued that while women had increased their employment rates this had only led them to take on a 'triple shift' drawing on the ideas of Duncombe and Marsden and feminist theory. A significant number of candidates included large amounts of evaluative material arguing that nothing had changed in the roles of men and women that often could be given little credit in relation to the question.
 - (b) This question also differentiated candidates well with a broad range of responses. Weaker answers tended to be largely anecdotal and often wholly one-sided, usually focusing on divorce, child abuse and/or domestic violence. Better candidates were able to offer some data on these issues for example

estimates of the frequency of violence and abuse and discussion of the role of charities and government agencies in combating abuse. Some candidates referred to more sociological studies such as Dobash and Dobash or Stanko. The best answers tended to draw on sociological theories critical of the traditional family for example feminisms, Marxism and radical psychiatry. Some candidates interpreted and analysed evidence from these approaches very effectively, for example material on patriarchy in families, Marxist notions of the family as an ideological conditioning device and Laing's work on schizophrenia. Some candidates also pointed out that New Right thinkers located the dark side of the family within the alleged problems caused by the breakdown of traditional family life. Many candidates offered entirely one-sided responses with better answers typically drawing on functionalist approaches arguing that dysfunctional families represented the tiny minority and that most families functioned effectively providing love and security for their members. Only a very few candidates were able to offer specific criticisms of theories which supported the dark side, for example that Laing's work focused on an unrepresentative minority of dysfunctional families or Hakim's critique of feminists for failing to consider that many women actively choose domesticity.

OPTION 2 MASS MEDIA

- 3 (a) This question was generally well answered, typically using conceptual knowledge and understanding and some relevant examples in support of the explanations. Many responses drew on relevant sociological concepts such as media/cultural imperialism, Americanisation, Macdonaldisation, loss of national identity, vertical/horizontal integration and concentration of ownership; however, sometimes concepts were not well explained. Many candidates' answers would have benefited from examples or evidence to illustrate how globalisation of mass media might be seen as negative. For example, some candidates pointed out how media production facilities were often under developed in third world countries, as they had come to rely on imported western media. Some candidates discussed two points that overlapped to a large degree, for example, Western domination of media and the loss of national identity. Other candidates discussed negative consequences of globalisation but did not link this to the mass media for example Macdonaldisation and the spread of fast food!
- (b) This question was generally quite well answered but few outstanding answers were seen. Weaker candidates tended to simply assert that journalists and broadcasters made the key decisions over media content sometimes pointing to the role of proprietors and/or audiences. Some candidates failed to distinguish journalists, editors and proprietors. Most candidates had some grasp of key theories typically organising their answers in terms of hegemonic Marxist, manipulative/traditional Marxist and pluralist approaches. Weaker answers tended to equate these theories somewhat simplistically with control by journalists, proprietors and audiences respectively offering little empirical evidence or evaluation. Better responses often discussed the importance of gate-keeping, agenda setting and news values in relation to the role of journalists and broadcasters but often were unable to illustrate these concepts with examples of empirical evidence. Better candidates were able to explain the hegemonic approach in terms of journalists and broadcasters sharing dominant ideological assumptions because of background and training. A few candidates drew on feminist material for example on the 'male gaze', to argue that the control of the media was largely in the hands of males. The role of proprietors was typically illustrated with material on Rupert Murdoch but most candidates seemed to have little other material on patterns of ownership. Some candidates pointed to evidence of audience power for example the reaction of the Big Brother audience over the allegedly racist treatment of Shilpa Sheti. Some candidates referred to post-modernist theories but these were not generally well understood with many candidates seeing them as offering similar arguments to pluralism. Few candidates were able to analyse specific sociological studies concerning media control. Most candidates tended to rely on a juxtaposition of theories to evaluate rather than offering any critical analysis. A number of candidates offered conclusions that did not follow logically from the analysis presented in the main essay.
- 4 (a) Most candidates were able to offer two ways. The most popular responses were age restrictions and the 9.00pm watershed. Some candidates also cited outright bans, editing of material by media professionals or proprietors and legal restrictions, as other forms of censorship. Most answers were relatively anecdotal with the best answers tending to have fairly detailed knowledge of the role played by watchdogs such as the BBFC, OFCOM, The Press Council etc and the legal framework governing censorship. Other candidates drew on research concerning the effects of media violence and the concept of moral panic to explain why some forms of media censorship had been introduced.

- (b) This question differentiated between candidates well. The weakest answers tended to offer common sense explanations typically focusing on cases where murders had been influenced by films or videos. Better candidates often also made use of such case studies but developed their response with sociological theories and concepts. Most candidates seemed more familiar with material against the view than in support of the view. Concepts such as copycat violence, desensitisation and the hypodermic syringe model seemed familiar to many candidates. In support of the view uses and gratifications model, selective filter model and concepts such as catharsis and sensitisation were used. Weaker answers were often rather list like while better candidates were able to interpret theories and concepts and make use of empirical studies. Bandura et al's Bobo doll experiment was much in evidence but some candidates also used more recent research such as Buckingham's work on children. A few candidates pointed to recent research that linked consumption of media violence to teenager males' rites of passage. Explicit evaluation was often limited even in knowledgeable candidates who often simply juxtaposed two sets of theories and concepts with a simple conclusion. Few candidates critically addressed the problems of defining what constitutes violence or the methodological difficulties of measuring media effects.

OPTION 3 RELIGION

- 5 (a) Only a small number of candidates opted to answer this question. Weaker candidates sometimes focused only on how NRMs were classified or on the appeal of religion in general. Most candidates were able to offer two relevant points with the most common being low level of commitment required, 'spiritual shopping', self improvement, empowering women. Fewer candidates offered the more traditional reasons of marginalisation and rapid social change. Better answers tended to be those that illustrated their points with examples from specific NRMs. Some candidates also drew on Wallis's classification and argued that different types of NRMs, e.g. world rejecting and world affirming offered different kinds of appeal.
- (b) There was a range of responses to this question. Many candidates produced competent accounts of classical theories of religion but most candidates had a weak focus on the contemporary UK. The majority of candidates linked the view to functionalism but where this was illustrated it was often with more traditional material on the totemism of the Trobriand Islands, for example. Most candidates also referred to Marxist approaches but again these were often not related to contemporary UK. Many candidates struggled to find arguments against the view though some candidates drew on Weber's work on the protestant ethic. The best answers had a contemporary focus. Only a small number focused on religion among ethnic minorities while others argued that in a secular society religion could no longer promote stability and consensus. A few candidates also drew on material on civil religion e.g. the role of religion in national rituals such as the Royal Jubilee and the death of Princess Diana. Weaker answers were anecdotal, typically, discussing individual personal stability and neglecting societal issues.
- 6 (a) This question was generally well answered with most candidates being able to identify two ways. Candidates were differentiated in terms of how well illustrated their answers were and the extent to which they drew on theoretical and conceptual material. Good answers typically discussed Marxist notions of religion as ideology, functionalist arguments about religion underpinning social norms and values or feminist theories about the control religion exerted over

women's sexuality.

- (b) Apart from a few candidates, who confused patriarchal with patriotic, most candidates showed at least a fair understanding of this question and most were able to link the view to feminism. Some candidates demonstrated detailed knowledge of relevant religious beliefs and practices across a range of contemporary religions including NRMs. These responses tended to be structured in terms of different elements of religions including scriptures, hierarchies and dress codes. Most answers were well-balanced and typically referred to the emergence of women priests, the role of women in NRMs and other examples of how not all religion was male-dominated. Weaker answers tended to have a narrow range of knowledge and offered wholly anecdotal material.

