AQA

**General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE)
June 2012**

Sociology **41902**

(Specification 4192)

**Unit 2: Crime and Deviance;
Mass Media;
Power;
Social Inequality**

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: aqa.org.uk

41902

General

This was the second series with a substantial entry, the first being June 2011, and it is pleasing to note that many centres and their students have taken on board the advice that has been given in previous Reports and in the Teacher Support/CPD sessions which have been running over the past twelve months. As a consequence, the overall standard of responses is less variable than last summer, with most students now able to demonstrate some sociological understanding. There were some outstanding papers with a sophisticated level of sociology evident. Less able students also seem more secure in their knowledge, with less reliance on personal experience and anecdote than in previous series.

Most students managed to complete the paper in an adequate manner, and, apart from those who breached the rubric by answering questions from all four sections, there were far fewer time management issues than in the past. As a consequence, there was a noticeable improvement in the quality of responses in the Social Inequality topic, particularly the 12-mark questions. A few students either did all of the 12-mark questions first and then the rest of the topics, or vice versa, but neither of these strategies seemed to have any noticeable impact on the overall marks gained compared to working through the paper in question order.

Previous series have been bedevilled by rubric infringements, none more so than last summer's examination. Whilst the problem has diminished somewhat, it still remains an issue in a significant number of scripts. Perhaps of greater concern is that in a few centres, students appear to have been instructed to answer all four topics, since every paper was in breach of the rubric. In others, weaker students only may have been told to complete the entire paper. Almost invariably, students who answered questions from all four topics did them in a rush, with a consequent lack of depth and loss of marks. Teachers have a clear responsibility to ensure that students are familiar with the rubric and the layout of the paper; those who instruct students to breach the rubric not only generate extra work for examiners, they also disadvantage their students, often quite substantially.

One noticeable feature of this summer's examination was that most students are now able to introduce some sociological terminology and concepts into their responses. More students also seemed comfortable in making theoretical references, although on occasions these descended into sweeping assertions as to what a particular perspective would say about an issue. It was also pleasing to note that many students could support points made by reference to contemporary evidence or events.

The great majority of students were able to access full marks on questions carrying one or two marks across all four topic areas. A small minority continue to misread the items, and some still wrote too much. There is no need to answer item-based questions in full sentences if a single word or phrase will suffice, nor is it necessary to repeat the question in one's response. In questions carrying two marks, two short phrases or sentences will suffice, provided they contain sufficiently specific and relevant information.

A range of quality was evident in responses to four-mark questions, which test understanding of a sociological concept. The key variable in quality was, quite simply, whether students either knew what the concept meant, and could write enough for three or four marks, or they did not, in which case they were often left scratching around hopefully for a mark. There is still a tendency for students to use examples to **illustrate** the concept they are asked to address, rather than explicitly **explain** it, and, in a few cases, students produced completely erroneous responses of no value. Centres should note that there is a section-by-section list of common concepts (additional to those to be found in the actual specification) in the Key Materials section of the [AQA GCSE Sociology webpage](#) under the Teacher Resource Bank tab.

Five-mark questions still continue to generate major issues of balance between the two parts of the question, with many students also writing at excessive length. Some provide a rambling, often repetitive series of examples to address the 'Describe one way …' aspect (three examples of the same thing still only gets a maximum of two marks) and often fail to differentiate between the two parts. Others spend far too long on the first aspect, and provide only a cursory, often very generalised response to the 'and explain…' element. A significant number fail to link the two parts at all, thereby losing marks in the second aspect of the question. Given that they are worth a third of the marks available across the paper, it is vital that students are taught how to structure their answers here – two brief, separate paragraphs are to be recommended.

Finally, the overall quality of response to the 12-mark questions was pleasingly high. Even less able students are usually able to construct a response that will get them into the bottom of the 4-6 band, often after they have struggled on the rest of the topic. There is still a tendency for most students to respond to 'How far …' by producing a generalised list of competing viewpoints/variables, some of which are not well-applied to the specifics of the question, but there were many good responses which used theory, concepts and evidence to good effect.

