GCE

Sociology

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

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Advanced GCE Sociology (H581)

Advanced Subsidiary GCE Sociology (H181)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Overview

H181

On both of the AS units, there has been a wide range of candidate performance. On the whole, candidates are able to demonstrate an understanding of the assessment objectives and question demands. The AS sociology specification has been assessed a number of times now and it is clear that centres are becoming increasingly familiar with the structure and assessment requirements of each unit. There are very few rubric errors made by candidates which suggests that centres and teachers are effectively preparing students for the specific requirements of the examination papers. Overall there continues to be a large variation in the performance of candidates; those who attained high marks were able to demonstrate that they understood, interpreted and evaluated sociological evidence with clarity and accuracy, using a range of sociological knowledge in the form of theories, studies, concepts and contemporary examples. On the other hand, low achieving candidates had a very basic understanding of sociological evidence, tending to rely instead on anecdotal and asociological material. The term 'sociological evidence' refers to concepts, studies, data, theories, and contemporary examples and candidates are encouraged to use a range of these in order to demonstrate they have a wide-ranging knowledge and understanding. However, it should be noted that candidates who rely only on contemporary examples will not score highly because, on their own, contemporary examples are not good sociology. The A grade and the E grade are set at very similar levels for both the AS units, demonstrating that candidates respond to both units in a similar way. Certainly, the detailed reports included in this document suggest that, across both examination papers, candidates seem to struggle most with the skill of interpretation and application. This skill is often about responding to the specific question or context, and given that candidates cannot prepare themselves for the exact nature of the questions, this is a skill area which is challenging. Candidates need to be encouraged to respond to the exact question on the examination paper and not just to offer a rehearsed answer to question which has been pre-prepared.

H581

The comments from the principal examiners on the two A2 units show that candidates are becoming increasingly familiar with the structure of these examinations. The vast majority of candidates answered all questions, or all question parts and the impression was that they were generally well prepared for these examinations. The A2 examination papers are very different to each other: G673 requires two unstructured essay questions on one or more substantive topic areas; G674 is a structured examination paper, which a piece of source material and questions which combine sociological research methods with social inequality and difference. They are, however, weighted equally at 50 per cent each of the A2 course. As with the AS examinations, there was a wide range of candidate performance and a clear difference between the high attaining and low attaining candidates. The former demonstrated a wide range of knowledge and understanding, using different types of evidence and were able to critically analyse and evaluate the evidence, whereas the latter often relied on anecdotal evidence which was accepted uncritically.

There follows a report on each of the units from this session, with some suggested teaching tips for teachers, focusing particularly on the skills needed to achieve success in this specification. Teachers are encouraged to read the relevant sections and to keep an eye on the OCR website for details of on-line training materials including feedback and preparation for future summer examinations.

G671 Exploring Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments

This session, once again, saw a wide range of candidate performance, although overall, candidate performance saw a slight dip, particularly for questions (1), (2) and (3). It is, however, pleasing to note that increasing numbers of candidates are responding accurately to the question stem instructions. There were very few rubric errors and the vast majority of candidates attempted to answer all four questions which indicate that the questions were clear and accessible to all. The majority of candidates allocated their time appropriately, recognising, for example, that since question 4 has half the marks for the exam paper, they should be spending half the time (45 minutes) answering this question. Compared to previous sessions, it was noticeable that a large number of candidates struggled to answer questions (1) (2) and (3) in an accurate, sociological way and could have shown greater knowledge and understanding of sociological evidence about global culture, class identities and the nature/nurture debate. There is a more detailed commentary on these questions in the section below.

It may be useful to, once again, clarify the role and purpose of the pre-release material. The pre-release material is specifically related to question (4) on the examination paper as this question contains the instruction "using the pre-release material…". The focus of question (4) is always on sociological methods and the research process and the aim of this question is to enable students to discuss methodological issues in the context of a piece of contemporary research focused on culture and/or identity and/or socialisation (the pre-release material). The other three questions on the examination paper aim to test candidates on the specification content from this unit which is outlined clearly and explicitly under seven key issues in the specification content. That is not to say, however, that the pre-release material can *only* be used for question (4). As the instructions on the front of the examination paper state*: "You may interpret and apply the pre-release material as well as your own sociological knowledge for any question, wherever it is relevant and appropriate".* This is because the pre-release material is based around research into culture, socialisation and identity which means that any other questions (1-3) asking students to write about these areas may wish to draw upon the pre-release as a piece of sociological evidence. It may happen, as it did this session, that the pre-release material could be referred to in questions 1 and question 3: For question 1, candidates could make references to the link between declining social class identities and global culture; and question 3 – nurturing into class or other social identities. Of course, candidates who only rely on the pre-release material as their only source of evidence are not going to score highly as they will fail to display a 'wide range' of knowledge and understanding which is required for the top band. In other sessions, there may not be so many links to the pre-release material in questions 1, 2 or 3 and students will need to be able to draw on a range of sociological evidence.

> *Teachers' tip:*
> *Keep copies of previous pre-release studies, not just to use as mock examination practice, but also as a bank of resources to add to the range of evidence students could draw upon. This can also be cross referenced with methods, so that methods in taught "in context" throughout the course, rather than as a discrete unit.*

With every question, in order to achieve marks in the highest mark band, candidates need to include a range of sociological evidence and to discuss these with some depth. A large number of responses, particularly for questions (2) and (3) could have included greater range and depth of sociological evidence. "Evidence" can include studies, theories, concepts and contemporary examples, although it should be noted that responses which rely heavily on contemporary examples will not score very highly as, on their own, contemporary examples are not good

sociology. It is also worth noting that there is a difference between contemporary examples and anecdote. Contemporary examples mean events in society that can inform sociology but may not have been formally researched or studied; or events that are happening as sociologists are carrying out their research. For example, some candidates used the examples of feral children for question 3. Anecdotal evidence, on the other hand, is bordering on 'common sense' knowledge and this is not rewarded in the examination; for example, by claiming that "working class parents don't socialise their children as well as middle class parents". Responses which were wide-ranging in their use of sociological studies, in questions (2) and (3) tended to score highly and there are some examples of good practice in specific individual question section below.

Most candidates allocated the use of time effectively, spending the longest on question 4 which is worth just over half marks of the whole paper. There is some evidence that question (4) responses have improved in quality since the start of this new unit. However, some candidates did experience timing issues; most commonly by spending too much time on question 1 which should be allocated approximately five minutes, or by spending too long on question 4 at the expense of the other three questions. Some candidates spent far too long on question 2, sometimes writing up to 2 sides for a question which should be answered in approximately 15 minutes. There is some evidence that where candidates choose to answer question 4 first, they often spend too long on this and then run out of time for questions 1, 2 or 3. Candidates who had been prepared well, even those who were clearly of weaker ability, managed to pick up marks on all questions, by knowing the assessment requirements and using sociological evidence appropriately. However, some centres did not seem to have adequately prepared their candidates either by having very little understanding of the role of the pre-release material, for example, by copying out large chunks of the findings or armed with very little sociological knowledge for questions 1, 2 and 3.

On the whole there was a clear difference between the high and low achieving candidates. At the top end, there was a range of sociological evidence contained in answers to all of the questions. Such responses included relevant and detailed explanations including sociological studies, concepts and theories where appropriate. The lower achieving candidates were often unable to provide sociological knowledge and understanding and their answers became very anecdotal and common sense like. Candidates must be encouraged to back up their answers with sociological evidence; be it concepts, studies, relevant contemporary examples or theory. For example, in answers to question (2), candidates who discussed ways of being socialised into class identities, concepts and theories scored more highly than those who wrote about, for example, working class families eating dinner off their laps in front of the television.

In terms of assessment objectives, Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) remains the strongest area; good candidates were able to offer a whole range of sociological knowledge, mainly in the form of concepts and studies, but sometimes making relevant use of contemporary examples and theory. AO2a (Interpretation and analysis) seemed to be the most difficult skill area for candidates; whilst many have been trained to evaluate evidence and arguments, they are less successful at interpreting knowledge and applying it to the specific question or context. For example, in question 3, candidates were able to offer a range of studies relating to socialisation, such as McRobbie, Oakley, Modood, but they failed to focus explicitly on how these related to the 'nurture' argument, which was the focus of the question. It is also worth pointing out that a significant number of students are not offering any evaluation for question 3, which is worth 4 marks and candidates must be reminded that there is also an evaluative element to this question.