OPTION 4 YOUTH AND CULTURE

- 7 (a) There was a range of responses to this question. Weaker candidates tended to produce anecdotal or descriptive responses typically focusing on dress and behaviour of youth subcultures. Some candidates answered in terms of specific subcultures rather than subcultures in general. Better answers were more theoretical or conceptual. For example, some candidates drew on the CCCS's notion of style as a form of resistance characterising working class youth subcultures using relevant examples, while others referred to the notion of delinquent subcultures drawing on writers such as Cohen. Some answers identified two characteristics but confused the studies used in illustration.
- (b) Weaker candidates offered common sense accounts focusing on how young people might develop social skills or a sense of identity by mixing with others. Other candidates were better informed but offered a range of explanations of youth culture not always focusing on the view in the question. Better answers located the view in the functionalist tradition of writers such as Eisenstadt and then used approaches such as Marxism and post-modernism to criticise this view. The best answers showed knowledge and understanding of a range of studies of different subcultures e.g. the work of the CCCS and more recent studies by Bennett, Hetherington, Hodkinson etc. Some good responses referred to the importance of class, gender and ethnicity in the transition to adulthood.
- 8 (a) Most candidates were able to identify two reasons. Weaker answers were more common sense, for example referring to peer group pressure and inadequate socialisation. Better answers drew on sociological approaches typically referring to concepts such as status frustration, relative deprivation and membership of delinquent subcultures. A number of candidates seemed confused in their understanding of concepts such as status frustration.
- (b) Most candidates could establish that Marxist views involved subcultures as class-based and/or as resistance to capitalism but weaker answers tended to be simplistic, e.g. seeing youth as in rebellion against capitalism but with little development in support. Better candidates tended to draw on the work of the CCCS and the best candidates gave examples of specific studies and explained the importance of concepts such as hegemony, magic, resistance and incorporation. Some candidates did not understand the Marxist view of subcultures and attracted few or no marks. Weaker answers offered little evaluation but better answers typically used post-modern theories and material on contemporary youth, e.g. Bennett's work on urban dance cultures, to

question the relevance of Marxist approaches. Some candidates also criticised Marxist accounts for failing to adequately deal with females, black youth, 'ordinary youth' and/or middle class youth subcultures.

Sociological research skills 2534

General Comments

Overall, the quality of responses has improved, compared to last summer's performance. Virtually all candidates answered every question part and responses demonstrate that candidates are becoming increasingly aware of the demands of each question and the assessment objectives involved in each question part. Many candidates were able to acknowledge the given contexts/research design given in Item B and in question (d) and evidence indicates that responses were 'fuller' this summer than they have been previously with more candidates attempting to explain concepts, design and methodology. A larger number of candidates seemed more engaged with the responses, offering answers more connected to the actual question set, rather than just relying on generalised pre-rehearsed responses. However, a large number of responses still fail to really engage with the context in a sustained way. In particular, poor responses were characterised by a lack of understanding of the basic research concepts required for questions (c) and (d) and there remains a stark difference between those candidates who have a strong technical understanding of key concepts and of their relevance to the research design, and the weaker candidates who either throw all the concepts in together, or leave them out completely. There is evidence of improved understanding of the difference between the terms reliability, validity and representativeness, although explanations as to *why* a particular research method tends to generate more valid or reliable results were often lacking. Candidates continue to be confused about the terms 'triangulation' and 'methodological pluralism'. If they are to be taught, they need to be taught in the context of research design with clear reference made to key concepts.

The other characteristic of weaker responses was in the lack of contextualisation where candidates offered only a generalised description of a research method for parts (c) and (d) without any consideration for the given research context.

Where candidates performed well, they had clearly been prepared for the nature of the questions and focused on the demands of each part from the outset. Good candidates are able to engage with the given research contexts and understand the need to include reference to the key research concepts. In particular, high level responses were able to reach the higher levels in part (c) questions, where they were clearly focused on the explicit strength / weakness related to the given research aim of investigating why people choose to give blood, and in part (d) questions as they successfully applied their chosen method to the research context given, rather than just mechanically outlining and assessing its usefulness. Many high achieving candidates have clearly been well prepared for targeting the assessment objectives of each question and many centres are encouraging candidates to answer questions in a formulaic way in order to achieve this.

Teaching tip: Focus on teaching the key concepts (validity, reliability, representativeness and reliability). Use concept / definition displays to act as a constant reinforcement to children.

Comments on Individual Questions

Q No

- 1) (a) The majority of candidates demonstrated an awareness of the concept of 'generalisability'; however, there was a very wide Centre variation where, on occasions, all candidates in a whole Centre clearly had no real grasp of the core meaning and there was a wide variation between marks. It is important to emphasise that the concept 'generalisability' is a key research concept on the specification and teachers must ensure that they have explicitly covered it in their teaching. The better answers offered a clear and succinct definition, referring to the ability of the findings from a sample to be applied to the wider or target research population. The best responses displayed a range of knowledge and understanding of the term by making reference to examples of sampling techniques which are more likely to be accurate in terms of generalisability and/or to examples of research which has been generalised. Some responses made links with positivism and large-scale data collection techniques. A significant number of candidates failed to understand the meaning of the concept; candidates should not be encouraged to see this question as one about key concepts in general. Some candidates gave a definition of 'representativeness' and whilst these generally were awarded with some credit, candidates do need to be aware of the differences between the two concepts. A number of candidates offered tautological answers; for example "Generalisation means being able to generalise" and thus failed to pick up many marks.
- (b) The majority of candidates were able to successfully interpret the data and identify two main changes. Most candidates were able to correctly analyse the data in terms of stating the relevant percentages of MMR/Whooping cough for each year gaining six marks in total. Few managed to cement the full eight marks as they failed to interpret the scale of difference accurately. The majority of candidates are still failing to address the scale of change or, if they do, it is inaccurate; a common mistake was to state the percentage difference as a percentage *increase*, without stating it is a percentage *point* increase. or by wrongly assuming that the numerical figure was raw numbers of people rather than as percentages. Fewer candidates than in previous sessions are going beyond the confines of the question which has resulted in clearer, more succinct answers. Candidates need to be trained to read the question carefully to focus on whether the analysis is asking for differences or trends and respond accordingly. Some candidates offered elaborate responses which make it difficult for examiners to identify the key points to reward.

Teaching tip: Encourage data interpretation skills when teaching the other AS units. For example, candidates could be asked to find two main changes in household composition, if studying the family option for 2533

- (c) The majority of candidates correctly identified one strength and one weakness and were able to offer some explanations of these. Some candidates identified relevant strengths/weaknesses but failed to explain them. Some candidates wrote about more than one strength or weakness, despite the clear direction in the question. A very small number misinterpreted the question and used Item A in their answer, instead of Item B. A large number of candidates are not spending enough time on this question. A 16 mark question requires more than a two-sentence answer.

Teaching tip: Using the specification, give candidates (in groups or pairs) a concept and ask them to come up with a definition and two further points of explanation (e.g. advantages/disadvantages; examples of

AO1

As well as clearly identifying both a strength and weakness, many candidates were able to reference an appropriate key concept in their explanations. Many also offered enough detailed expansion of their answer to confirm full AO1 marks for either both or one of the strength / weakness. Oddly, many candidates seemed capable of achieving full marks for just one; either the strength or the weakness, and gaining just the 2 marks (for the identification and explanation only) for the second. Some candidates became confused about the research design and misinterpreted some of Item B; for example, candidates were unsure about who was joining a support group and some candidates wrongly assumed that the purpose of the research was to increase the percentage of parents agreeing to have their children immunised. A number of candidates attempted to identify and explain strength and weakness in terms of *key concepts*, but this is quite a complex task and only a small minority of the more able candidates did this most successfully. Similarly, some candidates attempted to explain the strength of using *method triangulation*, and a few produced high quality answers, explaining in detail how *both* reliability and validity were enhanced. But, many who tried this did not fully explain their answer, simply stating that either reliability or validity were 'improved' without explaining how or why. Candidates should also be aware that method triangulation should be using both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques and those responses which referred to the 'survey' in the Item were credited for recognising this.

There were some very strong answers commenting on the *unstructured interviews*, producing good AO1 marks (whether as a strength or a weakness); triggering consideration of validity/truthful and detailed 'relaxed' responses (strength) or lack of it because of social desirability/interviewer effect (weakness) and/or issues of reliability (lack of). 'Representativeness' of the sample caused some confusion, as candidates often stated that choosing an area which has a low take up rate of the MMR vaccination wasn't representative as it was 'too small'; however, representativeness is more than just about size and this missed the point of the reasons for the research design, and . However, some candidates were able to gain full AO1 marks for indicating the weakness of the sample selected and lack of representativeness in relation to the 'reasons' why these parents rejected the MMR vaccination may be different to other areas, followed by a more detailed explanation of why this may be the case. In general, those candidates who selected methods as the strength/weakness tended to be able handle the demands of the question better than those selecting other research issues, and gain 8 AO1 marks.