Topic 1 – Crime and Deviance

This was overwhelmingly the most popular topic, but it is no longer the one that students do most effectively. The principal reasons for this were misreading of Question 06, and a lack of focus on the specifics of the question in 07 and 08.

Questions 01 and 02

These questions generated few problems, though in Question 01 some students omitted 'use', thereby scoring zero. A small minority felt it necessary to give a synonym for cannabis from street slang, which was gratuitous.

Question 03

Responses to this question were more variable, with some providing answers based on victim surveys or observation, and others responding in a very generalised manner about self-report studies being quick, easy, and so on. As usual, many students were firmly convinced that validity and reliability are the same thing.

Question 04

In this question most students were able to show some understanding of white collar crime, most answers referring to one or more of workplace crime, middle class-crime, corporate crime and so on. There was good use of contemporary examples to back up points made, and the best answers also referenced the responses of the forces of social control. A small minority had no idea what the concept meant, thinking it to be about crimes committed by white people.

Question 05

Most students were able to give an example of a relevant police action in the response to this question, although some failed to address the 'minority ethnic group' aspect, usually looking at the policing of young people ('hoodies') or the working-class. Many answers referenced 'stop and search', but for the two marks there had to be some indication of the disproportionate use of this strategy on minority ethnic communities. The second part of the question was generally done quite well, often referring to the self-fulfilling prophecy, statistics on prison population or the impact of media amplification, but many students left it to the examiner to separate the two parts of the question by means of some mental cutting and pasting.

Question 06

This question was answered poorly, with a third of responses scoring zero as a result of re-interpreting the question into one on **committing** crime. Of those who did cover **victims** of crime, many either failed to address the second part of the question at all, or gave lengthy, rambling and generalised accounts of reasons for poverty. The best answers usually referenced aspects such as environmental poverty, lack of security measures, police indifference and so on.

Question 07

Responses to this question demonstrated good understanding of the labelling process in the great majority of answers, with most students consequently being able to access the 4-6 band. Thereafter the quality was more variable, with less developed answers usually making vague references to the impact of socialisation or peer pressure, and better ones contrasting labelling with, for example, conflict approaches. At this level most students tended to conflate deviance and crime, but very good answers were able to discuss the role of those with power in defining what was deviant and to introduce some examples.

Question 08

Most students attempting this question were able to outline a range of explanations to support the proposal that young men commit more **crime**. Better answers specifically addressed anti-social behaviour per se, via discussion of, eg peer pressure, status frustration, and the impact of poor parenting. Thereafter, quality was more variable, with most making vague assertions about women and crime and/or the chivalry thesis, usually without any reference to anti-social behaviour. Some students lost marks by re-interpreting the question into one on competing explanations for male crime, losing sight of the 'most anti-social behaviour' aspect entirely. Very few addressed the age aspect at all, but more focused responses were able to consider things like 'ladettes', changes in social expectations of gender, the impact of greater affluence on young women etc.

Topic 2 – Mass Media

This topic was somewhat less popular than in previous series. In most cases students addressed the questions sociologically; however, as with previous series, some students were over-reliant on the use of examples drawn from their own media habits, in which the sociology was either non-existent or merely asserted. Such responses rarely attract more than half the marks available, whatever the question.

Questions 09 and 10

These questions provided few problems for the great majority, though a few students failed to identify the Daily Mirror in Question 10.

Question 11

In **this question** most students correctly identified two types of digital media, though some lost marks through vague or partial identifications such as 'radio' or 'film', which could have been either digital or analogue .

Question 12

Most students had some idea of what the hypodermic syringe model was, and often illustrated this by (usually lengthy) reference to Bandura or to the Bulger case. Some incomplete responses dealt with the model in terms of an addiction ('like a drug') rather than the direct, passive reception of media messages, and some confused the model with other media effects approaches. Reference to critiques of the model was extremely rare.