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

Comments on Individual Questions

1   In general this question was not answered very well and many candidates were unable to express a core understanding of the concept 'global culture' as being about cultural sameness across the world. Many weak responses did nothing more than reiterate the concept in the question; for example, by stating that "global culture is culture which has spread globally". Other weaker answers copied out the line from the pre-release material which contained the concept of global culture. These types of responses were awarded very few marks. Other weak responses, confused global culture with cultural diversity or popular culture. Many candidates offered examples of global culture but were often limited to a list of products/brands which could be found across the globe, such as Coca-Cola and McDonalds. Stronger responses were able to cite an accurate definition, often expanding on this with links to McLuhan's notion of the 'global village' and/or Giddens' discussion of aspects of globalisation. This was often supported by at least 2 distinctive examples, explained in terms of how they illustrated the concept of 'global culture'. There are some candidates who are spending too long on this question and writing a one whole page answer. This obviously has implications for later questions and candidates should be reminded that they should spend approximately 5 minutes only on this question. At the other end of the scale, some candidates chose not to answer this question at all and therefore limiting their overall marks.

Teaching tip: Question 1 is always a concept question taken from the specification content. Ensure that your students have detailed definitions and examples for each one. Encourage students to keep a glossary with all of these key terms.

2   This question was not very well answered on the whole and many candidates struggled to include the required level of depth. Commonly, responses cited two ways in which individuals are socialised into their class identities, for example, through the family and education. However, most responses then offered a brief explanation with some common-sense examples or generalised concepts and therefore could not achieve more than level 2. As stated earlier, those that purely relied on contemporary examples tended not to be able to demonstrate enough breadth or depth of knowledge to reach the higher mark bands. For example, many responses gave answers such as "working class families eat their dinners in front of the tv", without supporting this with any evidence. Weaker responses were confused and/or anecdotal, showing no real understanding of socialisation into class identities. Another characteristic of weaker answers was that potentially relevant studies were used, but not focused on class; for example some candidates used Willis, but the explanation was focused on masculinity, rather than social class. The best responses used sociological concepts such as immediate gratification, cultural and economic capital and/or studies, such as Willis, Reay, Medhurst.

3   This question was not well answered on the whole. The best answers contained a wide range of evidence and a real focus on the role of socialisation in relation to the idea of 'nurturing' which used research on identities, such as Oakley's work on socialisation into gender identities, showing that individuals are nurtured into their gender identities. Other strong responses were able to offer detailed knowledge and understanding of feral children to illustrate the nature/nurture debate. There were, however, a large number of weak answers to this question which failed to include any real sociological evidence or interpreted 'nurturing' to be about the caring, expressive female role. Many answers did offer potentially relevant studies, such as McRobbie, and Willis but fell down in terms of Interpretation and Application marks by failing to make their answers relevant to the

question, specifically in term of how these studies illustrate the nature/nurture debate. There were a number of responses which seemed very confused by the concepts 'nature' and 'nurture' and were unable to differentiate the two. Theory was often applied inaccurately in this question; by, for example, stating that Marxists agree with the nature side of the debate. Postmodernism appeared in many answers, and often included as evaluation but it was confused on the whole.

One feature of stronger responses was the presence of explicit evaluation of the question. The most common approach was to note biological explanations (the nature side of the debate). Stronger answers were able to include some evidence, such as the socio-biologists Tiger and Fox, or Parsons view that gender characteristics are biological. However, candidates need to be reminded that their evaluation needs to contain sociological evidence; it is not enough to simply state that the nature side of the debate disagrees. Where evaluation was weaker, candidates only evaluated in an implicit and assertive way by, for example, just stating the nurture is undoubtedly the most important influence on identities. Some candidates spend far too much time evaluating the view in the question whilst there are also a significant number of candidates who don't offer evaluation points at all and therefore lose four potential marks. Candidates need to be reminded that this question will always start with the instruction to "*explain and briefly evaluate*".

4   There was, once again, a wide range of responses to this question. The vast majority of candidates knew how to define quantitative methods, linking them with positivism and the methods in the pre-release of structured interviews and self-completion questionnaires. Most candidates were able to discuss issues surrounding the wider research process, such as sampling, access and ethics. A key differentiator in marking this question was candidates' use of the key concepts as highlighted in the specification - validity, reliability, representativeness and generalisability. Some weaker responses did not explicitly use these concepts and therefore achieved marks at the bottom of level 2. Others did attempt to use the concepts but were very confused, partial or undeveloped. To reach level 3 of the mark scheme, and beyond, for both AO1 and AO2b, responses needed to address the key concepts in an accurate and wide-ranging way. Even where candidates correctly discussed the key concepts, they were often not developed enough in explanation to reach level 4. For example, responses which state that the sample was large and therefore representative were not fully demonstrating a core understanding of the concept 'representativeness'. There were a significant number of responses which focused on mixed methods and/or spent a long time discussing the unstructured interviews part of the research. Such responses were irrelevant as the question was specifically focused on quantitative data. Centres need to be reminded that it is not recommended practice to "question spot" for this question. Candidates need to be taught the pre-release in a detailed and analytical way, which will enable them to answer any potential question in the examination.

The high achieving responses tended to systematically explain the method, offering a range of strengths and weaknesses and including key concepts. Another characteristic of strong responses was the discussion of aspects of the wider research process, for example, sampling, access, ethics and the impact of these. Many candidates made good use of theory in their responses, linking Heath's research design to the positivist tradition and offering an interpretivist critique. Strong responses recognised the quantitative nature of the findings and used these to illustrate strengths/weaknesses of the method. Such responses tended to be conceptually strong, referring to issues surrounding social desirability, rapport, interviewer effects, Verstehen. Teachers need to ensure that they spend some time teaching the content of the pre-release material in preparation for the exam. One real problem is in the number of candidates who waste time copying out the pre-release material and describing the findings of the study, once again, it should be reminded that this is stimulus material, not source material. The philosophy behind the pre-

release material is to give candidates the opportunity to look at some real research in depth but the exam question will always require them to go wider than this; to address research issues, methods, process and concepts and using the pre-release as an illustrative example.

It must also be noted that twelve marks are awarded for AO2a and in this question it is about how well the candidate contextualises their responses. The majority of students offered very generalised answers or just threw in the words 'social class' or 'identity' or had very inaccurate ideas about social class identity (such as "it's better to use interviews rather than questionnaires with the working class as most of them cannot read and write"). To score highly in this skill area, candidates need to be asking themselves "What is the problem/advantage of using this method for studying THIS particular group (working and middle class) on THIS particular topic (identity). Candidates need to be encouraged to highlight the actual question on the question paper, particularly where it states "to research....". Stronger responses in this area offered some very thoughtful comments about, for example, how quantitative methods were fit for purpose as one of the aims was to investigate trends - how social class identity has changed over time; exclusion of travellers/homeless from the sample which may have made it less representative. Candidates who did score more highly on this skill engaged much more fully with the context.

The findings were included in the pre-release material to enable candidates to gain an understanding of the value of this research and to discuss the idea of the method being 'fit for purpose'. There were some strong responses which linked the findings into the research methodology; for example by recognising the limitations of quantitative data in terms of it not offering explanation/meaning. Some centres had trained candidates to make reference to other research which had either used a similar methodology or which was focused on a similar topic. This was rewarded where they were being used to support or criticise a methodological issue but centres need to advise students not to spend time describing the findings of other studies as this is a question about methods.

G672 Topics in Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments

The Family continues to be by far the most popular option, followed by Youth and Religion. There were very few scripts submitted for the Health option. An overwhelming majority of candidates chose to answer both Family questions and only a small number of candidates chose questions from more than one option. Generally candidates used their time appropriately, producing at least three quarters of a page of the answer booklet for part (a) and at least three pages for part (b). Only a few appeared to run out of time on the second part (b) question. Very few candidates answered either too many questions or only one question. Overall, candidates fulfilled the requirements in terms of quality of written communication, producing work written in continuous prose and with clarity of expression.

Most candidates demonstrated sociological knowledge and understanding by referring to theories, studies, concepts and relevant contemporary evidence. Some candidates needed to explain ideas more fully to show the extent of their knowledge and understanding and apply evidence in support of the point being made. The best answers were both wide-ranging and detailed and showed a broad and in-depth knowledge and understanding of the topic. Some responses were brief and needed a wider focus on different aspects of the topic. Others covered a range of issues but needed greater depth or development of evidence to achieve higher marks.