AO2a

This section, again, provided more of a challenge for candidates to gain full

Most candidates attained appropriate identification and explanation marks, and more candidates are referencing the context of the research ('why some parents choose not to have their children immunised').

Some candidates made full use of the context making it a feature of their chosen strength/weakness; and gave full enough responses to gain full marks for AO2 but candidates need to be taught specifically to address the effects of the selected strength/weakness on the aims of the research in order to gain full marks.

Teaching tip: Give candidates past question (c)'s and Item Bs and a set structure for answering it: Identify and explain the strength; relate it to a research concept; include reference to the context and the aims of the research.

- (d) The majority of candidates allocated most of their time to this question and most candidates successfully focused on just one research method and referred to the given context of why people choose to give blood. It is clear that many Centres are preparing their candidates for the demands of this question as candidates are explicit in their use of key concepts, the wider research process and the given context. However, there continues to be a marked difference between high and low level responses to this question.

The hallmark of good responses was the ability of the candidate to apply their knowledge and understanding of one method (the most common ones being a form of questionnaire or interview) to the given research context and to think through aspects of the wider research process. There were some excellent responses to this question which engaged with explaining how they would undertake some meaningful research. For example, better responses chose sampling techniques that were appropriate for asking people why they give blood; for example, using registers of a blood-donor clinic for some form of random sampling, or using opportunity/purposive sampling through accessing a blood-donor unit and finding a sample as they donate blood. Many candidates were able to link their choice of method and sampling technique to appropriate ethical issues and addressed the issue of Operationalisation, albeit to varying degrees of success.

Teaching tip: Get candidates to apply their knowledge and understanding of sampling techniques by asking them how they would get different samples; e.g. elderly people, candidates, middle class, minority ethnic groups.

Most candidates focused on questionnaires, interviews and there were many candidates who displayed a range of knowledge and understanding of the actual chosen method and the related key concepts. Many Centres continue to provide their candidates with a framework for answering this question and whilst this has the advantage of ensuring the candidate addresses the method, concepts, and process, many of these answers lacked reference to the context and were therefore superficial. Candidates really do need to practise these questions with a variety of different research scenarios.

Weaker responses tended to offer generalised knowledge of methods; for example, by failing to state which type of questionnaire / interview or offering more than one method as is stated in the question.

Other weak responses offered confused/inaccurate references to key research concepts. Although more candidates are referring to the wider research process, weaker candidates do not express understanding. For example, they state that 'concepts need operationalising' or 'ethics need to be taken into account', but do not follow this with any elaboration or contextualisation. A large number of candidates offer a generalised answer or weak understanding of the context; for example, by selecting the telephone directory or electoral roll as a means of accessing people who give blood! Some Centres had clearly given candidates a rehearsed answer which was weak in terms of addressing the key concepts – many candidates in these Centres are still 'throwing in' all the concepts together which does not display any understanding of what the concept means. Candidates need to elaborate on explaining why unstructured interviews lack reliability and what are the issues with validity.

- (d) Nearly all candidates expressed some evaluation but weaker responses only justified their choice of method/sampling and offered no negative criticisms. Where candidates choose a semi-structured method, they often gave the impression that it was the all-round solution, but this meant that they struggled to score highly on AO2 as they couldn't think of any weaknesses. Good responses included an evaluative and reflective tone throughout their responses, for example by noting the strengths and weaknesses of their sampling technique as well as the stated method and addressed ethical concerns as a researcher. Such responses were well contextualised and referred to the key concepts in an evaluative way.

Research Report 2535

Many Centres should be congratulated for submitting Research Reports of a high standard which had been consistently and accurately assessed. In these instances candidates had clearly engaged with the task and had received clear guidance as to the requirements of the task. It should also be noted that the Research Reports submitted by some Centres showed a marked improvement on previous sessions. Nevertheless there are still a minority of Centres where the assessment is not accurate and consequently the candidates are disadvantaged. These Centres should take note of the comments made in both this Report and in individual Centre Reports. Moderators make every effort to include constructive advice in the Centre Reports.

Administrative points

The vast majority of the Mark Sheets were received by the 15th of May and Centres responded quickly to requests for samples. Some Centres would be wise to ensure that all candidates complete the front covers correctly, some omitted details such as candidate number or Centre number and some even failed to complete the word count – this is a requirement of the task. These seemingly small errors or omissions do hinder the moderation process. These details should be correct before Mark Sheets and Research Reports are dispatched to the moderator.

As requested in previous Reports Centres are asked to ensure that each Research Report is submitted either in the Answer Book or stapled together. Loose sheets of paper, without any means of identification, can be very troublesome.

The majority of Centres are now familiar with the use of the Centre Authentication Statements - one Centre Authentication Statement per Centre is the requirement (these are available on the OCR website). Without this form the coursework marks cannot be processed. Centres generally responded quickly to requests for this form when it had not been included with the sample, thank you.

Application of the Mark Scheme.

Assessment was generally accurate and consistent. When Centre marks had to be adjusted the main issue was a lenient interpretation and application of the Mark Scheme. This was often across all Assessment Objectives.

Some Centres are drifting towards becoming more lenient, especially at the A/B and sometimes the E/U boundary. If this trend continues it is possible that marks will be adjusted in future sessions.

The majority of assessors included detailed comments on the front cover of the Research Reports and also annotated the Research Reports themselves. Comments or annotation, which referred directly to the Mark Scheme in terms of Assessment Objectives and key concepts, were especially helpful and were often an indication of accurate assessment. Ticks and comments such as 'good' or comments directed at the candidate are rarely helpful. Assessors should ensure that comments accurately reflect the mark scheme and are directed at the moderator, not the candidate.

When marks were adjusted it was usually for one or more of the following reasons:

1. Understanding of key methodological concepts. There were very many candidates who demonstrated an excellent understanding of the key concepts. Nevertheless there was generally a confused or often imprecise understanding of these concepts in work where the marks were adjusted. In a few instances the concepts were not even mentioned. The Mark Scheme emphasises the key concepts for all Assessment Objectives. At level 4 'reliability, validity, representativeness and/or generalisability' are explicitly referred to across the Assessment Objectives. Consequently candidates who do not demonstrate an explicit and developed understanding of these concepts cannot be placed in level 4. Once again it is worth noting that candidates who refer to two or more of these concepts in the same sentence are not making their understanding explicit. Candidates should be reminded to develop references to these concepts. Comments such as 'unstructured interviews were used because they are valid' need to be developed to explain why unstructured interviews would be valid in the context of the study. Lack of explicit understanding of these concepts was one of the main reasons why some marks had to be adjusted.
2. The word limit. The mark scheme (AO1 – levels 1-3) clearly states 'Reports which do exceed the word limit, which are in need of further editing should be placed at the bottom of the (appropriate) level (see Mark Scheme and specification p14). Allowing additional words can give candidates an unfair advantage thus meaning they may increase their chances of gaining higher marks in AO2(a) and AO2(b). Assessors should therefore instruct their candidates that this practice can result in an adjustment to their mark.
3. Lack of context – some candidates were disadvantaged by writing about the methods used in a general way, without linking their comments to the context of their chosen study.
4. Inappropriate source material. Some Centres/candidates continue to use studies/source material which can disadvantage the candidate. Page 13 of the specification describes the nature and purpose of the Research Report, which 'requires the candidates to report on a short piece of sociological research...' Candidates which use past personal studies, studies of a psychological or non-sociological nature or articles where a detailed analysis of the research methodology has been undertaken are disadvantaged and often fail to fulfil the requirements of the task.
5. Poor focus on the requirements of the task. Moderators did note that those candidates who ensured Research Reports that were focussed on the prompts at the beginning of each section of the Answer Book often produced Research Reports of a good standard that were accurately assessed. Lack of focus on the prompts / task and inconsistent assessment often went hand in hand – these Reports were characterised by an incomplete section (a), a brief and generalised outline and justification of the research design and a section (d) which included far too many findings at the expense of developed evaluative comments.
6. Inconsistent assessment. When a Centre has a number of assessors, details of the procedure used for internal standardisation should be included for the moderator. Many Centres included such detail. Nevertheless all Centres should include such detail with the MS1, thus helping to ensure that the sample chosen by the moderator can include Research Reports that have been checked within the Centre.