Question 13

In this question, most answers demonstrated good understanding of processes such as deviancy amplification, agenda setting and gate-keeping, although a sizeable minority limited their marks in the first part of the question by tautology ('presenting a negative image by negative coverage…'). Many had difficulty identifying implications for democracy, often resorting to vague assertions about how the negative images would cause arguments, riots or anti-media protests. Some wrote about how the animal rights protesters might harm society, and others made vague allusions to political outcomes which had no link whatsoever to 'groups such as animal rights protesters'.

Question 14

Responses to Question 14 were often disappointingly shallow. There was some good understanding of phenomena such as blogs, user-generated content on the internet and viral campaigns (with the London riots frequently mentioned). On the other hand, many candidates wrote about the media in general, the traditional mass media (radio phone-ins) or trivial examples of power (choosing who goes through to the next round of X-Factor). Most responses failed to deal with the 'and explain …' aspect at anything other than a fairly generalised level, often conflating governments and political parties, though more effective responses were able to use recent events like the Arab Spring, online petitions and so forth.

Question 15

Question 15 was the more popular of the two 12-mark questions in this topic, and most students saw it as an opportunity to contrast descriptions of stereotypical female representations (housewives, cleaners, blond bimbos, supermodels etc) with generalised assertions about 'women having more equality and/or power'. Such responses often cited characters from various soaps, etc, as evidence of this change in media attitudes, and rarely contained enough sociology to move them beyond the 4-6 band. Better answers were characterised by responses that (a) were sociological, and (b) moved beyond assertions about improvements in the status of women, though in the latter case some students focused on women in society, rather than their image in the media. Very good responses referenced concepts such as the male gaze, patriarchy and symbolic annihilation, or located the response in a theoretical framework (usually feminist and pluralist).

Question 16

Responses to this question were variable in quality. Poorer responses largely consisted of generalised or superficial statements about the power of the media in general, with little or no reference to the 'political opinions' part, or largely ignored the media and got bogged down in descriptive accounts of socialisation in families and education. However, there were some strong answers, detailing the power of newspapers to sway people politically, supported by accurate evidence from recent elections, and by different theories or effects models. These were usually contrasted with pluralist approaches and/or consideration of the impact of other factors shaping political opinion, such as class, one's family, workmates, etc.

Topic 3 – Power

This topic was both more popular and done more competently than in the previous summer, the standard benefiting from the fact that the great majority who completed questions from this section did so intentionally rather than through rubric errors as in June 2011. There was some good use of contemporary evidence in this section, perhaps belying the oft-noted indifference of young people to all things political.

Questions 17, 18 and 19

These questions posed few problems, although a minority of students failed to score on Question 18 because of imprecise responses ('£50' and 'less than £50' are not synonymous). There was an encouragingly wide range of responses to Question 19.

Question 20

As with the other four-mark questions, responses to this question were variable in quality. Most showed some understanding of the concept, though it was sometimes presented inappropriately as a rant against so-called benefit scroungers. Some wrote about the social benefits of a multi-cultural population, and some merely described one or more benefits without addressing the 'culture' issue.

Question 21

In this question, some were able to describe specific recent measures, such as the ending of compulsory retirement, pension credits etc, but many lost marks by vague or generalised reference to long-established provision such as 'pensions' or 'better healthcare'. Recent media exposure of care home scandals provided some of the stronger responses to the second part of the question. Some students quoted examples from their own localities, such as the withdrawal of a free swimming concession on cost grounds. Students and their teachers need to be aware that when words such as 'recent governments' appear in a question, they need to provide examples from the last 15 to 20 years.

Question 22

Most answers to this question were able to identify an example of prejudice, and examples of discrimination were also credited. On occasions, students did not achieve the full two marks available for the first aspect because they failed to develop the initial example fully, or simply answered with a single word, eg 'racism'. The 'and explain…' aspect was done poorly, as many struggled with the notion of power. Those that did score here generally talked about the impact of institutional racism and, eg lack of minority ethnic groups at the top of hierarchies, or the lack of MPs etc.