Part (a) Questions

Most candidates seemed to understand what was required by the instruction 'identify and explain', though many responses in the 'good' knowledge and understanding mark band, level 3, did not achieve level 4 because their answers were underdeveloped. An effective approach to achieve Level 4 is to identify two broad reasons/ways/factors etc. that can be developed in a number of ways within the answer e.g. citing 'effects of legislation' rather than a specific Act allows the candidate to include a wider range, similarly, 'changing norms and values' as a broad point gives scope for a variety of issues to be included within this. Many candidates correctly identified two points but some needed to be clearer in explicitly stating the point. A minority of candidates covered more than two points and a significant number of candidates did not clearly identify the two points they had chosen to address leaving this implicit in their answer.

Candidates can improve their marks by making sure that they:

- Carefully select the two points that can be best supported with evidence.

- Consider if they can identify two broad points that can be developed in a number of ways within the answer.

- Fully explain the two identified points with relevant sociological theories, studies, concepts and/or contemporary evidence to develop their answer.

- Choose two points that don't overlap.

- Avoid lengthy and unnecessary introductions to part (a) answers before actually proceeding to identify and explain the two points.

- Include only material that is required e.g. criticisms are not needed in part (a) questions as there are no marks for evaluation.

> **Teachers' Tip for part (a) questions** - Use a separate paragraph for each of the two points to be identified and explained. An effective format to start the first paragraph is, for example, 'One way in which...' The second paragraph can then begin with 'A second way in which...' Candidates should be encouraged to write about ¾ of a page for a part (a) answer.

Part (b) Questions

Most candidates attempted to show knowledge of sociological concepts, theories and research in answering questions. Perspectives-based answers on the lines of 'functionalists would argue x while Marxists would argue y' should offer evidence to illustrate/support these arguments, for example, in the form of a study, example and/or statistical data. Most candidates answered questions in a sociological rather than purely common sense manner and even the less developed responses usually included some references to sociological concepts, studies and/or theories. Most candidates were aware of the need to include alternative perspectives and arguments as part of their evaluation. In some cases, points of evaluation were presented without supporting evidence to develop the point. Some candidates, who juxtaposed different views, needed to explicitly evaluate evidence and arguments and use evaluative language to assist this process. Some candidates show confusion in their understanding of some theories, for example, Marxism where they write about Marxists supporting the exploitation of the proletariat. This confusion is a recurring theme each session.

Candidates can improve their marks by making sure that they:

- Include sufficient sociological evidence to demonstrate wide and detailed knowledge and understanding. The best responses made accurate use of a range of sociological theories, concepts and/or studies.

- Carefully select the material to be included to make sure that it is relevant and used in such a way that it supports or refutes an argument being made and avoid simply listing evidence.

- Address different sides of the argument and support with evidence.

- Offer critical comments about evidence, weigh up arguments and draw a reasoned conclusion.

- Write an answer that covers at least 3 pages of the booklet.

> **Teachers' Tip on Knowledge and Understanding** - To achieve the highest marks in the skill of knowledge and understanding candidates need to show a detailed understanding and so must learn as much about the evidence they are using as they can to be able to write about it in an informed way. Teachers should aim to select teaching material that will best facilitate this process and use evidence that gives depth and detail.

The skill of interpretation and application is challenging to some candidates who tend to list evidence without applying it to the question.

> **Teachers' Tip on Interpretation and Application**- To achieve the highest marks in the skill of interpretation and application candidates need to select and apply different types of data including theories, concepts and/or contemporary evidence on various sides of the argument. Candidates should aim to identify the most relevant data and then show how this relates to the question, highlighting patterns and trends, supported with evidence where appropriate. Applying sociological material to the question can be enhanced by including phrases that explicitly use the wording of the question e.g. 'This study shows that radical feminists view relationships in the family as oppressive to women'.

Many candidates demonstrate very good skills in analysis and evaluation. Others need to avoid simply juxtaposing views by analysing arguments so that they can then evaluate the strengths and weaknesses. Analysis involves breaking down an argument to gain a clearer understanding. This is an essential stage in the evaluation process. A sustained evaluation is needed to achieve the best marks and this involves candidates using an evaluative tone from their introductory paragraph onwards so that evaluation is evident throughout their answer.

Teachers' Tip on Analysis and Evaluation – A sustained evaluative approach can be demonstrated by candidates writing an evaluative introduction, making some pertinent evaluative points about studies, theories and ideas used, and summarising the different views in relation to the question. Candidates could be encouraged to use key evaluative terms that signal that they are evaluating the evidence or the argument at a given point e.g. 'however', 'on the other hand', 'conversely', 'on the contrary', 'in contrast', 'this evidence can be criticised because...'

Comments on Individual Questions

1(a) Most candidates were able to identify relevant reasons but a significant minority of candidates mis-read the question as relating to single-parent families. Candidates considered a range of possible reasons including the changing role of women, changing social attitudes, increased divorce, changes in life expectancy and people delaying marriage. Those who selected two broad reasons tended to be able to demonstrate wide and detailed knowledge and understanding. However, many answers were rather under-developed with candidates only giving a relatively brief explanation once they had identified their reasons. The best answers supported their points with sociological studies, statistics or other evidence and used sociological concepts such as individualism, postmodernism, secularisation and ageing population.

(b) Most candidates located the view within functionalism. Less developed responses tended to briefly list Murdock and/or Parsons' functions without explaining these. Better answers explained both and applied them effectively to the question. Some also discussed the notion of 'fit' and the idea of complementary instrumental and expressive roles, showing both wide and detailed knowledge and understanding of functionalist views. Some candidates also considered New Right ideas with the most sophisticated responses able to point out that, although New Right thinkers approved of the nuclear family, they saw families such as lone parents as more dysfunctional for society. When evaluating, candidates considered a range of views including Marxism and different types of feminism. Weaker answers tended to simply juxtapose these perspectives while the best used them to criticise the notion of positive functions, therefore ensuring that evaluation addressed the question. A significant group of candidates mis-applied Marxist theories, arguing that as the family helped to support capitalism Marxists saw it as performing positive functions. Some candidates referred to postmodernist ideas but often seemed uncertain as to how to apply these to the question. In some cases this was done effectively e.g. by arguing that the freedom and choice offered by contemporary families was a positive function and some suggesting that in postmodernity diverse families no longer have a specific function.

2(a) Although few candidates produced very good answers on this question, most succeeded in identifying two ways in which families were diverse. A range of aspects were discussed including class, ethnicity/culture, sexuality and forms of structural diversity such as lone parent, reconstituted and beanpole families. While many candidates were able to identify forms of diversity, many were less successful in fully explaining how these represented aspects of diversity, for example some candidates focused more on reasons for diversity. Some very good answers were seen on sexual diversity, for example pointing to the chosen nature of many same-sex families and to evidence of greater equality in roles

typically drawing on the work of writers such as Dunne and Weeks. Very good answers were also seen on ethnic diversity with the best answers focusing on a range of ethnic groups and looking at different aspects such as patterns of marriage and cohabitation, gender roles and relationships with extended kin with references to Bose, Berthoud and others. Answers on class diversity were often quite detailed but tended to focus on class differences in education and leisure activities rather than diversity in families.

(b)   This question produced a range of approaches and levels of response. Most candidates identified the view as being supported by feminists with more basic answers looking at a narrower range of evidence of gender inequalities in relationships. Better answers tended to distinguish different feminist approaches and looked at a range of aspects such as domestic labour, emotion work, decision making and domestic violence. Some very good answers widened their scope to consider other relationships e.g. between parents and children with reference to debates about toxic childhood versus child-centred families and between adult generations e.g. considering beanpole families and the sandwich generation. Some candidates produced rather one sided answers but most were able to consider some points in evaluation, for example, evidence of greater symmetry in families, the greater involvement of fathers in parenting (Dermott). Some candidates also drew on functionalist arguments that conjugal roles were different but complementary and postmodernist ideas that relationships were now more chosen and negotiated. A minority of candidates seemed to reverse the view in the question, starting by outlining evidence that relationships were equal and then evaluating this meaning that otherwise knowledgeable answers scored less well than they might have done on AO2 skills.

3(a)   There were few responses seen to this question. The best answers showed a clear understanding of two distinct ways that mental illness may be related to ethnicity with the two most commonly used being labelling by medical professionals and inequalities related to structural factors. Some candidates struggled to differentiate two clearly distinct ways and produced overlapping points typically related to stereotyping by medical professionals. Most answers were good but under-developed in their explanation. Answers that reached the top mark band typically identified two distinct ways using concepts and then supported these points with relevant studies and statistical evidence.

(b)   There was a range of levels of response to this question. Some narrower answers outlined one or two areas related to feminist views such as women in subordinate roles in the medical profession and labelling of female patients but they did not develop the points with evidence. Better responses covered a wider range, typically also discussing medicalization and patriarchal control. Some weaker responses offered little in the way of evaluation, for example, briefly making the point that there were more women doctors now but not supporting this with evidence. Some other unbalanced answers showed stronger knowledge of counter views and went through these in detail without engaging with the debate in the question. The best answers outlined feminist views covering a range of issues and evaluated these with counterviews related to the point/question. Such answers typically also drew on contemporary evidence to show change and/or evidence that men were a disadvantaged group in relation to health care.

4(a)   Most candidates were able to identify two reasons for the increased use of alternative medicine. A number of candidates cited religious or philosophical standpoint as a reason but did not explain how this led to an increase in the use of alternative medicine. Better answers tended to identify a broad point such as disaffection with orthodox medicine and explain this with reference to problems with the NHS such as waiting lists, inability to solve problems related to chronic conditions and concepts such as clinical iatrogenesis. A popular second point was postmodern outlook and the impact of greater individualism leading to diversity and choice. This approach enabled candidates to demonstrate wide and detailed knowledge and understanding.

(b) There was a broad range of responses to this question with some candidates showing a clear understanding of cultural explanations and others that were vague or confused. Some responses were very brief in their consideration of cultural factors and produced unbalanced answers that were much stronger on alternative explanations. There were some answers that understood the question but did not support points with evidence other than to state that some groups had healthier lifestyles than others and ate better food/took more exercise. Better answers tended to address cultural differences related to gender, ethnicity and social class and countered these with relevant alternative views. Some more sophisticated answers questioned cultural explanations, arguing that often, what were seen as cultural choices, were shaped by structural factors such as poverty. A number of candidates used artefact explanations in evaluation with varying degrees of success depending on the clarity of their understanding of this view.

5(a) Most candidates were able to identify two functions of religion. Many candidates opted to discuss functionalist notions of providing social solidarity and collective consciousness along with Marxist interpretations of religion acting as an opiate or a form of social control. Answers were differentiated in terms of how well these ideas were developed. Underdeveloped answers often used relevant concepts but did little to explain or develop these. The best answers used examples and/or evidence to illustrate the functions of religion e.g. pointing to ways in which collective worship helped to create collective consciousness. Few candidates developed both functions fully but a number were able to reach the bottom of level 4.

(b) A variety of approaches were seen on this question. Many candidates located the view within feminism and considered different feminist views relating to aspects of patriarchy in religion. The best answers tended to consider studies such as De Beauvoir and El Saadawi together with a range of other factors. Candidates also discussed differences in the level of religiosity between males and females, sometimes considering several explanations as to why women appeared to be more religious than men. A few candidates referred to the role of women in new religious movements and new age movements. Many candidates found it difficult to evaluate in much depth but better answers were able to point to ways in which women had achieved greater equality in some religions and some candidates referred to Watson's work on veiling in Islam. Some candidates also pointed to other factors which were important in religiosity such as class, ethnicity and age.

6(a) There was a range of responses to this question but many candidates struggled to produce very good answers. Weaker responses contained rather confused understanding of fundamentalism. However, most candidates were able to identify relevant characteristics including literal interpretation of texts, opposition to modernity, demanding a high degree of commitment and claiming a monopoly of truth. Many answers were quite under-developed in their explanation with better responses showing detailed knowledge and using relevant concepts and examples to illustrate characteristics.

(b) There were few very good answers to this question. Many candidates appeared to be trying to press prepared answers on the secularisation debate more generally, into service in answering this question. Some seemed to have only basic or limited knowledge of New Religious Movements. Some candidates spent some time explaining Wallis's typology of NRMs but struggled to link this to the question. Better answers tended to refer to studies such as Heelas and Woodhead and Stark and Bainbridge to show how NRMs might be linked to religious revival. In evaluation, most candidates again tended to draw on more general secularisation arguments e.g. Wilson and Bruce but a few candidates were able to point to the relatively low membership and influence of NRMs in society.

7(a) Most candidates had some understanding of the concept of moral panic, although a number did not explicitly identify characteristics. Many candidates referred to examples of moral panics but these were sometimes only loosely linked to the characteristics identified. Examples cited included Mods and Rockers (Cohen), Hoodies (Fawbert), hippy marihuana

smokers (Young), knife crime and acid house/raves. Some less developed answers focussed on characteristics such as media exaggeration and labelling without fully explaining how these were part of a moral panic. The best answers typically referred to at least two examples of moral panics and went beyond notions of labelling to consider aspects of societal reaction in more depth, such as strengthening of social controls and heightened fear together with consequences for groups identified as folk devils such as deviance amplification.

(b) Answers to this question were well differentiated. A few candidates were confused or simply lacked knowledge of Marxist views. However, most candidates had at least some basic knowledge, typically centred on notions of resistance, and sometimes linked to descriptions of one or more youth subcultures. Better answers typically built their knowledge around a series of key Marxist concepts such as social class, resistance, magical solutions, bricolage and/or incorporation. Answers were differentiated in terms of the degree of sophistication in understanding of these concepts and the extent to which they were able to apply relevant studies (e.g. Cohen, Hall and Jefferson, Hebdige and Brake) and empirical examples (e.g. Skinheads, Teddy Boys, Mods and Punks). Most candidates evaluated by considering one or more alternative theory including functionalism, feminism and/or postmodernism. More basic evaluations tended to juxtapose such approaches or only consider one or two explicit criticisms with little development. Better answers were able to highlight specific criticisms of Marxist approaches and to back them up with relevant studies and evidence e.g. relating to Marxists ignoring females and the irrelevance of the notion of resistance to contemporary neo-tribes. In a number of cases candidates' knowledge of Marxism was very narrow and much of the answer was taken up by discussion of alternative theories.

8(a) A significant number of candidates produced irrelevant or inaccurate responses to this question with some candidates citing explanations which were not functionalist in their answers such as labelling theory and resistance to capitalism. Better answers showed accurate understanding of functionalist explanations but some candidates focused on broader functionalist approaches to youth such as Eisenstadt and Parsons and were less successful in linking these to youth deviance specifically. The best answers tended to look at explanations such as Merton's strain theory, Cloward and Ohlin's opportunity structures, Cohen and status frustration and Miller's focal concerns. While many candidates were familiar with relevant concepts and/or studies, few seemed to be able to explain these in sufficient depth to achieve full marks.

(b) Answers to this question were widely differentiated. More basic responses typically focused on just one or two aspects such as subject choice and anti-school behaviour. Better answers were more wide-ranging, for example, including discussion of differences in teacher labelling and interaction with pupils, lad/ladette cultures and the hidden curriculum. Some very good answers were seen which were able to cite a range of relevant studies and apply concepts well. Evaluation was often less well developed than knowledge on this question with many candidates simply juxtaposing material on class and ethnicity. Better answers explicitly tried to evaluate the relative importance of these factors and also considered the extent to which gender differences had narrowed or disappeared e.g. by reference to the work of Sharpe, Jackson and others and changes in education policy e.g. GIST and the National Curriculum. Surprisingly few candidates seemed able to consider how gender, class and ethnicity might interact together e.g. many candidates cited the work of Sewell as evidence of the importance of ethnicity or Willis on class without considering the significance of masculinity in these studies.

G673 Power and Control

General Comments

Many candidates displayed a wide-ranging knowledge and understanding of concepts and studies, showing that they had obviously prepared well for the examination and that their grasp of sociological theories was very good. A good selection of studies was seen across all questions, and it was pleasing to see many candidates successfully utilising very recent examples to supplement their answers and fully demonstrate their understanding.

The range of theories understood by most candidates was very good, with the strongest being able to make links between them, for example, links between different right wing views, or links between different aspects of Marxism.

Unfortunately, as in previous sessions, where the focus of the question was on one theory, many candidates spent too much time discussing opposing theories, without explicitly using these to evaluate the view in the question. The stronger candidates were able to create a discussion between these other theories and the view in the question and maintain their focus throughout, but weaker responses did not mention the theory in the question after the first couple of paragraphs until the conclusion.

The biggest factors in denying some candidates access to the highest levels was lack of depth and/or lack of accuracy. A very superficial understanding of Marxism (Question 4) or interactionism (Question1) were common examples of this, with assertive claims about what 'they' think, often not attributed to specific theorists, or sometimes wrongly attributed.

There was also a tendency to drift away from the question set which was commonly demonstrated. For example, in question 3, in relation to victims of crime, where candidates often discussed offenders instead, or question 6 in relation to middle class advantage, where many candidates did not address this aspect of the question at all. Similarly in question 9, the view in the question about the change in representations was often not addressed. This affected the Interpretation and Application mark, but also the mark for Knowledge and Understanding, since it lacked relevance in many cases. As previously suggested, candidates should be encouraged to consider the material they have included in terms of how it relates to the question set, and constantly try to link back to the question. There were examples of candidates who had clearly pre-prepared answers and ploughed on regardless, though the question set was not the same as the one they were expecting. So for example, in the education option, question 4 was continually related to the economy, and question 6 was related to diversity and choice. These reflect previous questions set, and some candidates seemed unable or unwilling to adapt their knowledge to answer the specific questions in this paper.

Evaluation and Analysis was again demonstrated strongly, with more and more candidates managing to link ideas together and show support or criticism within their arguments. However, once again, only the strongest candidates sustained this into a critical commentary. Many candidates still leave evaluation until the end, creating a list of underdeveloped points, which could have gained more credit if formed into a sustained discussion. The juxtaposition of opposing theories with no evaluative link was still demonstrated by some candidates. Others spent a lot of time evaluating opposing views, which, due to lack of focus on the question at hand, gained very little credit.

There was a tendency for some candidates to spend overly long on introductions and conclusions, which added little or nothing to the overall essay, and were thus a waste of their time. Introductions which define crime and deviance for example, or discuss a theory in a very general or even historical way, without focussing on the question or even the topic, gain little

credit and should not be encouraged. Similarly, conclusions, sometimes lengthy, which merely re-hash all the arguments presented in the essay itself, would be better avoided, since they gain no additional credit.

There were very few rubric errors this session, and the vast majority of candidates answered two questions from within the same option.

Comments on Specific Questions

CRIME & DEVIANCE: This was by far the most popular option, though question 3 was less popular than the other two questions.

1 Candidates were generally well prepared and had good knowledge of interactionist explanations. Some candidates produced good introductory discussions on the social construction and relativity of deviance, which were well located in the interactionist view, and supported with examples. Most candidates referred to Becker, labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy and master status. There was some confusion between interactionism and labelling theory, with many candidates asserting that they were synonymous, rather than being clear that labelling is a process described by interactionists.

Lemert was also very commonly used, though there was some confusion between Becker and Lemert, with a significant number of candidates attributing Becker's ideas to Lemert, or vice versa, so accuracy was a problem. Jock Young was often used effectively to analyse Becker's views, although the subjects of his Notting Hill study often changed decade or ethnicity. Many responses effectively made a link to moral panics in relation to interactionism. Stan Cohen was often referred to, and linked to deviancy amplification (sometimes with Wilkins), but while some responses contained a very descriptive section on Cohen, others wrote more generally about moral panics. Other common studies used to support the interactionist view were those of Cicourel and Malinowski. Matza sometimes appeared, but few seemed to realise his link to interactionism, and some used him to evaluate instead, inaccurately describing him as a subcultural theorist.

The lack of depth was the biggest issue, with many candidates almost listing some of the above names and concepts, with very little demonstration of a full understanding of what they said or the differences between them.

Most candidates were able to evaluate interactionist explanations effectively with reference to other perspectives, particularly Marxism, functionalism or realist views. Those who scored highly engaged in sustained evaluation and analysis. Some stronger answers recognised the overlap between Marxism and interactionism, and some drew on the New Criminology and/or Left Realism to show the influence of interactionism on newer theories. However, there was a common tendency to lapse into juxtaposition, and present virtually every theory of crime in a list-like way.

The most often cited studies were: Becker, Lemert, Cohen, Young, Cicourel, Goffman. Common concepts included: labelling, self-fulfilling prophecy, master status, deviancy amplification, moral panics.

2 This was a very popular question attracting a wide range of responses, though it was clear that some candidates were not expecting a question focussing on the working class, and struggled to work out how to apply the material they knew, which has not previously been the case when gender or ethnicity have been the focus of the question. Another problem was that many candidates ignored the issue of 'most crime' and instead just gave an account of different explanations of working class crime.

A significant proportion of candidates spent a long time at the start of the essay examining the view that most crime is NOT committed by the working class. This was often well credited as evaluation, though was sometimes a bit implicit, but some then found it difficult to move from evaluation to then discuss the view in the question, treating it more as an essay about white-collar crime.

A common approach was to use Marxism to support the view in the question, though some candidates then also realised that some Marxists would evaluate the view by discussing white collar crime. Stronger candidates successfully made this contrast, whilst others got very confused. This was more likely to occur when the candidate discussed 'Marxism' generally rather than identifying specific theorists. There were very good interpretations of Merton and the subcultural theorists. Other common approaches were to use ecology theory (zone of transition, tipping), the New Criminology/neo-Marxism (resistance/rebellion), left realists (relative deprivation), right realists and also the New Right (referencing the underclass – sometimes used as evaluation), and often these views were considered in depth and well-linked to the question – particularly realists. However, as previously mentioned, focus often strayed away from the issue of whether most crime is committed by the working class, to explanations of working class crime. Better focussed answers made reference to the patterns of crime shown in the OCS and whether these were or were not accurate. Generalised functionalism which was not focussed on specific theorists was less successfully applied.

In evaluation, candidates used Marxists such as Box, Snider and Croall to discuss white-collar/corporate crime, and also applied labelling and police/media bias, using Cicourel, Chambliss, Reiner, Hall, and S.Cohen. Discussions about the 'dark figure' in relation to the OCS and how this might cast doubt on the view in the tile were also well done.

The most often cited studies used to support the view were: Bonger, Gordon, Merton, A.Cohen, Cloward & Ohlin, Miller, Murray, Hirschi, Taylor, Walton and Young.

3 This question was less popular than questions 1 and 2, and seemed to challenge some of the candidates who attempted it, as if they were underprepared for a question focussing on victims, despite this being a clear area on the specification.
Most candidates focused on feminist explanations for female victimisation, and often also considered victimisation of ethnic minorities and the working class. Sometimes these ideas were located in theories, particularly using Left Realists and the Islington Crime Survey.

Weaker answers spoke in very general terms about why different groups may be more likely to be victims of crime, sometimes discussing why they are more likely to offend, and then just stating that this also makes them more likely to be victims as well, with no supporting evidence. Some candidates strayed from the focus on victims to perpetrators especially during discussions of Realism. Some candidates interpreted 'victims' as victims of the police, often in terms of racism or bias in favour of the ruling class and so moved away from victims of crime into victims of police practices. Only the strongest candidates brought this back by discussing the idea that police corruption/brutality can become criminal. Some made a link to the treatment of victims, for example drawing on Stephen Lawrence.

However many candidates had a good knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts such as relative deprivation, marginalisation, zone of transition, tipping, patriarchy and racism, and did manage to demonstrate how some of these ideas can relate to victimisation.

Many answers lacked sustained evaluation, though stronger candidates contrasted the patterns of victimisation shown in the BCS/CSEW with the realistic fears shown by more

vulnerable groups and investigated by more qualitative victimization research, supported by work from Left Realists such as Young and feminists. Such discussions were often very analytical and scored highly for AO2b.
Commonly cited studies included: BCS/CSEW, Hough & Mayhew, The Islington Crime Survey, Lea and Young, Dobash and Dobash, Walklate, Stanko, Carrabine, Walby, Shaw & McKay, Baldwin & Bottoms.

EDUCATION: the second most popular option, question 4 was the most commonly chosen question, with fairly equal numbers choosing questions 5 and 6 to go with it.

4 Most candidates seemed well prepared for this question. Many produced quite sophisticated interpretations and analyses of Marxism. Better responses were able to incorporate a range of Marxist writers with accuracy and depth. Bowles and Gintis' correspondence theory was often discussed in impressive depth, using illustrative examples. However, many responses just wrote two or three lines on each name in a list-like way, limiting their marks due to lack of depth.

Weaker responses tended to generalise Marxist views without reference to studies, or to group the ideas of several different theorists under one name, often just 'Marx'! Some stronger answers developed more range by including reference to Marxist critiques of vocational education (such as Finn), and Boudon was also well used by some candidates. Willis was often used as a critic of Bowles & Gintis, but also sometimes recognised as a Marxist thinker in his own right.

Some candidates drifted away from the idea of the 'role' of education and focussed more on social class inequality, linking this to Marxism but sometimes drifting into interactionism. Others presented a juxtaposition of several perspectives on the role of education, spending relatively little time on Marxism, and more on functionalism the New Right, Social Democratic and Liberal views, losing focus on the question set. Some good explicit evaluation using some of these other perspectives was seen however, as well as explicit evaluation points supported by Reynolds, Hickox etc.

Commonly cited studies included: Althusser, Bowles and Gintis, Bourdieu, Boudon. The most commonly used concepts were: Ideological State Apparatus, hidden curriculum, correspondence, cultural capital, false class consciousness, 'myth of meritocracy'.

5 A fairly popular question attracting a wide range of responses: some really struggled for focus, but other excellent responses were seen. Some candidates spent a long time discussing the history of patterns of achievement in relation to gender, and an overly long time discussing changes in girls' achievement, and using dated studies such as Stanworth and Spender, which were not related back to the question in any way.

Some candidates did not engage with the idea of processes *within* schools, instead presenting several arguments which ran together, relating to socialisation in the home, peer group/subcultural influence and teacher/pupil interactions, so it was difficult to unpick the parts which were fully focussed on the question. Those who did focus on this often used generalised references to ideas of labelling and self-fulfilling prophecy, sometimes utilising Becker and Rosenthal and Jacobson, but struggling to relate this to boys' patterns of achievement. Candidates should be encouraged to continually relate back to the question set and be clear whether their points are supporting or refuting the view in the question.

There was also a tendency in this question to assert certain things as fact, leaving them completely unsubstantiated and/or uncontextualised, such as the idea that there are many more female teachers today than in the past. In addition, many candidates were tempted

to juxtapose alternative viewpoints (outside school factors) rather than engage in sustained evaluation.

It was clear that a significant minority of candidates were hoping for a question relating to ethnicity and/or social class rather than gender, and were determined to make this the main focus of their answer, with only occasional references to boys. Explanations for working class underachievement, or differences between different ethnic groups, were then superficially applied by saying that they might apply to boys.

Commonly cited studies: Becker, Rosenthal and Jacobson, Mitsos & Brown, Willis, Kane, Francis, Jackson, Frosh, Mirza, Mac and Ghaill. Common concepts: feminisation, labelling & self-fulfilling prophecy, stereotypes, subcultures, crisis of masculinity, anti-school subcultures, peer pressure, bedroom culture, role models.

6   Candidates were knowledgeable of a broad range of policies since 1988, including some very recent proposals, but were not always able to effectively apply them to the question asked. The links to middle class advantage, though made explicitly and effectively by stronger candidates, were often left implicit by others.

For example, references to New Labour policies such as Surestart, EiC and EMA were sometimes discussed as helping the working class, with no attempt to link to the question, when these could have been successfully used as evaluative points. This was credited as implicit evaluation, but could have been used much more effectively. A significant number of responses effectively referred to the Coalition Government's dropping of these programmes in England as evidence that recent policies benefit the middle class, though weaker candidates found the process of manipulating this data to clearly address the question more challenging.

Knowledge in this question was more focussed on policies, but some candidates did make links to studies and concepts, particularly in relation to marketisation, league tables and parentocracy. Policies were also often located within educational/political perspectives such as 'New Right' and 'New Labour', though these were often confused. It is clear in the specification that 'recent' refers to post-1988, however, there were still some answers which focussed on the tripartite system and other pre-1988 policies, and there was also some confusion relating to policies and dates.

In evaluation, policies which clearly aimed to benefit the working class or benefitted all students were successfully used, though often, as mentioned, they were left slightly implicit. Some strong responses evaluated policies which apparently benefit the middle class by arguing that they can actually benefit all. For example, increased tuition fees may have appeared to benefit the middle class, however, it was argued that university is still affordable for all due to the payment schemes, and HE has opened up to more students, so actually all will benefit.

Commonly cited concepts/policies: parentocracy, skilled choosers, cultural capital, ERA, league tables, Academies, Sure Start, New Deal, EMA, Free Schools, EiC, CTCs, catchment areas, tuition fees
Commonly cited studies: Ball, Gewirtz, Bourdieu, Leech and Campos, Callendar & Jackson.

MASS MEDIA: overall a much less popular option. There was a fairly equal spread of answers across the three questions for those who did choose this option.

7   Most candidates were able to maintain focus on the view that audiences are the main influence on the content of the media. However many discussed the Pluralists without referring to a single study, or even examples. Whale was the most used Pluralist. Galtung and Ruge were also effectively used in relation to news values. Other good evidence used

included discussions of Public service Broadcasting, and also 'citizen journalism', supported with examples, such as the Boston Marathon bomb. The slight narrowness in available supporting evidence was taken into account in the marking of this question, so those who used relevant examples to support the pluralist view and also those who supported the view with postmodernists, were well credited. Some also made effective links to the uses and gratifications model, or other audience-centred models of effects.

The evaluation was often strong especially from a Marxist perspective, both traditional and neo-Marxism, though once again, there was a tendency for juxtaposition. Some candidates also turned the question round to say that the media influences the audience instead, as their evaluation, using the hypodermic syringe model, for example, which was an acceptable evaluative approach.

8 Some candidates appeared very well prepared for this question and produced wide-ranging and detailed responses. Stronger candidates referred to positivism and interpretivism and linked these paradigms to popular methods of researching the media, such as content analysis, semiology and experiments. These were often well supported with illustrative studies, such as Bandura for experiments, Ferguson for content analysis and McRobbie for semiology. Better responses used these studies to focus on the method, whereas others merely discussed the findings of the studies, without effectively demonstrating the use of the method in question.

However, some candidates did not seem to fully understand the demands of the question. For example, some candidates looked at models of media effects rather than methods. Also some weaker candidates turned this into a general methods question without referring to the media – discussing strengths and weaknesses of interviews, observation and/or questionnaires. Some who did this still attempted to link these methods to studying media, but others made no reference to media at all, so could gain little credit.

Evaluation was often underdeveloped and list-like, using methodological strengths and weaknesses such as issues of validity, reliability, ethics etc. Stronger responses developed these points using examples and made contrasts between the methods.

Commonly cited studies: Bandura, GUMG, Ferguson, McRobbie, Best, Lobban.

9 This question produced a range of responses. The focus on representations changing appeared challenging to many candidates. Many described negative representations, supporting these with examples and sometimes studies, but were really presenting implicit evaluation of the view in the question. There was a lack of evidence presented to support the view in the question, with Gauntlett being the most commonly used. Stronger responses located their examples within a theoretical framework, linking to pluralists and/or postmodernists, and then using feminists and Marxists to evaluate. Most candidates were able to refer to more than one social group with ethnicity and gender being popular focuses, although age was also approached well. Few candidates seemed to recognised that change could mean for the worse as well as for the better, but there were some strong responses which considered this, referring to more negative representations of ethnicity post 9/11, using the concept of Islamophobia and ideas from Abbas, for example. Feminists, such as Walter, were also used to support the title view in this way (with references to 'lads mags'), as were more negative portrayals of youth (with reference to moral panics about hoodies and binge drinking). Candidates who relied too heavily on contemporary examples found it harder to score higher level marks. More studies were used in evaluation to show that representations are not changing, such as Van Dijk, Moore et al and Barker for ethnicity, or Wolf, McRobbie and Lobban for gender, so many candidates scored more highly for evaluation than for knowledge in this question.

POWER & POLITICS: This topic area was significantly less popular. However candidates who did attempt it had been well prepared. Those candidates who achieved high marks were able to draw upon theories, studies and contemporary issues and examples, and many produced wide-ranging and sophisticated responses. There was a slight tendency in this option in particular for the first response to be so wide-ranging that the second response suffered due to lack of time.

10 This was the most popular question, attempted by almost every candidate who selected this option. Candidates who did attempt this question tended to produce high quality answers clearly addressing the question. Often there was a comparison with pressure groups and, particularly, OSMs, but most did maintain focus. However, some candidates did write in a generalised way about definitions and types of NSMs, without really focussing on the question. Others spent overly long discussing classical Marxists' explanations of social movements in general, without moving on to focus on New Social Movements.

Many discussed the Postmodern views on NSMs and search for identity. The majority looked at neo-Marxist views and notions of alienation in the modern world. Most were also confident in describing the functionalist informed Collective Behaviour Theory and also Resource Mobilization Theory with its focus on personal gain. Those candidates who were well-prepared often produced extremely wide-ranging answers, showing sophistication, and often reaching the higher levels. Some candidates were able to effectively utilize examples of NSMs to both support and to evaluate the differing explanations, though others missed the opportunity to do this.

Sustained evaluation was common, with sophisticated, evaluative discussions often being presented. Weaker candidates tended to juxtapose ideas, though this was less common than in the other option areas.
Commonly cited studies: Hallsworth, Melucci, Giddens, Marcuse, Offe, Callinicos, Smelser, Touraine, Beck.
Commonly used concepts: identity, individualism, idealism, hegemony, globalisation, reflexivity, metanarratives, social class dealignment, risk society

11 Most candidates were well prepared and could clearly differentiate between established forms of political action and newer forms with references to new technology and globalisation informing many answers. Stronger candidates took the opportunity to interlace their answer with interesting contemporary examples such as Occupy, the 2011 riots.

However, this question was not as well supported in terms of theory and evidence as Q10 by some candidates, with an over-reliance on examples in some responses, and/or assertive claims about what Marxists or other theories may say, unsupported with evidence. In the better responses, comparisons were often made between direct action and traditional forms of action such as voting, lobbying etc, and discussions of the 'decline of the ballot box' were often well focussed.

Commonly cited studies: Giddens, Habermas, Roseneil, Beck, Lash & Urry, Klein, Callinicos, Marcuse, Back, Bachrach & Baratz, Walby.
Common Concepts: urban social movements, collective consumption, collective identity, patriarchy, reflexivity, risk society, identity politics, globalisation, anti-capitalism, transnational social movements.

12 Candidates were often well prepared and the answers were informative and focused although it was the least popular question in this option. The responses demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of Marxism, typically focussing on Miliband, Althusser and Poulantzas, with some well-argued debates between these writers often being presented. Other evaluation generally came from pluralism, postmodernism, feminism and

elite theory. Some candidates used elite theory to support the view in the question, arguing that the state does operate in the interests of the elite, contrasting this with elite pluralists, and this was credited. Concepts such as ideology, infrastructure, hegemony and false consciousness featured strongly.

Commonly cited theorists: Miliband, Poulantzas, Althusser, Lukes, C.Wright Mills, Mosca, Pareto.

G674 Exploring Social Inequality and Difference

General Comments

There were approximately 4000 candidates entered for the GCE A2 Unit 'Exploring Social Inequality and Difference' in June 2013. This was similar to June 2012 and reflects the decision of most centres to enter candidates for this unit in the summer session.

As last year, standards attained were very good; candidates and centres are to be congratulated on their achievements.

The paper is designed to test candidates' knowledge and understanding of social inequality and difference, as well as sociological theory and methodology. The paper is synoptic and linked to the core themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. In addition the paper tests candidates' ability to interpret and evaluate sociological theory, research and evidence, especially through the analysis of a research case study.

In Section A candidates were expected to show knowledge and understanding of different sociological perspectives or theories of research, for example feminist, positivist, interpretive and realist approaches, as well as research design and methods. This is achieved through the analysis and evaluation of a research strategy within a case study outlined in source material. In this session the source material was based upon a study of ethnic intermarriage reported in The British Journal of Sociology, published in 2010. The study employed statistical analysis of quantitative secondary data collected from the UK Government General Household Survey as the main method of research.

In Section A, in order to evaluate the research strategy within the case study, candidates are expected to use a range of methodological concepts and perspectives. It is therefore essential that candidates are familiar with and able to apply some of the key sociological methodological concepts, including validity, reliability, representative, generalisable and replicable. Candidates should know these key concepts and have had opportunity to apply them in the evaluation of research case studies during their courses. Understanding positivist, interpretive, realist and feminist approaches to methodology is also important. Candidates should encounter a range of research studies and have the opportunity to critically evaluate their methodology during the course.

In Section B candidates are expected to show knowledge and understanding of substantive topics in Social Inequality and Difference and evaluate different theoretical perspectives, notably Functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, Weberian, Post Modern and Feminist.

In June 2013 candidates' choice of questions in Section B revealed a preference for the question on race as opposed to gender inequality.

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

In general, the compulsory questions on sociological research were answered very well and there were some excellent responses that demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of the role of operationalisation in research, the use of quantitative secondary data and various types of evidence. It was pleasing to see how many candidates were aware of the uses of different methods and could evaluate different forms of evidence, based on the method of collection, the source and different theoretical perspectives. Application to the specific case

study was often sensitive and thoughtful, especially in relation to the potential sensitivities of the context of ethnic intermarriage. Awareness of the different methodological perspectives appears to be improving as well.

The questions on both gender and race were also answered very well. Candidates demonstrated good levels of knowledge and understanding of functionalist approaches to gender inequality. Many candidates had a good grasp of different functionalist writers; other approaches to social class inequality were used perceptively to evaluate and assess functionalist theory. The questions on race were answered particularly well, with many candidates demonstrating an excellent knowledge and understanding of different theoretical explanations of race inequality.

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

- answer the question set and refer back to the question regularly; this especially helps candidates to demonstrate the skill of interpretation and application
- use a variety of different forms of sociological evidence, which may be empirical studies, data, concepts, theory and contemporary examples
- refer to sociological concepts, studies and theory wherever relevant
- evaluate theories and research strategies by referring to both strengths and weaknesses
- avoid simple assertion, opinion and anecdotal evidence

Candidates seemed to have sufficient time for the tasks. The vast majority completed all of the questions within the time allocated. There were hardly any rubric errors.

Comments on Individual Questions

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

Most candidates understood that operationalisation is the process of defining a concept or idea so that it can be measured in sociological research. It is an important part of planning and designing research in sociology. Abstract concepts have to be translated into a form which enables data to be gathered about the ideas being investigated. The method used often shapes how a concept may be operationalised. For example, observation and experiments usually record behaviour and actions whilst interviews and questionnaires record opinions and views. Many candidates also discussed the role of operationlisation in preventing misunderstanding of concepts and misinterpretation of results.

There were many different examples of studies that had obvious ethical issues taken from general background knowledge to illustrate responses, which is creditable. Examples of concepts which would need to be operationalised drawn from the source included:

- ethnic background
- religious background
- length of time in education

In the source material concepts were operationalised to allow comparison of data over time to establish trends and patterns of ethnic intermarriage, especially given changes in the categorisation of ethnicity and religious background over time within the GHS.

In responding to the question, candidates tended to refer to concepts such as:

- measurement
- recording data
- data analysis
- quantitative and qualitative approaches
- patterns and trends
- abstract concepts
- operational definitions
- validity
- reliability
- practicality
- value freedom

The best responses related their responses clearly and systematically to the source material, using the research by Muttarak and Heath to illustrate their answers. Some candidates did not use the Source and inevitably restricted the marks that could be gained. Centres should stress the need to use both the Source and their own knowledge and understanding.

Unfortunately, a few candidates did not focus on *operationalisation* but discussed the uses, or strengths and weaknesses, of the specific methods in the case study. Similarly, whilst the question asked candidates to outline and explain the importance of operationalising, some evaluated the research method in the Source. The question is designed to test Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) and Interpretation and Application (AO2a), so material presented by candidates on evaluation cannot be credited.

Some candidates did not understand the term and described some aspects of research in general introducing material that was tangential to the question.

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

Most candidates understood that quantitative secondary data from questionnaires within sociological research is numerical information and evidence that is mathematical or statistical in form. This data allows the researchers to establish patterns and trends and look for correlations between variables. They are interested in an objective understanding of those being researched using mainly factual evidence, in a similar way to scientific approaches. The research is usually large scale and at a macro-level. Quantitative secondary data from questionnaires tends to be low in validity and high in reliability. It is favoured by positivist and structural theorists rather than interpretive, feminist and action approaches to research. It is often combined by realist approaches with other methods, including qualitative.

Candidates were expected to discuss the use of *quantitative secondary data* for this research problem – that of ethnic intermarriage. Most candidates were aware that structured questionnaires as used within the GHS are more often associated with positivist approaches, can be used to generate mainly quantitative data and evidence, and so can be used within an interpretive approach to research design. Most candidates also demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the key methodological concepts of validity, reliability, generalisability and representativeness.

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

- positivist
- quantitative
- structural
- action
- patterns and trends
- variables
- correlation
- subjectivity and objectivity
- validity – accuracy/truthfulness/reality of data gathered
- reliability – comparability of data gathered
- representative
- generalisable
- replicable
- sample size

Most candidates clearly discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the view that quantitative secondary data provides the best way to study ethnic intermarriage. In evaluation, candidates generally referred to methodological issues and concepts such as:

- the influence of method/researcher on quality of data gathered and subsequent uses
- advantages and disadvantages of quantitative secondary data/official statistics
- interpretive, feminist and realist approaches
- objectivity and subjectivity
- sample size effects
- representativeness
- meanings and experiences
- empathy
- rapport
- reflexivity
- generalise
- validity
- subject and researcher biases
- fitness for purpose
- access to sample

Ethical issues were sometimes raised, for example of confidentiality and the potential impact on the lives of those studied, including raising sensitive issues and ensuring absence of harm. Many demonstrated an understanding of the issues facing sociologists gaining access to personal data.

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

The best responses related their responses clearly and systematically to the source material, using the research to illustrate their answers. Some candidates failed to use the Source and inevitably restricted the marks that could be gained. Centres should stress the need to use both the Source and their own knowledge and understanding.

Unfortunately a few candidates discussed other methods beyond the case study in the Source Material or contrasted quantitative secondary data with many other research methods in their answers. The question was focussed specifically on secondary

quantitative data and so much of the material presented in this type of response, unless clearly related back to the central issue of the *'fitness for purpose'* of the target method tended not to be relevant and could not be credited.

3(a) Candidates generally used their knowledge and understanding of gender and life chances from different units within the Specification, as well as the G674 unit itself. Most candidates correctly focused upon the relative life chances of both males and females. Some, however, tended simply to describe gender differences rather than focus on providing evidence or relating this to life chances.

Aspects of gender that were identified and discussed by many candidates tended to be:

- education and training
- employment and unemployment
- promotion and career opportunities
- income and wealth
- health and welfare
- power and control at work
- patterns of crime and deviance
- family position and relationships
- politics

The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- patriarchy
- status
- power
- social mobility
- stereotypical gender roles
- conjugal roles
- dual role
- socialisation
- glass ceiling
- dual labour market
- class and occupational structure
- reserve army
- human capital theory
- segregation of jobs
- marginalization
- social exclusion
- masculinities

Theoretical explanations for gender inequality were often identified and discussed, mainly including Feminist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, Functionalist and Weberian.

The sociological writers most often cited were:

- Oakley
- Greer
- Parsons
- Walby
- Pollert
- Abbott et al
- Hakim
- Barron and Norris
- Connell

Candidates were most likely to outline some theoretical evidence and make reference to empirical studies. Some introduced relevant data and contemporary examples. The most effective responses made appropriate use of all these types of sociological evidence. Candidates gaining marks at the highest levels of response tended to link gender explicitly to the concept of life chances, often comparing males and females, supported by several different types of evidence, including empirical studies, data, concepts, theory and contemporary examples.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to the issue of life chances. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related back to the question.

Some candidates made very good use of contemporary examples, which tended to include:

- recent patterns in educational achievement
- unemployment and work experience in the economic recession/crisis
- recent changes in patterns of health
- patterns of poverty
- examples of crime and deviance

(b) Candidates were expected to outline and assess functionalist approaches to explaining gender differences. The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- rules
- norms
- shared values
- integration
- role models
- function
- organic analogy
- socialisation
- social system
- meritocracy
- role allocation and performance
- rewards
- functional prerequisites/necessities/importance
- consensus
- structure
- social order
- expressive and instrumental roles
- human capital

Candidates tended to refer to functionalist and other writers such as:

- Durkheim
- Parsons
- Murdock
- Davis and Moore
- Tumin
- Merton
- Eisenstadt

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

Candidates evaluated functionalist explanations of gender differences very well in many cases, presenting a range of strengths and/or weaknesses. Arguments included:

- recognizes the role socialisation and shared norms and values in creating gender differences
- the role of biological influences are highlighted
- under-values female contributions to society and the workplace
- helps to understand the linking of gender differences across different aspects of social life – family, education, media, crime, etc
- doesn't provide an explanation of the origins of patriarchy historically or socially
- underestimates the importance of class, race, ethnicity and age in differences/inequality
- tends to underestimate the importance of concepts like status and power in understanding differences/inequalities
- underestimates the changing and fragmented nature of social and gender differences, diversity and culture
- doesn't acknowledge the way class and other aspects of difference may reinforce each other, e.g. race and gender
- post modern critiques of inequality

Comparison of alternative theoretical explanations was usually undertaken in evaluation. Some candidates simply described and juxtaposed different theoretical approaches. More effective responses used alternative approaches to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of functionalism, and each other, and also evaluated in a sustained and explicit way. The best responses also tended to conclude with a specific and clear assessment of functionalist and/or other explanations.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to an assessment of functionalist approaches to gender. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

4(a) The majority of candidates answered this question well. Candidates generally used their knowledge and understanding of patterns of ethnic inequality and disadvantage from different units within the specification, as well as the G674 unit itself. Most candidates correctly presented evidence about disadvantage amongst different ethnic groups. The best responses tended to present a range of recent evidence about disadvantage with some contemporary examples and focus.

Aspects of social life for which changes in patterns of ethnic disadvantage were most often identified and discussed included:

- education
- employment
- income and wealth
- health and welfare
- housing
- political power
- patterns of crime and deviance
- portrayal within the media
- legislation

The following concepts were often identified and discussed:

- race
- racism and institutional racism
- prejudice and discrimination
- migration
- ethnicity
- nationalism
- host community
- globalisation
- ethnic penalty
- economic, social and cultural capital
- class
- status
- power
- poverty
- income and wealth
- social exclusion
- marginalisation
- fragmentation
- dual labour markets
- situational constraints
- access to power and political representation
- differential academic achievement

Candidates most frequently referred to writers such as:

- Murray
- Giddens
- Banton
- Richardson and Lambert
- Castles and Kosack
- Rex and Tomlinson
- Cox
- Pilkington
- Brown and Gay
- Hall
- Modood
- Rattansi
- Mirza

Theoretical explanations for ethnic differences most often identified and discussed included Marxist, functionalist, post modern, Weberian and feminist. The impact on ethnic differences of gender, age and class was sometimes compared or contrasted with ethnicity, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

Contemporary examples most often cited were:

- media treatment of Muslims and Islamophobia
- Eastern European migration and employment
- examples of ethnic disadvantage/discrimination
- recent evidence about patterns of ethnic inequality in education and work/unemployment
- differential impact of recession on ethnic communities
- examples relating to crime and deviance

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

Candidates gaining marks at the highest levels of response tended to describe ethnic differences in a range of different areas of social life supported by several different types of evidence, including empirical studies, data, concepts, theory and contemporary examples.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to the issue. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.

Some candidates did not address the issue of disadvantage and simply described different forms of ethnic inequality, which did not demonstrate a focussed interpretation of the question.

(a) The majority of candidates answered this question very well. Candidates were expected to outline and assess sociological contributions to explanations of ethnic inequality.

Responses tended to describe and evaluate a range of sociological explanations, usually functionalist, Marxist, neo-Marxist, Weberian and postmodern. Occasionally black feminist approaches were examined.

Most candidates were able to describe a range of approaches at least simply with a few relevant concepts and studies. The best responses did so comprehensively in a wide ranging and detailed manner. Some weaker responses tended to describe ethnic inequality in a generalised way or some theories, but neglected evaluation and assessment, which was the focus of the question.

The following concepts were often discussed:

- racism
- prejudice and discrimination
- host/immigrant
- assimilation
- reserve army of labour
- scapegoat
- divide and rule
- primary and secondary labour markets
- globalisation
- fragmentation
- hybrid identities
- glass ceiling
- concrete ceiling
- leaky pipe
- vertical and horizontal segregation

Candidates often referred to a very wide range of sociological writers from across a range of theoretical traditions.

The impact on ethnic inequality of gender, age and class was occasionally compared or contrasted with ethnicity, as well as the intersection/interrelationship of these dimensions.

Ethnic inequalities in different aspects of social life were often used to illustrate answers, such as education, employment, income and wealth, health and welfare, housing, political power, and patterns of crime and deviance.

As candidates were expected to evaluate a range of explanations of ethnic inequality, the main contrasts of approach tended to include:

- highlights the impact of class, power, status and market position in inequality to differing degrees
- emphasizes structure and social action based on common interests, identity and culture to differing degrees
- sees social change as a process of conflict or progressive development and assimilation over economic wealth, status, power and culture related to ethnicity to different degrees
- recognises changing nature, fluidity and eclectic nature of culture in post modern society to different degrees
- interprets 'new ethnicities' and the experience of inequality differently eg hybridity
- emphasizes importance of ethnicity, culture, racism and discrimination in patterns of inequality differently
- doesn't acknowledge the way other aspects of inequality may reinforce ethnic inequalities

Comparison of alternative theoretical explanations was usually undertaken. Some candidates simply described and juxtaposed different theoretical approaches. More effective responses used alternative approaches to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of different explanations, and evaluated in a sustained and explicit manner throughout. The best responses also tended to conclude the answer with a specific, clear assessment or comparison of different explanations.

Candidates at the higher levels of response revealed an excellent ability to interpret sociological knowledge and understanding and apply it to an assessment of different explanations of gender inequalities. The material was clearly, explicitly and consistently related to the question.