Academic matters

Increasingly Centres are submitting reports that are based on a wide range of appropriate studies. This ensures that candidates have access to and develop an understanding of materials that can be used to inform other aspects of the specification. When candidates use source material which has been downloaded from the Internet they should include the website address in section (a). It is also prudent to check such material in order to ensure that it includes sufficient detail regarding the research design. Candidates are disadvantaged when they report on an appropriate study but use source material which is lacking in methodological detail. If the original source material does lack detail it is appropriate to use additional information from other sources.

Using the Research Report Answer Book.

Section (a)

This section must be accurate and completed by the candidate. Candidates who do not correctly complete this section cannot be awarded the highest marks for AO1, 'All sections of the Report should be focused on the task... .' (Mark Scheme).

Section (b)

The majority of candidates wrote a section (b) that gave a clear and concise account of the research design, often introducing technical terms. Candidates should be reminded that they should include details of all aspects of the research design, including ethical issues.

Section (c)

Some candidates wrote an excellent section (c). This work was characterised by a clear focus on the context of the study, use of technical terms; including the key concepts, emphasis on positive reasons for the research design and a consideration of and references to various aspects of the research design, including aims, methods, sampling and how the research was conducted. Characteristics of weaker section (c)'s were repetition or further descriptive details which should have been included in section (b), the inclusion of too much background material, general comments regarding the methods, lack of focus on the context of the research and an analysis of other methods which may or may not have been appropriate.

Section (d)

A feature of weaker section (d)'s was the inclusion of far too many findings at the expense of a developed evaluation. 100 words, with reference to the appendices should be sufficient to briefly analyse the main findings. Many candidates successfully linked their analysis of the main finding to the aims of the study.

The ability of many candidates to evaluate the research in sociological terms was excellent. These candidates again considered various aspects of the research and linked their evaluation to the key concepts. Some weaker candidates tended to repeat much of section (c) in this section whilst the stronger candidates used this section to develop comment made in section (c) and/or to introduce some element of critical evaluation.

Appendices

Many candidates made effective use of appendices to illustrate the main findings of the study. Candidates who failed to use an appendix often penalised themselves in terms of lack of developed evaluative comments. It should be noted that the appendices can only be used to illustrate findings. Some candidates attempted to use them to elaborate on sections (b) and (c). Such additional information cannot be considered for assessment purposes.

Power and Control June 2536

General Comments

The overall standard was similar to June 2006. Most candidates performed to a good standard and were able to apply their knowledge to the question set.

The majority of candidates displayed a sound knowledge base with a broad understanding of concepts and studies. Theoretical knowledge was present in the responses of most candidates but sometimes this was generalised and not related to the specifics of the question; for example in question 7, feminism was described in some detail but not applied to the issue of construction and consumption of culture. Knowledge of theorists was often not based on historical context so that some candidates wrote about Marx and Durkheim as if they were contemporary writers; for example Marx commenting on the use of ASBOs in question 1! In terms of historical knowledge some candidates wrote generalised accounts of developments in social policy not related to the demands of the particular question, for example in question 9.

Differences within perspectives were recognised more consistently in this session; for example between classical Marxism and neo-Marxism although weaker responses tended to describe studies by any writer they could remember when a particular theory was highlighted in the question. Another tendency amongst responses was to give equal weight to other theories, for example in question 1 often theories other than interactionism were written about in as much detail as interactionism itself, but not utilised to make evaluative points.

Some candidates displayed such a wide ranging knowledge of studies that the responses tended towards lists of writers and there was insufficient time to apply these to the question and analyse the studies in any depth. Some candidates, therefore, achieved high marks for knowledge and understanding but did less well on interpretation and analysis given the time constraints of the exam.

Candidates should be encouraged to consider why a particular study is included and look at how it relates to the question set.

A minority of candidates were falling into the opposite trap where they were analysing and interpreting the question but failing to support their ideas with evidence from studies. A small minority of responses were entirely impressionistic, assertive and anecdotal. The tendency towards assertion was particularly noticeable in responses to question 2 where victims of crime were discussed with a lack of reference to evidence.

Interpretation and analysis was a weaker skill area for most candidates although stronger responses continually related their analysis of 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.

Interpretation of concepts in relation to contemporary examples/events was stronger in this session demonstrating the ability to relate sociological knowledge to current events. Sometimes, however, this tended towards over-long anecdotes which were not sourced in any way. When media sources are used they should be identified clearly rather than 'I watched a programme on the television which showed.....'

Evaluation was, again, the weakest skill area which 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.

Many candidates were evaluating throughout their responses, demonstrating the ability to evaluate positively as well as through the more common criticism of studies and theories. A few candidates attempted to evaluate positively but simply stating that 'this is a good study' without explaining why.

Much evaluation is still left to the end of essays with sometimes mere repetition of points already made. Weaker candidates tended towards assertion, impression and opinion in their conclusions without supporting theory or evidence.

The planning of essays continues to improve with fewer lengthy plans which use up valuable time. Many plans were coherent and logical with evidence that candidates were referring back to them and using them to structure their essays.

Some introductions were too long and generalised again using up valuable time in establishing historical contexts or attempting to define terms which were not central to the question or which are rather obvious. A few candidates considered it to be important to explain what 'assess' means!

Poor spelling was again evident. Some candidates who appeared to have completed their responses well within an hour did not seem to have used the time to proof-read what they had written. This applied to some candidates who had spelt accurately in general but allowed misspellings to remain. For example 'the ruling class can afford good locks, grills and alarms and this act as a detergent to burglars'.

Many candidates in this session, however, wrote coherent and logical essays with a clear introduction, a focussed main body and thoughtful conclusions. Many candidates were using conclusions to suggest gaps in sociological knowledge and/or research and possible avenues for further research rather than simply repeating points they had already made, which is to be encouraged.

Most candidates appeared to have utilised the full hour and there were few rubric errors. There were far fewer misinterpretations of questions in this session.

Comments on Individual Questions

Question 1

This was a popular question with the majority of candidates demonstrating a sound knowledge and understanding of interactionism. Sometimes this was rather generalised with a lack of focus on crime and deviance. However, there were some excellent responses with well developed analyses of the ideas of Becker, Lemert and Cohen in particular.

Weaker responses tended to write 'everything I know about crime and deviance' so that equal weight was given to other perspectives/theorists. Some of this material could have been used to evaluate interactionism but this was not explicit in weaker responses.

Some candidates dealt in great detail with one aspect, such as moral panics, but did not develop other interactionist concepts or studies and thus were not rewarded highly for knowledge and understanding.

Good responses not only evaluated interactionism but also counter-evaluated its critics, such as by reference to Plummer.

Question 2

This was also a popular question but not as well answered in general compared to question 1. Weaker responses ignored the issue of victims completely and wrote about patterns of offending. There was often considerable discussion about methods of obtaining evidence, for example, victimisation studies but sometimes there was confusion about different methods, for example between self-report studies and victimisation studies. Evaluation of victimisation studies was sometimes vague or confused, for example the British Crime Survey is weak on grounds of reliability/validity/representativeness/generalisability with no explanation as to why.

Weaker responses to this question were assertive, impressionistic and anecdotal due to a lack of knowledge about victims of crime. Some candidates confused being a victim of crime with being a victim or apparent victim of labelling, such as in cases of alleged police racism.

Stronger responses utilised their knowledge of patterns of offending, for example inner city/zone of transition and applied this to patterns of victimisation.

Stronger responses also used feminist arguments in a thoughtful, analytical way.

Question 3

This was another popular question. Most candidates had a sound knowledge and understanding of theories which were relevant to the question, particularly Marxism and Functionalism. The majority of candidates were able to write accurately about Davis and Moore, Parsons, Bowles and Gintis, Willis, in particular. Evaluation was often implicit or by juxtaposition, however, with a section of the response on Marxism followed by a section on Functionalism with no explicit link between the two.

Some weaker responses wrote about inequalities within education with no analysis of how this relates to employment.

Few candidates addressed the notion of new vocationalism in any depth.

Question 4

This was also a popular question and most candidates displayed a sound knowledge and understanding of theories, concepts and studies relating to working class underachievement in education. Some candidates, however, wrote equal amounts about factors inside schools as factors outside. Other, weaker responses focused on gender and ethnicity as much as on social class. Strong responses were completely aware as to what to include and what to exclude and utilised inside school factors in an explicitly evaluative way. Most candidates used a wide range of writers and explanations such as Sugarman, Douglas, Bernstein, Bourdieu but cultural capital theory was frequently not understood well. This was often confused with cultural deprivation.

Question 5

Fewer responses were produced to this question. Those candidates who attempted it were generally displaying a sound knowledge and understanding of the significance of material factors with frequent references to Acheson, Black report, Graham. Marxist explanations were generally utilised well. Weaker responses wrote in greater depth about cultural explanations without using these to evaluate in a coherent way. Some responses were assertive with impressionistic accounts of working class life which were very stereotypical.

Question 6

There were not many responses to this question. There were some strong responses which clearly addressed the issue of social control with references to writers such as Goffman, Oakley, Szasz, Illich, Parsons, in particular.

Weaker responses failed to address the issue of social control and wrote very generally about medical treatment/health care.

Question 7

There were very few responses to this question. Stronger candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of feminist approaches with a differentiation of perspectives within feminism. Weaker responses wrote generally about feminism with a lack of focus on the construction and consumption of culture. Some candidates wrote very generally about the consumption of culture in an impressionistic way often not supported by evidence or theory.

Question 8

This was also not a popular question. There were, however, some strong responses to this question with a focus on global culture and identities. Weaker responses wrote generally about globalisation without relating this to issues of culture or identities.

Question 9

There were rather more responses to this question than questions 7 and 8. Stronger responses demonstrated a good understanding of the concept of welfare pluralism and were able to differentiate between different social policy perspectives in a clear way. There was often an impressive knowledge of recent developments in the delivery of welfare services, for example Sure Start.

Weaker responses failed to address the concept of welfare pluralism and wrote generalised accounts of the history of welfare provision post-Beveridge.

Question 10

This question was more popular than question 9, but overall not many candidates attempted it. Generally it produced stronger responses with many candidates able to address the issue of equality and relate this to social policy perspectives. Social democratic and feminist perspective in particular were dealt with in an analytical way.

Weaker responses wrote generally about the history of the welfare state without addressing the issue of equality. A tendency amongst weaker responses was an over-long description of the Beveridge report.

Question 11

This was not a very popular question but many responses demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of new social movements with reference to writers such as Hallsworth, Melucci, Scott and Klein in particular.

Sometimes the issue of traditional political action was not addressed.

Weaker responses demonstrated a confusion about the nature of new social movements.

Question 12

Again, not a very popular question. There were some strong responses which demonstrated a sound knowledge and understanding of globalisation relating to cultural and identity issues. The examples of protest movements were utilised in a thoughtful way by stronger candidates, for example the Iraq war. Other examples of protest were not 'globalised' sufficiently. For example 'Twyford Down' was described in some local detail.

Weaker responses described globalisation but made little reference to protest movements.

Applied Sociological Research Skills 2537

General comments

Once again the number of candidates taking this module rose slightly compared to last June. Candidates appeared to have engaged with the theme of the paper and were able to produce some very well thought through research designs in response to the brief in Item A which were well contextualised in relation to the needs of the homeless. There were a few who perhaps reflecting on the work they had done for 2539 spent some time particularly in (b) and (c) lamenting on the plight of the homeless and commenting on what Tony Blair should be doing about it. Candidates should be reminded this is a research methods paper and they should not waste time bringing random content material from other modules into their responses since, whilst it might demonstrate their awareness of the social world in general, it cannot be rewarded.

Most candidates tackled all five parts of the question and appeared to divide their time according to the guideline on the paper. This meant there was less evidence of candidates running out of time by part (e).

As always a few candidates chose to do (d) and (e) first but, as in previous sessions, there seemed little evidence to suggest that they did any better than those who worked their way through from part (a).

Tip

Ensure candidates read the specifics of the question by using past papers and giving them two minutes to jot down what they think are the key issues in parts (b) and (d). They should then exchange with a partner to check each other's reading of those two parts.

Comments on individual parts of the question

Part (a)

This part of the question asked candidates to identify two problems of gaining access to older homeless people. Most were able to identify two problems but a significant number identified three, attempting to use the third by way of an explanation. In order to obtain top marks for this part of the question candidates must explain why the point they have identified in the item is a problem in gaining access. This need to explain the point in the item in relation to the issue in the question is not a new departure. Every session part (a) requires candidates to demonstrate their skill of interpretation and of explanation. There were a number of candidates who argued that given the older homeless tended to have a lower life expectancy than the average in the population that in itself could cause a problem, there were less to access. They were rewarded for this imaginative thinking given a lower life expectancy was in the item, however the minority of candidates who used material that was not in the item received no marks. Candidates must do as the question asks and use **'only item A'**

Tip

Use part (a)s from past questions and ask candidates to practice identifying the two points and then ask them to complete the following sentence: This means that.....because.....

Part (b)

As in previous sessions this question was one of the differentiators on the paper. The differentiation is in relation to candidates' ability to contextualise their responses. This ability continues to be a skill that eludes too many candidates and consequently they are throwing two marks away. Some candidates, who tried to contextualise, misread the question. They did not read that this was concerned with the experiences of young people who have run away from home and decided it was either about the elderly homeless or the homeless in general and although it may be the case that teenagers who run away are sometimes homeless it is a supposition and candidates are better advised to concentrate on the specifics of the question. However, in order to demonstrate they understand the context it is not good enough to repeat the words of the question they need to demonstrate they understand how collecting qualitative data might or might not be useful in relation to the experiences of this group. They could for example have said that the collection of qualitative data allows researchers and the teenagers to develop a rapport and for the researcher to probe the teenagers and to ask for clarification in relation to what they are saying about their experiences of running away because perhaps they had experienced abuse or bullying either before they ran away or once they had gone and to perhaps gain answers to question they might not have thought of asking and the teenagers might feel comfortable enough to open up and elaborate on their experiences thereby giving a true picture/account of their experiences which would make the data high in validity. They must contextualise both of their points.

Most candidates did know what was meant by qualitative data although a few either misread or did not know and talked about quantitative data instead. Some wasted time giving an initial definition. It has been pointed out in previous reports to Centres that there is no point in doing that it is better to go straight to the specifics of the question identifying and explaining the strength and then doing the same for the weakness. Some candidates argued the strength (or weakness) of collecting qualitative data was because it was not quantitative and then wasted time writing about that. Many linked the strength to validity and the weakness to reliability, by doing this they kept focussed and demonstrated how useful a secure and confident knowledge and understanding of these key skills can be. Finally the strength tended to be better done than the weakness.

Tip

Candidates could, as an exercise, think of contemporary issues relating to the topic they are studying for 2536 or to inequality and difference for the synoptic unit and consider the strengths and weaknesses of the collection of first qualitative data and then quantitative data on those issues. The knowledge and understanding of all aspects of quantitative and qualitative data collection is of prime importance across this whole paper.

Part (c)

This question requires candidates to demonstrate a skill used by practising sociologists in their working lives, which is to summarise data. To summarise all of the data not just some of it. Those who did summarise it all and did so in an analytic way were placed in the top mark level. However, there were a significant number of candidates who only partially described what they saw or who only summarised the data in the table or that in the text. As usual some did not support what they said with accurate statistics. However it was a relief to find that only a few in this session were tempted to play around with mathematical calculations which inevitably they got wrong. As in past sessions the very best candidates interpreted and analysed the data using terms such as highest, lowest, differences, similarities and so on. In addition they made comparisons and identified patterns and trends. Some weaker candidates appeared to rush in without reading the data carefully consequently they made assumptions about the '....issues relating to [the older homeless]' suggesting they were the reasons for their homelessness. The item does not say or they referred to the data in a partial way.

Tip

Candidates should look for contemporary data relevant to the other two A2 papers and practise summarising it fully. This could be done as a class exercise/competition asking candidates in turn to identify a point until someone cannot find anymore in which case they are 'out' and the exercise continues until the next person is 'out' and so on

Part (d)

Many candidates were well prepared for this part of the question and demonstrated a good understanding of the research process and of the key concepts. Most candidates responded well to the context of the needs of the homeless although there were some stereotypes that emerged such as the homeless are illiterate and uneducated. It is clear that candidates are being well prepared for this part of the question in terms of the elements of the research process and although there were signs of 'templates' being used they were used in a contextualised way this session. Templates and mnemonics are not always helpful to some candidates who become fixated on the template and therefore respond to the brief in a rather mechanistic way. As in previous sessions many candidates recognised the importance of linking their research design to theory but quite often did it by either starting with a general paragraph or adding one on at the end. These were sometimes not connected to the context in any way but rather waxed lyrical about Durkheim and other dead white male sociologists although occasionally Oakley found herself included in their company. Such generalised paragraphs did not attract many marks. The theoretical debate about the collection of qualitative/quantitative data should be linked securely to the context.

Some candidates appeared to have misread the brief and focussed on why people were homeless and not the needs of the homeless.

Tip

Ask candidates to read and deconstruct past item Bs. Check they are reading the specifics of the brief.

Most candidates chose appropriate methods usually either questionnaires using closed questions or structured interviews and were then able to justify why they had chosen the particular method. The ability to explain and justify each stage of their design distinguished the stronger candidates from the weaker ones who tended to mechanistically describe the process without justifying any of it or linking it at each stage to the context. For example candidates would say I need to operationalise concepts such as the homeless and needs and then did not say how they would do that.

Tip

Using past questions candidates to work in pairs and identify what the concepts in each brief are that need to be operationalised

The aspect of research design that still seems to mystify many candidates is that of sampling. There is evidence that part of this is a Centre issue. Candidates need to understand the difference between a sampling frame and a sample. The better candidates tended to suggest that since a comprehensive sampling frame could not exist for the homeless that snowball sampling would be the best sampling technique to use. They were able to justify this on the basis of their age and their lack of acquaintance with the homeless and that to use snowball sampling would therefore be for them the most appropriate and efficient. Many candidates spent some time considering how they might do stratified sampling of some sort in order to get a representative sample but the brief only asked them for an appropriate sample so although they could discuss representativeness in (e) they had no real need to spend a lot of (d) on discussing how they would obtain a stratified sample. Stronger candidates thought about the sample size carefully and realised that the possibility of getting hold of a very large sample would be problematic however there were some candidates who seemed to go on autopilot and argued quantitative data needed a large sample therefore they would ask literally hundreds of homeless to complete questionnaires for them. The most relevant key concept they could have discussed in this part was reliability and many did that a considerable number referred to reliability and did not develop it assuming the examiner would know what it meant and therefore they did not need to say and others confused reliability and representativeness.

Every session a number of candidates worry about time and money. This is unnecessary since the Organisations who ask the candidates to do the research can be assumed to have the money to finance the research they are looking for. In addition some candidates employed sociologists to carry out the research. The brief clearly says ‘...you...’ and if candidates focus on themselves as the researcher they may keep focussed on what is realistic.

Tip

Candidates to be given short extracts of research relevant to other modules and to discuss in pairs the impact of the key concepts on the quality of the data collected and the research design. They can then use then as an evaluative point in those exams.

Part (e)

This part of the question is the other main differentiator between candidates. Most candidates left themselves time but it was at this point that those who were following some sort of template lapsed into a generic response listing a range of weaknesses and solutions that were not focussed on the specifics of the question. This was particularly noticeable with regard to theory. The majority of candidates were able to identify a range of weaknesses and some appropriate solutions. Once again it was assumed that respondents will automatically tell lies when completing a questionnaire or being interviewed. As far as this session was concerned this was compounded by those who thought the homeless were a dangerous, alcoholic, drug dependent bunch of people.

Triangulation which was described inaccurately as a method by a number of candidates was often used as a throwaway with little explanation. A number of candidates spend time in (d) and /or (e) referring to the work of sociologists such as Barker. It would be better if they spent the time focussing on explaining the use of triangulation in relation to this research design and context and not in relation to the moonies.

A number of candidates used (e) to develop their research design further in other words they offered solutions to implied weaknesses which the examiner was left to guess at. The best responses accurately and explicitly discussed ways in which the key concepts impacted on the research design and the quality of data collected. However it is important that candidates explain what the concepts mean in order to distinguish themselves from those candidates who simply use the terms with no obvious understanding.

A successful part (e) does not change the whole design from the collection of quantitative data to the collection of qualitative data but rather focuses on the weaknesses and how to resolve them whilst keeping within the brief. It is good to demonstrate a knowledge and understanding of the debate but not to rewrite the question.

Tip

Give candidates a range of weaknesses and then in pairs or small groups ask them to identify a solution and then develop it in relation to a key concept and to a context.

The Personal Study 2538

General Comments

The overall impression gained by examiners this year was that there was a real improvement in the standard of the studies with fewer very weak candidates.

As with previous years, performance for AO1 remains Centre-specific and in many instances it appears that the Centre's teaching/guidance is being assessed rather than the candidate's own ability to carry out research.

Overall many examiners felt that this year there were many studies revolving around the old familiar themes, especially those of conjugal roles where Wilmott and Young have resurfaced like the Phoenix from the ashes. One candidate referred to men becoming the 'fanatical' provider. Maybe this was true! However there were a number of really interesting topic areas which had fired the sociological imagination of some candidates. For instance, "The way in which car modifications mirror masculinity", "What wouldn't Jesus do?" and the "Unwritten rules of pub behaviour".

The best candidates were those who explicitly took on board the concept of a pilot study by creating a strategy and design that was localised and small scale which could be contained within the word restrictions. They provided a brief sociological rationale to act as their background focus and then concentrated on the research process as a whole, exploring the theoretical connections of their chosen method(s), the concomitant strengths and weaknesses in relation to the key concepts of validity, reliability, representativeness and generalisability. They demonstrated that they had fully understood the importance of accessing their target population, perhaps via a Gatekeeper, employing appropriate sampling techniques as well as paying due care and attention to ethical issues.

The best studies concentrated on a narrow focus with one or two clear and concise aims, which were linked explicitly to the hypothesis or research question. These aims and associated findings were later revisited in the results section and skilfully reviewed in the evaluation section.

It was encouraging that there were fewer candidates who exceeded the word limit this year but Centres must be aware of the penalties their candidates will incur if they do exceed the word count as stated on the mark scheme. The word count is between 2500 and 2750 words. Some candidates did exceed the word count either overtly or covertly. Please note that if examiners are suspicious about the word count, they will check the word count by laboriously counting them word for word and if over, will penalise accordingly. In addition, there are still a considerable number of candidates producing work which is lower than 2500 words and this should alert Centres to the fact that their candidates' work will lack the requisite detail and will subsequently score less. Some Centres are still assuming that material smuggled into 'footnotes' and also the Appendix is one way of getting round the word limits. Please note that this is unacceptable and actually disadvantages candidates. Footnotes as well as the Appendix itself are not marked and Centres are therefore giving their candidates bad advice by recommending this type of action.

In terms of choice of methodology, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews came through as firm favourites whilst fewer candidates opted for Content Analysis this year. The few candidates that did undertake Content Analysis however were still unable to tackle this method well and failed to discuss it as thoroughly as would be expected with other methods.

More worryingly, it seemed that this year more candidates than ever made flawed linkage to positivism and questionnaires with open-ended questions and many candidates commonly confused structured interviews with semi-structured interviews. More and more candidates took the view that questionnaires provided greater validity than interviews!

Examiners felt that there was a move towards greater reflection when considering the piloted nature of the candidate's research. The stronger candidates were able to adequately review the strengths and weaknesses of their approach and diagnose ways in which to improve it for the full-blown study. Weaker candidates continue to be oblivious to the fact that they have conducted a small scale pilot study with many candidates still intent on pre-piloting the pilot which is totally unnecessary.

Examiners commented that Coursework Adviser's comments were largely heeded this year with only a few candidates deciding to ignore the advice given. However, it is still evident from the candidate's diary that they are being allowed and positively encouraged by the Centre to carry out research well before coursework approval is gained. This is not good practice.

This was especially true in cases when candidates had been advised to operationalise concepts. Operationalisation of central concepts continues to baffle the majority of candidates and presumably their teachers alike. This is a **major** failing and has a severe knock-on effect on the rest of the study. The majority of candidates are still falling into the trap of defining these key terms rather than breaking the key terms down into measurable units which assists them in measuring what they have set out to measure.

Most Centres have taken on board ethical issues when conducting research. Even so, there were a few candidates whose piloted research was highly unethical. It is up to teachers to check over their candidates' questionnaire or interview schedule for probing questions into illegal activities of their respondents.

A few examiners experienced several incidences of malpractice this year, whereby large swathes of one candidate's work had been copied by another candidate and in other instances within Centres, the same topic, the same aims, the same background focus, the same identical device and the same results had been produced by a number of candidates. Obviously this is not allowed. The Personal Study is by its very nature research carried out on an individual basis. Centres should be aware that if plagiarism is detected, candidates can be disqualified.

Some candidates used their research diary to consider solutions to problems, but the majority of diaries served no useful purpose at all.

This year, the Bibliography seems to have fallen foul of bad practices. Innumerable candidates did not acknowledge the author, publisher or date of publication and some candidates did not provide a Bibliography at all. By this stage of their education, Centres should be encouraging candidates to accredit their sources.

Finally, in terms of administration, some Centres are not attaching a front cover assessment sheet to their candidates' studies which is needed for examiner marks and annotation and this needs to be addressed. Also some teachers have taken upon it themselves to mark the coursework before sending the coursework on to the external examiner! Please note that this module is externally examined and teacher assessment is not required.

ONE centre authentication form is required per centre before grades can be awarded and this should be included with the scripts when sent to the external examiner. In many instances, Centres did not provide this form.

Assessment Objective 1: Knowledge and Understanding

This section commands the highest marks. The key to scoring highly in this section is to have detailed **and** wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of the whole research process. The weakest candidates in this section tended to either concentrate on a few aspects of the research process or consider it in a generic way without personalisation.

The nature of the pilot study should be explained in the Rationale since it accounts for decisions and strategies as they unfold during the research process.

The best candidates provided a set of clear and concise aims that were explicitly relevant to the hypothesis/central research issue and which also linked to their referenced sociological study, used as a background focus to set the scene. Those candidates who did not provide a background study/article were then unable to link their findings to it in the Results section. There were some hilarious howlers this year which tweaked the sociological humour such as a reference made by one candidate to "Anthony Giddiness".

Weaker candidates had aims which lacked clarity or were too ambitious. Many candidates had aims which did not relate well to the hypothesis or research question and consequently lost focus on what it was they actually intended to measure.

The majority of candidates were able to link their chosen strategy and device(s) to a theoretical perspective but weaker candidates made flawed connections to theory by claiming positivists use 'open ended questions' and interpretivists use structured interviews.

In terms of the research device, the research method was generally well justified and the type of data obtained discussed. However some candidates were still unsure of the differences between structured and semi-structured interviews. A rather alarming number of candidates failed to include transcripts of interviews or examples of questionnaires, so that it was difficult for examiners to tell if any research had actually been carried out or whether the device had been effective in measuring the study's aims.

The most able candidates used wide ranging and detailed knowledge and understanding of the key concepts of representativeness/generalisability, validity and reliability effectively and accurately whilst acknowledging the limitations a pilot study imposed upon these concepts. Weaker candidates still confused validity and reliability and used them interchangeably.

The most able candidates dealt with sampling procedures in a sophisticated way and within an appropriate scale. Overall it was felt by most examiners that there more appreciation of an 'appropriate' sampling technique this year with more consideration given to how respondents could be accessed with many making reference to gatekeepers. Some candidates still referred to a stratified sampling technique when confronted with gender or ethnicity but had little awareness of how to apply it in proportional terms. Many candidates were often unsure about basic techniques such as random sampling and made the assumption that equal numbers of males and females could be generated as if by magic. Randomness and representativeness continue to muddle a large number of candidates. Candidates seem to assume that generating a random sample provides representativeness, merely due to the fact that the Researcher has not been biased in his/her selection! Many candidates announced they were using a purposive sample but then failed to indicate how their respondents would be chosen. Weaker candidates are still confusing sampling frame with target population. Centres should address the complexity of sampling to aid further understanding in future as this is an integral part of the research process.

In terms of ethical practices, the recent emphasis on keeping the pilot studies 'clean, healthy and safe' seems to be working. Ethical issues were considered appropriately but few candidates discussed ethical dilemmas which could occur especially in relation to the 'full-blown' study.

Most studies had clear sections and in general spelling, punctuation and grammar posed few problems this year, although there were instances with several Centres, where candidates had not provided any separation between sections at all and it read as one long essay. Some candidates decided to centre each line of their coursework on each page which was not conducive to reading.

Assessment Objective 2(a): Interpretation and Analysis

Overall this was handled much better than in previous years. The best research tied the findings to the aims of the study and the selected evidence was analysed and interpreted and compared/contrasted with the background research previously discussed in the Rationale.

The most able candidates did an excellent job of justifying their chosen methodology and strategy by linking it back to their aims as well as clearly operationalising concepts by breaking them down into measurable units. Many did this well and often it was the result of responding to the advice on the Proposal Form. Some candidates stated their intention to operationalise concepts but then rode roughshod over it and this really did impact upon the quality of their study but overall the majority of candidates continue to define their concepts without actually realising that the concepts have to be unpacked in order to be 'measured'. Other candidates expected that operationalisation would be solved via their research device. It is quite clear to examiners that without operationalisation being performed at the start of their research, the candidate is clearly hampered since they are unaware of what they are actually trying to discover from their pilot. It also impacts on the effectiveness of the research device.

On another humorous note, when it came to analysis, one candidate stated that "after I completed my research, I anglicised it".

The best candidates not only related their findings from the analysed data quite specifically to their aims but also linked their findings to the study/studies outlined in the Rationale revealing ability to contrast or compare these with their own in the conclusions drawn. Weaker candidates simply presented the results in a descriptive way. It is still a cause for concern that graphs are being included without a summary and many are disembodied from the text. There were fewer reports by examiners of page upon page of graphs.

Candidates do need to spend more time drawing conclusions in relation to their stated aims. Many candidates had no conclusions whatsoever and very few candidates were able to compare and contrast their findings with their background study in a sophisticated fashion.

Some candidates had far too lengthy devices and consequently only partially analysed the research questions. This impacted upon their ability to interpret data within the restrictions of the word count. It must be stressed that the Personal Study tests the candidate's awareness of the research process and strategy and it is recommended that the device be kept as short and as focused as possible.

Assessment Objective 2(b): Evaluation

The better able candidates were able to evaluate, analyse and be reflexive throughout. There were fewer formulaic approaches by Centres this year, which is to be encouraged.

Many candidates did not take issue with their Aims or evaluate their effectiveness in any way. Very few actually made recommendations of how they could be improved for the full blown study.

Some candidates did not mention key concepts at all and in the majority of cases the key concepts were incorporated into the text without any sense of engagement or genuine understanding. The majority of candidates appeared to handle Representativeness/generalisability reasonably well with a lack of representativeness being recognised as almost inevitable in a pilot but the solution however was nearly always seen in terms of merely increasing the sample size. Representativeness and generalisability were often used interchangeably and very few candidates commented upon the fact that interpretive research may not need to have these qualities in the first place. Validity and Reliability continue to be used interchangeably although stronger candidates separated them out and used them to effectively evaluate not only the device but the evidence as well.

More candidates this year seemed to think that anonymous questionnaires produced valid data because the answers were likely to be honest – well yes up to a point but the argument has to be fully developed to have any value. It is a worrying trend that the interview process was perceived by many as being flawed in terms of validity!

Only a small number of candidates went into detail about researcher influence/values and subjective interpretations and how this impacted on their research. Virtually all candidates touched on further developments with a typical solution to sample size being seen as mainly having a larger sample, although the actual increase in size was never thought through and discussed. Very rarely was there a reflection on the sampling process and whether there would be changes in the full-blown study.

The best studies were reflective in tone and there was a real sense that candidates had benefited from the research in some way. Examiners felt that these candidates were able to properly appreciate and empathise with the strengths and weaknesses of carrying out their own area of research. They clearly demonstrated that they had learnt from the experience and could fully address the pitfalls of being a sociologist.

In conclusion, it would appear that candidates are beginning to hit the right notes but many candidates are still experiencing the same common mistakes surrounding key research concepts and there is an inability for a large percentage of candidates to operationalise the concepts they intend to measure and resort instead to pure definition. Sampling continues to remain the most misunderstood and misapplied area of the research strategy. All Centres need to address these issues if candidates are to score highly in this unit next year.

Social Inequality and Difference 2539

This examination produced a full range of responses to both questions. Question two on ethnicity was significantly more popular than question one on social class. Most noticeable in this session were the number of candidates who struggled to outline Weberian explanations of the changing class structure 1(e), and those who struggled to outline Marxist explanations of ethnic disadvantage 2(e). Both of these theories are stated clearly within the specification, yet a number of candidates struggled to offer basic accounts of either. There follows a question by question report on the workings of the examination.

Question 1

(a)

This question posed few problems for candidates, other than an occasional arithmetic error. Candidates were not required to present their calculation, and those who did were awarded the marks if they correctly stated the % in 1992 and those in 2002 regardless of whether they made the accurate calculation. Only two occupational groups were accepted as valid answers; skilled manual and semi & unskilled manual.

(b)

Most candidates identified money, self respect, not wanting to be a social parasite, or confidence as reasons why people work. The differentiator came in the ability to briefly explain what they had identified. A number of candidates offered no explanation for self respect or being a social parasite. The stronger answers focused on people wanting to avoid the negative feelings of dependency as a factor influencing why people work.

(c)

Candidates were able to contextualise their answers to this question well, providing insight into factors influencing changes in job satisfaction over time. Some responses wrote about people changing jobs, problems of memory, the changing nature of work and decline in manufacturing and heavy industries also appeared. However, the question asked specifically for difficulties sociologists face when **researching** changes over time and some candidates did not relate their well explained context to the methodological difficulty. The strongest responses used concepts such as attrition, operationalisation or the problems of achieving data from which to generalise.

Teacher Tip

Encourage candidates to focus on the advantage/difficulty asked for, to offer a methodological concept in their answer and relate it to the context in the question. These 3 factors provide the basis of a strong answer.

(d)

Some candidates produced very basic responses to this question with generalised accounts of social class differences. Statements such as the working class achieve fewer GCSEs and have shorter life expectancy were frequently cited, without any reference to evidence or sources. Mid-range responses followed a similar approach but did use concepts such as; labelling, self fulfilling prophecy and the underclass. There were a number of references to writers such as Hart and Bourdieu . The strongest answers could refer to evidence from studies and could relate this to social class differences with reference to thinkers such as Hutton and the 30/30/40 thesis or the new egalitarians explored by Giddens and Diamond and their exploration of the concept of social exclusion. Candidates who did not have access to this material could still achieve full marks but needed to focus to some extent on the inequalities between the social classes rather than describing the plight of the underclass and leaving the inequalities implicit in their answer.

(e)

A number of candidates did not appear to know what a Weberian explanation of the changing class structure would be. The strongest answers focused on issues of market position, status and power differences and crucially fragmentation. Some candidates made effective use of the Hope-Goldthorpe scale or Runciman's work on social class divisions. The dual labour market theory and Weberian explanations of the underclass were also used effectively. Some candidates produced accounts of Weber's distinction between class, status and party but could not relate this to the changing class structure and were struggling to be placed beyond level 2. In evaluation those candidates who could explain Weberian ideas tended to juxtapose these against Marxist, functionalist and post modern explanations. The strongest of these answers could identify and explore to some degree the different focus of each theoretical position on the changing class structure and were able to be placed in level 4.

Question 2

(a)

This question posed very few problems. Most candidates could identify the religions of Buddhism and Hinduism as showing the greatest difference. Some candidates misread the key and confused males with females, clearly affecting their mark.

(b)

As with question 1 (a) almost all candidate could correctly identify two reasons why Muslims are disadvantaged in employment. The most popular answers were; due to needing better qualifications than their white counterparts, being over looked for promotion because they were less likely to take part in social events at work and the lack of understanding of Islam shown by many employers. Some candidates chose to focus on the social and economic disadvantages from line 1 of the item to good effect.

(c)

As this question provided a research method the responses were much more predictable than those in 1(c) . The vast majority focused on unstructured interviews providing more valid data due to being more conversational and enabling a rapport to develop between interviewer and interviewee. Conversely this method was deemed less reliable than others. A few candidates were able to contextualise their responses to the issue of researching discrimination in the workplace. Some focussed on the sensitive nature of the topic and explored the context that way, would respondents feel at ease providing this information if they risked losing their job? Others focused well on interviewer effect and respondents giving socially desirable answers depending on the social characteristics of the interviewer and the gender/ethnic make up of the work place. This question produced a similar pattern of marks to 1 (c) but were achieved less through the context and more through the methodological route.

(d)

This question differentiated well, with the key word being discrimination. Most candidates could outline some evidence to show ethnic disadvantage in the contemporary UK; however only the strongest answers focussed explicitly on discrimination. Studies by Brown and Gay appeared and Jenkins more recent work on workplace discrimination was used well. The 'ethnic penalty' appeared frequently. There was some excellent references to work in crime and deviance focusing on institutional racism, the MacPherson Report and canteen culture in the police force. In education candidates who focused on discrimination through the hidden and formal curriculum with reference to sociologists such as Cecile Wright or Mac an Ghail produced stronger answers than those citing differential achievement at GCSE. Weakest responses focused on ethnic disadvantage without reference to any evidence and were placed in level 1.

Teacher Tip

Work through the past 2539 papers (d) question and focus on the key word in the question. Is it asking about inequality between groups, in which case the answer needs to have a comparable element? Is it asking about racism? Is it asking about disadvantage or discrimination?

There were a larger number of responses than usual which tried to evaluate the evidence cited, this may suggest a lack of familiarity with the assessment objectives from some centres or it may be that the nature of the topic encouraged evaluative thinking. These candidates were not penalised but could not be rewarded evaluation marks.

(e)

A surprising number of candidates did not know what Marxist explanations of ethnic disadvantage were; some candidates missed the whole question out while others wrote lengthy accounts of ethnic disadvantage without referring to Marxist explanations at all. The majority of candidates offered a basic account of Marxist theory with concepts such as exploitation, oppression and the reserve army of labour. Most candidates could then place some ethnic groups within the reserve army and offered evaluation through the exploration of a rising middle class, the failure of the proletarian revolution to materialise and the problems of treating minority ethnic groups homogenous. The strongest answers developed the Marxist explanations and offered concepts such as scapegoating, divide and rule and legitimization. Only the most able candidates were able to differentiate traditional and neo Marxist explanations. These answers were focusing on economic and cultural factors and using writers such as Miles and Gilroy to good effect. Candidates who clearly distinguished different Marxist explanations had more scope for evaluation as they could develop the nuances with Marxism. The majority of candidates evaluated through juxtaposition with Weberian, functionalist and post modern explanations.

Teacher Tip

Encourage candidates to approach (e) questions theoretically, even if the question does not provide a theory for them.

**Advanced GCE (Sociology) (3878/7878)
June 2007 Assessment Series**

Unit Threshold Marks

Unit		Maximum Mark	a	b	c	d	e	u
2532	Raw	60	44	40	36	32	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2533	Raw	90	64	56	48	41	34	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0
2534	Raw	60	44	40	36	32	28	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2535	Raw	90	74	67	60	53	46	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2536	Raw	60	43	38	33	29	25	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2537	Raw	60	46	41	37	33	29	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2538	Raw	60	49	43	37	32	27	0
	UMS	90	72	63	54	45	36	0
2539	Raw	90	64	57	50	43	36	0
	UMS	120	96	84	72	60	48	0

Specification Aggregation Results

Overall threshold marks in UMS (i.e. after conversion of raw marks to uniform marks)

	Maximum Mark	A	B	C	D	E	U
3878	300	240	210	180	150	120	0
7878	600	480	420	360	300	240	0

The cumulative percentage of candidates awarded each grade was as follows:

	A	B	C	D	E	U	Total Number of Candidates
3878	18.6	36.7	58.6	76.9	90.2	100	7276
7878	17.7	41.0	66.8	87.2	97.3	100	5061

12337 candidates aggregated this series

For a description of how UMS marks are calculated see;
http://www.ocr.org.uk/exam_system/understand_ums.html

Statistics are correct at the time of publication

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