Question 23

This question was overwhelmingly the more popular of the 12-mark questions. There were some very detailed responses, referencing changing economic roles, women and careers/the labour market, the 'new man', the impact of legislation and feminism and so on. These were contrasted with continued patriarchy, discrimination, sexism, power in the domestic situation, the glass ceiling and so on. A few responses also looked at areas where men arguably lack power, eg after marital breakdown. Less successful answers recycled the information in Item E so 'power' was seen solely in terms of parliamentary 'power'. Weak answers consisted of generalised assertions about the role of women, almost invariably in the family.

Question 24

This question was attempted by very few students, and the quality was less good overall than on Question 23. Poor answers usually consisted of generalised assertions or anecdote about children and their parents, or simply recycled Item F. Better answers often located the question in a framework of different types of power, usually democratic and authoritarian, and introduced examples from areas other than the family such as education, the legal system and so on.

Topic 4 – Social Inequality

This section was less susceptible to the impact of rubric infringements and/or poor time management than in previous series. Consequently, many students were able to produce responses of a high standard across the topic area.

Questions 25 and 26

These questions were unproblematic for the majority, though some students identified the incorrect community in Question 26, whilst many gave all three of the correct communities when only one was required.

Question 27

The great majority of students experienced no difficulties with this question, although a very small minority re-interpreted it into 'two research methods'.

Question 28

In this question, the majority of students were familiar with the concept of a glass ceiling, though few developed their responses in a way that explicitly addressed both the notion of invisibility and the way in which the barrier operates. A few students offered explanations referring to groups other than women. Disturbingly, some students had clearly never encountered the term before. This tended to be a centre-wide matter, and we can only reiterate the need to ensure that students are familiar with the common sociological concepts in the specification and the expanded list on the AQA website.

Question 29

Most students managed to respond in some fashion to this question, the main variable in quality being the degree to which answers were explicitly linked to upward social mobility. About half based their answers on welfare benefits or anti-discrimination legislation, and generally then struggled to relate the remainder of the answer explicitly to social mobility. Those who chose educational measures often managed the second aspect of the question more successfully. A few misunderstood the question as referring to improving personal mobility for the disabled, or improving public transport.

Question 30

Most students answered this question reasonably competently, although some insisted on doing the 'and explain' part first, in what were often quite rambling responses. Students offered a wide variety of causes, from disability to criminal records, with the majority focusing on relative poverty. These then typically linked this to an account of the poverty trap or cycle of deprivation (not always explicitly linked to the persistence of social exclusion, and often mini 'essays'). Few students looked at other economic factors such as unemployment, or social factors such as single parenthood.

Question 31

This question was slightly more popular than Question 32 and generated some good responses discussing significant changes in the labour market, the decline of 'traditional' industries, the rise of the service sector and its impact on class structure via embourgeoisement. Some quite dated empirical material from the 1970s was often quoted, but stronger answers addressed the 'now' aspect of the question. Some responses took a theoretical route, citing material from one or more of Marxism, functionalism and the New Right, usually contrasting meritocracy/decline of 'class' with evidence of continued class divisions. In this respect it was pleasing to see answers which used Marxist and other theoretical concepts accurately and effectively. Weak responses simply outlined aspects of inequality and/or made sweeping assertions about the impact of personal choice and hard work, usually via anecdote, or, in a few cases, gave simplified and garbled versions of 'Marx' on class, or just denied it existed.

Question 32

This question produced a wide range of responses, ranging from the really poor to the excellent. The former usually contented themselves with either recycling the item or making some vague assertions about different minority ethnic groups, and took it as axiomatic that they all had poorer life chances. Better answers often distinguished between the life chances of different minority groups and those of the majority, usually linking this to a discussion of the impact of social class/status. Others introduced gender as a possible factor, with very good answers also examining its impact within different ethnic groups. Most students, even the more informed ones, took a narrow view of 'life chances', seeing it as referring to 'a good education leading to a good job'. Some simply saw life chances in terms of inequality in general, but a few were able to examine areas like health, morbidity and social mobility.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the Results Statistics page of the AQA Website.

Converting Marks into UMS marks

Convert raw marks into Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) marks by using the link below.

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion