

OCR Report to Centres

June 2013

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This report on the examination provides information on the performance of candidates which it is hoped will be useful to teachers in their preparation of candidates for future examinations. It is intended to be constructive and informative and to promote better understanding of the specification content, of the operation of the scheme of assessment and of the application of assessment criteria.

Reports should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and mark schemes for the examination.

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General Certificate of Secondary Education

Sociology (J696)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

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Overview

2013 is the fourth year the units of the current GCSE sociology specification have been offered and the third year the qualification will be awarded.

The non-tiered approach continues to be successful with exam papers which are structured to test the knowledge and skills of candidates across the ability range.

All units were completed within a structured answer booklet with marking of these papers taking place electronically. Again, candidates for B672 coped well with an extensive booklet required for the choice element of this paper.

In general, the quality of the candidate's knowledge of sociology and their skills in applying this to answer specific questions continues to be impressive. Candidates have demonstrated a good understanding of and ability to apply in context, difficult concepts. Again, some candidates at the top end are using sociological studies to support and inform their answers and some are using simple sociological theory with accuracy. Candidates can achieve the top grade without this, but the transition to advanced study of sociology will be smoother. There has been some excellent use of sociological language and even candidates at the lower end of the grade range are able to use sociological terms with some accuracy.

Overall, candidates continue to be well prepared for the examinations and teachers are using the resources available such as the increasing stock of past papers and the schemes of work to inform their teaching. Use of the online training materials, produced by the Principal Examiners for each unit and available on the OCR website is to be encouraged.

B671 Sociology Basics

This was the fourth year of examination for this GCSE Sociology paper. The paper was untiered and so designed to cater for candidates of all ability levels and was marked out of 60. The structure of the paper means that candidates should work on a 'mark a minute' rule in order to best make use of their time – 60 marks, 60 minutes. It is hoped that centres and candidates will find this helpful. Timings in the 2013 session were generally very good with few candidates appearing to run out of time. The examination paper was again in a booklet format in an attempt to try and help structure candidate's responses and thus support them in achieving the best marks they were capable of. A large number of candidates took advantage of the additional pages in order to extend their responses for questions 5 and 9.

Some excellent conceptual and theoretical sociology was seen by the examination team and it is obvious that much good teaching is taking place. Students and teachers are to be congratulated for their hard work and efforts with this.

General Comments

This year's paper was felt to have been set at an appropriate level having questions that were both accessible to the lower end of the ability range whilst yet stretching the upper end. The questions were varied and engaging, and some questions were answered very well indeed.

In general most areas of the specification appear to have been taught well though a small number of candidates appeared to be unclear about pilot studies, longitudinal studies and role conflict. There was evidence that many candidates had been prepared well for this examination by their teachers and that they clearly understood the rubric implications of the different question styles and the command words. Where candidates were not as well prepared they confused different skills and often "identified" where they were required to "explain" or ignored instructions to "evaluate", for example. Centres are to be reminded that all areas of the specification can be examined and it is thus essential that candidates are prepared for this.

Most candidates showed at least an average knowledge of sociological concepts and methods, particularly around socialisation and gender. The level of critical thought was also good with the majority of students having at least some understanding of research techniques, their advantages and also their flaws. Essay technique was generally good with very few tabulated responses for Q9 - which suggests that most candidates had enough time to fully consider and answer all questions on the paper and thus to maximise their marks. Some genuinely interesting and perceptive debates around the power of the media to socialise individuals were seen with topical examples, such as size zero, being discussed.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A – Research Methods and Evidence

Q1

This was a true or false question testing candidate's sociological knowledge. Most candidates scored well here although a number had not read the Source material carefully enough or didn't know what certain concepts such as 'snowball sample' meant and thus lost marks. Centres are advised to give their candidates plenty of practice at this style of question prior to the examination. They can be incorporated easily into lessons as starters, reviews and/or plenaries for any topics being studied and will thus familiarise candidates with the format requirements as well as allowing them opportunities to review key concepts and terms.

Q2

This question is best approached as a question about representativeness and generalisability and candidates should therefore focus on issues of sampling and the key word 'all' in the question. This question was typically very well answered this year with most candidates scoring well. The most commonly seen answers concerned the small sample size, gender bias of the sample and the fact the research was only completed in one place.

Marks will not be awarded here for those candidates who identify and discuss accuracy issues. Centres are advised to give their candidates plenty of pieces of evidence to analyse for these types of issues - old legacy papers as well as past Basics papers should prove useful here but centres can also set their own question using a topical piece of data from, say, the media to give candidates as much practice as possible. Candidates are well advised in this question to choose two points that are sufficiently different to allow them to 'show off' their sociological knowledge and understanding in their explanations.

Q3(a)

If candidates understood what was meant by a 'pilot study' then they were able to explain very well indeed why these were used in sociological research, with most talking about them being used as a test run before a real piece of research in order to make changes and amendments as necessary.

Q3(bi and bii)

Again, the issue here centred on whether the candidate understood what was meant by a 'longitudinal study'. The command word, 'describe', was well focused on with only a very small minority of students in this session giving a one word answer. The advice in the last Principal Examiner's report seems to have been well followed here. Some students just gave generic methodological advantages and disadvantages that weren't focused on longitudinal studies – it is obviously crucial that candidates pay close attention to the method/evidence in the question and tailor their responses to this.

Q4(a)(i and ii)

The majority of candidates were successfully able to identify the age group in which women are most likely to drink heavily and the percentage of men aged 65 and over who drank heavily.

Q4(b)

Here the focus of the question is on issues of accuracy/validity and it is only answers discussing these issues that will score marks. There was a much better focus on these issues in this session indicating again that centres are making good use of the guidance and advice given in the Principal Examiner's report. Some students, however, are still losing marks because they discuss points about sampling/representativeness/generalisability. This needs to be avoided – best advice is to give students plenty of practice with this style of question and make good use of past question papers. Most common answers seen by the examiners focused on the fact that the source was adapted, was out of date, was from Government statistics and just looked vaguely at those who drank heavily on 'at least one day in the previous week'. Candidates often identified their point well, though some faltered on the explanation, and sometimes generic explanations were repeated. Some candidates explanations were also brief and may have invited a 'VG' – candidates should be encouraged to have a clear and separate sentence explaining each of their identified points.

Q5

It was pleasing to see that very few candidates, far fewer than last session, seemed to misinterpret the question and answer this as an essay; candidates seem to have generally been well prepared here. This is a standard question format and thus it is crucial that candidates are trained in how to answer it prior to sitting the examination and given lots of practice opportunities. The bullet point prompts appear to have aided candidates in this and helped them to focus on the issues of research and evidence that is required here.

This question was, in general, answered very well with many candidates being able to write responses which clearly identified primary methods and secondary evidence that might be used within the specific context of the investigation. Most candidates were also able to provide at least some description for the choices they made but justifications were done less successfully on the whole. It's crucial that candidates are able to articulate why certain methods, samples, pieces of evidence etc are being used within the context of the investigation. High level and accurate concepts were used and duly rewarded in the better Level 3 responses, demonstrating some excellent sociological knowledge and understanding. The question therefore differentiated well in terms of outcome between candidates of various different abilities, allowing all to access it – most candidates scored within Level 2. As one might expect, the level of justification for methodological choices differed quite widely with some focussing on practicalities (eg quick and easy) whilst others were able to link choices to issues of validity, reliability etc. Lower level scripts were often simply due to lack of detail and development. Some also neglected context. Most of the better answers made good use of the additional space provided within the answer booklet.

Issues for centres to work on with candidates were that at times candidates did not cover the required two primary methods and a piece of secondary evidence in their discussion. A lack of detail and depth on how the method / evidence would be used was also something noticed by the examining team. Quite a few really good responses remained at the top of Level 2 because the third method/evidence was dealt with very briefly and its inclusion in the research plan was not justified. Similarly, the context of the study is really important. This session, for example, some candidates had really thought about where would be best to, say, observe – suggesting locations such as hospitals and doctors surgeries which really allowed them to engage with the specifics of this hypothesis rather than just talking generically. Focusing on these issues with candidates should really help to boost the marks awarded in this question.

Section B – Key Concepts in Sociology

Q6

This question was answered well overall with the majority of candidates scoring full marks and very few indeed scoring zero. To help candidates in learning their key concepts, centres may wish to consider getting students to compile their own 'key concepts' glossaries based on the specification. Key concepts can also be used in games such as 'Articulate' as a lesson starter, mid-way review or plenary and ensures a real sense of clarity in student's answers whilst also being an activity that they really enjoy.

Q7(a)

This was answered well although some candidates clearly did not know what an 'agent of socialisation' was. These candidates simply drew upon the terms in the source – like 'businessman', 'going to the pub' and so on. Some students also failed to identify the agent properly, using 'school' instead of 'education, or 'parents' instead of 'family'.

7(b)

Another question answered well by the majority. There were some references to women becoming more masculine or doing men's jobs here, failing to focus on how masculine roles have been affected and so not scoring the mark. The majority of correct answers referred to ideas about househusbands, the new man and more of a focus in society on male appearance and grooming.

Q7(c)

Most students were able to correctly identify a sanction with the majority selecting formal negative examples such as prison, fines, tags etc. Some candidates, however, struggled to explain either what the sanction was or how it stopped unacceptable behaviour. This question was thought to be a good example of stretch and challenge, allowing the higher end candidates to really demonstrate high order understanding of concepts such as deterrence, reform, rehabilitation, warnings etc.

Q7(d)

This question was typically answered very well by candidates. Most candidates were clearly able to talk about a role found in a school. The most common answers discussed students, teachers and head-teachers and were well able to explain what characterised these roles with well-chosen examples.

Q7(e)

A mixed response to this question with some students not being clear what is meant by 'role conflict'. Again, centres are to be reminded that all aspects of the specification need to be taught. Some candidates confused two roles in conflict with each other here (like a teacher and a student), or focused on the word 'conflict' and talked about fights and arguments in a commonsensical way thus not scoring any marks.

Q8(a)

All examiners have noted that a specific subculture was nearly always correctly identified by candidates, but a sizeable number of students just went on to describe what a generic subculture was rather than identifying a trait specific to their identified subculture. This tended to be the key differentiator between a one and a two mark answer.

Q8(b)

Answers to this question were quite mixed with some candidates struggling to gain two marks as they tended to simply identify an example without a relevant description. Some 'common-sense' answers pertaining to, for example, men wearing suits and women wearing skirts were evident. Also lots of differences described with no identified point; for example men do building jobs and women tend to make the tea. The principal issue here seemed to be an inability to separate out the identified point from the description. The best answers focused on clear sociological issues such as pay, status, type of job, hierarchy, power etc.

Q9

As has already been stated, most candidates showed good time management skills here and were thus able to finish the paper and not jeopardise marks in this last question. The question seems to have effectively differentiated between candidates of various abilities but still a number of one-sided answers were seen. The question clearly asks for points for and against the claim and thus candidates cannot score highly if they fail to follow the rubric here. Centres might want to present this essay question as the 'debate question' or the 'arguing question' and thus encourage candidates to never look at the claim from just one side. This is crucial for success.

The structure for this question was generally very good, with candidates mainly offering a balanced argument that was justified in a conclusion at the end. Some candidates struggled with more than one argument for how the media socialises people into their gender identities, however, and many candidates actually showed stronger knowledge and understanding of the evaluation points. Whilst a balanced argument is not a requirement, the question was about the media and thus this did need to be given adequate time and attention. Knowledge of processes and strategies of socialisation was a little mixed, particularly when discussing the media.

The most common points seen by examiners on the media engaged with concepts such as imitation and role modelling, using a range of apt examples to exemplify them. These tended to be drawn from TV, advertising and magazines predominantly. Conceptual engagement was typically better in evaluation, with some students who cited studies (like Oakley and Postman) and many who discussed processes such as peer pressure, hidden curriculum, canalisation and manipulation. Answers normally ended with conclusions. Stronger conclusions picked a side and justified their reasoning based on the key points made during the essay. Weaker answers tended to lack a range of points or key terms.

TIPS FOR SUCCESS IN QUESTION 9:

Specific focus on this process of socialisation was often the difference between a Level 2 and a Level 3 response.

Candidates should be reminded to ensure they discuss the primary agent in the question (the media) in some detail (including processes) as many moved on too quickly to trying to discuss and evaluate the other agents of socialisation without demonstrating enough knowledge of the main issue.

Conclusions were included by the majority of candidates but too many of these tended to be descriptive and merely repeated the content from the main body of the essay rather than making a clear judgement on the debate.

Examiner hints, tips and advice:

- Ensure candidates have regular practice at the various styles of examination question well before they sit the paper to help with familiarity and to pinpoint any issues that they may have with particular question skills and time management.
- Encourage candidates to keep glossaries of the key terms covered as these will always be needed as a basis for the sociological knowledge and understanding on the examination paper.
- Understanding the command words in the questions correctly will, of course, be crucial to overall success on the paper. The differences between identify, describe, explain, justify, evaluate etc need to be covered by teachers as part of their preparation for the examination.
- For Q5 ensure that candidates understand the requirements of the research plan and are able to appropriately select, describe and justify their choices of methods and evidence within the context of the hypothesis. Remind them of the need to consider sampling for their primary method choices. It is also crucial to remember the context of the investigation as candidates will not be able to score in Level 3 if their response is a generic one.
- For Q9 a one sided answer must be avoided as the key command word is 'evaluate'. Candidates should be encouraged to make a point, explain and expand upon it and give an example. A range of points should be included in the essay. Best practice is to clearly 'flag up' to the examiners when evaluation is occurring via phrases such as 'however', 'on the other hand' etc. A conclusion should be offered to sum up the points made and to make a judgement on the claim.

B672 Socialisation, Culture and Identity

Overall the majority of candidates did follow the rubric to only answer three sections, however there were still some candidates this year who ignored that rubric and attempted the whole paper and thus not scoring well.

The candidates continue to use the answer booklet well and it prevented the time wasting on copying out the statements in the mix and match activity shown in previous sessions. Some candidates still need to be clear when using extra sheets to denote that they have done this and others need to adhere to the rubric that they must only work in the space provided.

Sections A, E and F remain the most popular. A smaller cohort of centres answered Sections B and C, but still only a few candidates answered Section D. These seem to be a couple of centres who had been taught Section D alongside a few errant candidates who either chose to answer the whole paper or thought it looked manageable.

As last year; there seemed to be some centres who clearly taught three of the six sections and their candidates often had enough wide ranging knowledge with detail. However some centres seemed to have opted for teaching more than the required amount of sections. Whilst for some the candidates were still successful, there was evidence that this worked against many. Either they did not have enough wide ranging ideas or detail in their work, or had indecision over which sections to answer which was seen when some then answered too many, others started one section, crossed it out and moved on. It seems preferable to only teach the necessary three options.

General Comments

Strong candidates clearly were prepared for the paper, with sufficient knowledge of sociological evidence to discuss, however the less successful candidates relied largely on common sense. It was pleasing to see far more candidates using a plethora of studies as evidence. This distinction was more apparent on the essay questions and the 8 mark questions. Essay structure remains impressive with some extremely discursive essays. The majority of candidates were able to use evidence both for and against, presenting sustained evaluative arguments on most of the essays. The number of candidates that failed to offer a conclusion again remained low – which again was pleasing. Impressively there were less candidates relying on subtitles to construct their arguments.

The 1 and 2 mark questions requiring candidates to consider the source largely allowed candidates of all abilities to engage with the question and show their analytical skills when asked to answer “from the source”. However, a minority of candidates did not adhere to the instruction and thus failed to gain marks.

The majority of candidates performed well on the multiple choice key concept questions. It was pleasing to see that candidates not only knew the key concepts for the matching activity, but also seemed to consistently use them throughout their answers in an improved fashion in comparison to the old specification. However some concepts still prove trickier than others (discussed later in this report).

Sociological knowledge has correctly been taught in a diverse set of ways with candidates confidently using concepts, but also empirical evidence and many studies alongside contemporary examples referring to cross cultural ideas, subcultural studies and the law. There is a growing use of sociological theory in the candidates work. Largely it is based around a very generic view of Marxism (it is all about money, often just labelling any material discussions as Marxist) and an improving idea of Functionalism. Historically the use of theory has been a

problem for candidates who either are inaccurately using theory or generalising it. However, some centres have taught it well and candidates were showing an impressive and applicable use of theory especially in the Youth and Crime and Deviance sections (to be discussed later in this report). Overall though theory should be used to extend the learning of those who are able to confidently use other forms of evidence as it is not a necessity. Now we are faced with a new problem: too much evidence presented in an almost list like fashion, without fully developing or explaining it.

Evaluative skills have improved overall but now it is clear that candidates need to plan their answers to essays as they often get confused over what the debate is, and whether an idea is for or against the claim. As seen in the mark scheme often ideas can be used for or against a claim, but it is in how it is developed / applied. This needs to be made clear to candidates and they need to practise their application/evaluation skills.

Timing again seemed to be better this year with most candidates using their time wisely spending 30 minutes on each section. However a few did spend far too long giving an unnecessary introduction for their 8 mark questions and thus did not have enough time to write a developed debate for their 24 mark essays, although it appears working in a booklet with a limited amount of space did help. It is still good practice to attempt the whole paper timed before the exam.

Section A – Family

This was by far the most popular Section answered on the paper.

Question One – This year the question tested candidates ability to analyse quantitative data. Candidates largely were able to do this. However, in a minority of cases candidates did not seem prepared for this task. The questions require an answer from the source, and then ask for an answer from the candidates' wider knowledge. Candidates need to ensure the latter answer is not already included in the source. Some did not, and failed to score with answers such as cereal packet families.

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates follow the instructions. In homework give them a mixture of source/wider sociological knowledge questions so they get used to reading the paper carefully. Ensure they practise analysing both quantitative and qualitative data.

Question Two – Most candidates could accurately match all four key concepts. However some candidates did use household unnecessarily.

Examiner tip:

Ensure that candidates are given the list of key concepts for family from the specification. They need to ensure they have a working definition for each and revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Question Three – The majority of candidates could discuss sociological reasons for why families might not be good for everyone. Commonly successful answers chose the dark side of the family with explicit examples of types of abuse and some good contemporary examples such as Baby P, alongside Feminist ideas such as dual burden. There is still a clear divide between candidates who are using the mark scheme to concisely give a reason, use some evidence, explain the increase and develop their answer; with others who fail to use evidence. A few wrote generic answers that seemed to focus more on why people do not want children, not really answering the question. Finally some candidates failed to use two distinct answers thus having too much repetition and overlap to gain full marks.

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format "One reason is... using a separate

paragraph for their second idea. Candidates should practice planning first to ensure two distinct ideas without overlap.

Question Four – All candidates engaged with this question. Those who were most successful could articulate why socialisation may or may not be the most important function of the family. Best responses either discussed the different functions of the family considering which is most important, or they debated whether the family is most important in socialising individuals. Both were able to reach full marks. Some answers successfully structured their response on key areas: norms and values, gender identity, class identity and ethnic identity. There were an impressive amount of studies used such as Parsons, Oakley and case studies on feral children. Functionalist theory was used well, but Marxist theory was more muddled. Overall now candidates need to work on their development of ideas. They should pick fewer ideas (they can gain full marks only debating four ideas), and ensure their ideas are explained and examples are discussed. A few candidates misinterpreted the question debating if families positively or negatively socialise their children. It was good to see less candidates misunderstanding the term socialisation and discussing socialising.

Examiner tip:

Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content. For those who struggle they need to use the sociological ideas learnt in class even if they cannot recall the correct sociological language. Practice essay titles can be found on the OCR website for past papers on the legacy specification. Candidates need to practise developing their ideas.

Section B – Education

Question Five – Most candidates were able to answer all the source based questions dealing with the qualitative data well. However, in a minority of cases candidates did not seem prepared for this task. 5b asked them to *identify and explain one idea*, some misread this and listed two ideas. In this section part of the question requires an answer from the source, where others ask for an answer from the candidate's wider knowledge.

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates follow the instructions. In homework give them a mixture of source/ wider sociological knowledge questions both quantitative and qualitative data so they get used to reading the paper carefully. Also ensure practice includes identify and explain one idea, as well as identify two.....

Question Six – Most candidates were able to match the relevant concept with the appropriate statement, however a small number of candidates were confused by formal and hidden curriculum.

Examiner tip:

Ensure that candidates are given the list of key concepts for education from the specification. They need to ensure they have a working definition for each and revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Question Seven – Most candidates engaged with the question, but less successful candidates failed to evidence their answer with any key concepts. Often answers were uniform and subject choice, but these needed linking to a concept such as hidden curriculum or gender socialisation to gain full marks.

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format “One way is.... This is known as.... An example of this is This shows..... These questions are easy to peer mark, getting candidates to discuss with each other the format should aid candidates to remember to include evidence.

Question Eight - This question divided candidates. There were fewer candidates that failed to understand the concepts streaming and setting but a minority still did and failed to do well, discussing location and rooms (setting). The main issue that held some back was misinterpreting the debate as Setting and Streaming is good, thus they debated the problems vs the benefits and failed to gain evaluative marks. However, many did very well discussing the effects (either positive or negative) of setting and streaming, then debating the weight of them vs the importance of other factors on academic success eg gender, class, ethnicity. Again it was pleasing to see some theory and lots of studies (Willis being a favourite).

Examiner tip:

- Candidates need to gain practice of interpreting what the actual debate is.

Section C Mass Media

Question Nine – Most candidates successfully analysed the quantitative data. However answers differed for 9b. Some did not consider the “global” nature of the question or repeated ideas from the source and thus failed to score. Successful answers to 9b used ideas such as social networking using Facebook connecting migrant workers to their families.

Question Ten – This was generally well answered, although some candidates confused bias/stereotyping.

Examiner tip:

Ensure that candidates are given the list of key concepts for Mass Media from the specification. They need to ensure they have a working definition for each and revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Question Eleven – This was a well answered question with candidates often able to find two distinct ways the media is controlled. Common answers were the audience, editors and owners. Strong responses contained some theory such as Pluralist vs Marxist ideas.

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format “One way the media is controlled is by .. This is known as An example of this is..... This shows control the media.

Question Twelve – Candidates engaged well with this debate, some providing excellent answers full of evidence. They knew the differing models of media effects and had some excellent contemporary examples. For some though applying their ideas to the debate was difficult and they failed to explain if their model was proving or disproving the claim. For this essay the evidence can be used interchangeably for or against the claim depending on the development/application. A minority failed to use evidence to discuss the debate using a common sense discussion of celebrities and the affect they have individually had on their audience.

Examiner tip:

- Candidates need to practise interpreting exam questions, carefully considering plans for an answer and whether material proves or disproves the statement.

- Candidates need practice in focussing on the full claim ie ensuring in this case their examples illustrated effects on “behaviour”.

Section D – Work

As mentioned this section was only answered by a minority of candidates. Overall there was an improvement in answers for this section.

Question Thirteen – Most candidates were able to analyse the quantitative data. However some chose to elaborate on their answers unnecessarily. Some candidates seem unprepared for question 13b. Others scored well discussing discrimination, unequal pay amongst other ideas.

Examiner tip:

Candidates need to review negative experiences at work.

Question Fourteen – Most candidates’ answers showed a good knowledge of the key concepts. However there were some who confused computerisation and automation.

Examiner tip:

Ensure that candidates are given the list of key concepts for work from the specification. They need to ensure they have a working definition for each and revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Question Fifteen – Many candidates answered this well focussing on intrinsic and extrinsic reasons to work. Some failed to use sociological concepts, but the majority engaged with the question, giving two distinct answers.

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question planning their answers and including sociological evidence.

Question Sixteen – There were some excellent answers by some candidates who chose to discuss the effects of gender on employment vs ethnicity and class. The most successful responses contained a variety of evidence: concepts such as horizontal and vertical segregation; theory outlining Marxist and Feminist ideas; laws such as the 1975 Sex Discrimination Act. Candidates who did less well wrote almost anecdotal answers such as women can do anything vs women get stereotyped.

Examiner tip:

Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content. For those who struggle they need to use the sociological ideas learnt in class even if they cannot recall the correct sociological language. Practice essay titles can be found on the OCR in past papers.

Section E – Crime and Deviance

This section was as popular as Family, with most centres answering it.

Question Seventeen – Most candidates were successful in analysing the quantitative data. However 17c divided candidates. Some were not prepared for “Identify **and** explain” and just noted two ideas. Others failed to use *another way of measuring crime* often explaining other self-report ideas (as in the source). Successful answers explained official statistics or victim studies.

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates follow the instructions. In homework give them a mixture of source/ wider sociological knowledge questions both quantitative and qualitative data so they get used to reading the paper carefully. Also ensure practice includes identify and explain one idea, as well as identify two.....

Question Eighteen – This question was well answered. Most candidates were able to accurately match the concept and the statement. However there were a few candidates that did not read the statements properly and got confused over deviance and situational deviance.

Examiner tip:

Ensure that candidates are given the list of key concepts for Crime and Deviance from the specification. They need to ensure they have a working definition for each and revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Question Nineteen – Candidates did well to explain two solutions to crime. However a minority did misread the question offering two reasons people commit crime. Whilst most managed to gain A01 marks as they knew the names of solutions, a minority took the question more holistically ie more prevention, more youth clubs then forgetting to ensure some concepts/evidence were included.

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format “One solution to crime is.... This is when..... This will solve crime because.....

Question Twenty – All candidates could engage with this debate. Some responses were so impressive they were of an AS level standard. These candidates used a variety of evidence such as: studies (Cohen, Willis, Katz, Miller), concepts (self-fulfilling prophecy, status frustration, sense of belonging), theory (Postmodernism and Marxism). However a minority struggled to provide evidence offering common sense explanations and examples of peer pressure. Annually the mark scheme shows that an uneven debate can gain full marks and often the best answers contained a wide ranging discussion of why the hypothesis is incorrect with only one idea why it was correct. There is still some confusion for some candidates over the meaning of status frustration, but many other difficult concepts were used accurately and well.

Examiner tip:

- Review the meaning of status frustration.
- Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content. For those who struggle they need to use the sociological ideas learnt in class even if they cannot recall the correct sociological language. Practice essay titles can be found on the OCR website for past papers on the legacy specification.

Section F – Youth

Question twenty-one: Candidates largely interpreted the data/source accurately. Some candidates repeated their answers for 21b from 21a ignoring the instructions *not included in the source* stating peer group or family.

Question twenty-two: Largely candidates successfully matched their concepts to the right statements. However there was some confusion on loss of innocence and social construction of youth.

Examiner tip:

Ensure that candidates are given the list of key concepts for youth from the specification. They need to ensure they have a working definition for each and revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Question twenty-three – There were many excellent responses to this question with candidates focussing on two rites of passage. Popular answers were Bar Mitzvah and one of the many cross cultural examples. Answers that failed to score highly lacked detail/evidence eg One rite of passage is learning to drive. Without stating an age/country this cannot receive full A01 marks (see mark scheme for further examples).

Examiner tip:

Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format “One rite of passage is.... This happens in (state country/tribe/age). It is a rite of passage where (detail of what it includes) This is a rite of passage because..... (relate to a transitional age phase.)

Question twenty-four – There were some impressive answers to this question The most successful candidates unpicked the statement “shared interests” evidencing for the argument with studies and examples of subcultures that share interests in clothing, politics and music such as Hebdige’s work on Goths. Candidates that scored less well did not give detail offering ideas such as “yes because Goths like the same music and clothes” without explaining what their similar tastes would include. As written in the mark scheme full marks were awarded for an uneven debate due to the plethora of evidence against the hypothesis. Some candidates struggled to make a clear debate as often ideas could be used for or against the statement. However the successful responses showed that a clear debate is maintained through their application of ideas (see mark scheme). Candidates that did less well repeated ideas and struggled to use evidence/detail.

Overall tip:

Candidates need to practise planning their essays to ensure clarity over which side of the debate they are arguing.

B673 Applying Sociological Research Techniques

Introduction

B673, Applying Sociological Research Techniques in 2013 was the fourth time this examination paper has been offered as part of the revised GCSE specification.

This paper continues to be weighted towards the testing of skills. There is a basic structure to the paper but within sections A and B the format of the questions changes each year. Candidates are examined on their knowledge and understanding of sociological research techniques but they also need to demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills of interpretation to the pre-release investigations made available in January of the year of the examination. Candidates are expected to have studied the pre-release material prior to the examination and to have gained a sound knowledge of it. A copy of the pre-release is made available to them for reference during the exam.

As the J696 specification does not have tiered assessment papers, the B673 examination has questions structured to test the ability range from A* to G grade candidates. It is therefore anticipated that some candidates will find particular questions eg questions 6, 12 and 13 this year, to be challenging. Conversely, all candidates should find some parts of the examination paper to be accessible.

Teachers in centres are to be commended for the work they have done in the classroom with their candidates. It was clear that most had a good understanding and knowledge of the pre-release material and had been prepared well for the exam.

Question 1 (a)

This was a straight forward question and was generally answered correctly. Where mistakes were made candidates had often selected an example stated before the bullet points or newspapers, so careful reading was needed. Some candidates took an example from Investigation 2 instead of Investigation 1 so gained no marks. Candidates were required to select directly from the pre-release so answers such as 'magazines' or 'video games' were not credited.

Question 1 (b)

Most candidates answered correctly. Incorrect answers were mostly selected from the bullet points. The most common mistake was magazines.

Question 2 (a)

Most candidates scored here with the most common mark being one. Many candidates were able to identify ethical as 'moral' or 'morally right', and some were able to give an example, relating to harm, danger or consent for the second mark. However, those who identified ethical research as that which is 'right or wrong' were not credited. Most candidates who gained one mark were only able to give an example. Some confused 'ethical' with 'ethnic' and wrote a response about researching different types of ethnic groups. A number of candidates made vague statements such as 'fair', 'rights', not causing offence, or abiding by norms and values and so did not gain any marks.

Question 2 (b)

This question was answered well with clearly explained points. Few candidates scored zero and the most common mark was four. For some, explanation was weaker and candidates were able to identify an aspect from the study but did not explain why it was unethical. Sometimes the explanation given was repeated for both points, ie 'no consent given'.

Question 3 (a)

Most candidates had a good understanding of a 'closed question' and gained two marks. However, some did not achieve both marks for this question because their explanation did not refer to what it 'is' but what it 'produces' ie quantitative data. Many gave the example of a 'yes/no' question, and some gave an example from the pre-release which without explanation gained one mark. Candidates who stated a closed question to be one which allows only yes or no as the answer and gave no further information were not credited.

Questions 3 (b) and 3 (c)

Few candidates did not gain the one mark for each of the two questions. A small number confused open and closed questions.

Question 4 (a)

This question was generally answered well with over half of the candidates gaining both marks. Most candidates could identify that quantitative data was numerical, and could state what it produces using the idea of statistics, graphs or tables. Some candidates simply identified rather than described eg it's data with numbers. Quite a lot of candidates said what quantitative data is not. A minority of candidates confused quantitative with qualitative data and therefore didn't gain any marks.

Question 4 (b)

Most candidates gained marks with the most common score being one. Although many candidates did respond with answers about lacking validity or not having depth, many did not explain their answer in further detail. Those who gained both marks generally explained 'lacks depth/ information' with 'can't tell what the person was really thinking' or focused on reasons for responses could not be gained. Many confused reliability and validity in this question and some candidates confused quantitative and qualitative data.

Question 5 (a)

Most answered correctly. Those who didn't had simply selected another number from the table, usually 55.

Question 5 (b)

This was answered well, most identifying rap music, hatred of authority or ending of EMA.

Question 5 (c)

Most candidates answered correctly. Those who were not credited had tried to reword it in their own way, even though they clearly understood the findings made. A few also tried to give their own summary of the experiment.

Question 6

This question was a good differentiator. Many candidates accurately identified reasons why the sources may have been useful or not and gained level two marks. Responses tended to be split into two types. Those who could make the link to studying violent behaviour were then able to do this well for at least two and often all three sources and give evaluation points. There were some excellent answers. However there were also many who were limited to three marks because their answer focussed on two or more comments about the usefulness of the sources. Some did this in depth but missed out on marks by not making the link to the issue. In general, disadvantages were much more developed than advantages. Some candidates did not gain mark six because they did not give an advantage and a disadvantage. A minority of candidates misunderstood the question and made reference to the primary research instead ie the questionnaires.

Question 7

This was answered well although a small number of candidates did not gain the mark because they had tried to reword in their own way, even though they clearly understood the hypothesis.

Question 8 (a)

Generally this question was answered quite well. Many candidates demonstrated understanding of the concept of sampling by referring to groups of people being selected and developed this by alluding to this group taking part in research, which was enough to get them the marks. However, some candidates who were able to define sampling correctly would use a sampling technique as the explanation so gained only one mark. Fewer candidates indicated that it should be representative or cross-sectional. A surprising number of candidates confused sample with pilot study.

Question 8 (b)

There were many, including higher scoring candidates, who did not gain these two marks because they gave types of sampling techniques instead eg snowball, stratified. However, there were also many who gained the two marks easily by taking the correct information from the pre-release. A few candidates did a mixture of both and gained one mark.

Question 9 (a)

Most candidates answered correctly.

Question 9 (b)

A small minority of candidates gained two marks but over half missed the second mark because they failed to describe the conclusion fully using evidence from the table. Many gave simple responses such as 'soaps were most popular' but nothing more and therefore could only gain one mark. Many candidates also created their own explanations by surmising how it might link to the hypothesis, for example, comments about how it proves women are stereotyped. There were also many who seemed to make it too difficult for themselves by trying to add up all of the figures etc and often giving a confused or incorrect answer as a result.

Question 10 (a)

The majority of candidates answered correctly. Those who didn't showed a lack of understanding of the term method. Some candidates incorrectly identified other methods, or stated 'Meehan' or 'watching soaps'.

Question 10 (b)

Most candidates answered this correctly. Those who did not score the mark generally gave the description of the stereotype instead eg by identifying a happy housewife instead of the good wife.

Question 10 (c)

The majority of candidates answered the question correctly. Most identified it was out of date or came from America.

Question 11 (a)

This question was not answered well overall. A small minority of candidates gained two marks. Many candidates only achieved one mark as they either did not include an explanation or included an explanation which did not link to the advantage identified. Answers were largely focused on 'cheap', 'easy to access' but then no worthy explanation followed. Where an explanation was given it was vague or not media focussed. Some candidates gave a general advantage of secondary sources. Some candidates listed a number of different advantages but no explanations. Almost half of the candidates scored no marks.

Question 11 (b)

This question was answered much better than 11a with some very well explained responses. Where candidates gained only two marks, it was often for identification of issues like 'bias', 'exaggeration', 'distortion' but failing to explain why these were disadvantages. Quite a lot of candidates used the same explanation twice, ie not valid, or confused valid and reliable.

Question 12

Many candidates demonstrated a good and developed understanding of the method of unstructured interviews, identifying and explaining the advantages of unstructured interviews. However, few were credited above level two because they did not apply this to the context of representation of women in the media. The most common mark was three, gained by almost half of the candidates. Conversely, some had weaker knowledge and understanding of unstructured interviews but gained the same mark by applying this to the issue. Few candidates were unable to score at least one or two marks.

Question 13

As in previous years, this question is designed to be a discriminator. However, there were very few candidates who did not attempt the question and even at the lower end, candidates found it to be accessible.

There were many good answers which looked at specific advantages and disadvantages of all three questionnaires and samples and made well developed points. At the top end the candidates were able to apply these to the influence of the media and made good observations about how the findings may help the study of different aspects of media effects. Application marks were awarded quite flexibly and candidates who referred to any areas highlighted in the pre-release such as representation and violence as well as any other areas of the media were credited.

A large majority of candidates were credited in level two with marks of six and seven being the most common. This was mainly due to a lack of application of their knowledge to the context of studying the influence of the media which meant that some excellent answers relating to the quality of the questionnaires and sampling methods could not gain more than eight marks.

In general, candidates referred to all three questionnaires but tended to focus more in-depth on questionnaires 1 and 2. Unfortunately, many of the candidates wrote repetitive advantages or disadvantages for questionnaires 1 and 2. Many candidates focussed entirely on disadvantages, and this then limited their mark. Some candidates when discussing the questionnaires simply focussed on listing mainly bad points about the questions and their wording for example, but didn't develop these points to explain the significance and show real understanding. Overall, development of advantages and disadvantages could have been a lot stronger in order to explain their significance.

Often where evaluation was credited, the only advantages mentioned were very limited and tended to be related to the inclusion of both open and closed questions or of advantages of questionnaires in general rather than specific strengths. Some candidates were able to provide a developed and more balanced debate but even very good answers that were scoring within Level 3 were still imbalanced with candidates finding it difficult to pull out the advantages.

A minority of candidates simply described some of the basic advantages and/or disadvantages of questionnaires in general and were therefore limited to level one. A minority of candidates also read the question incorrectly and wrote a descriptive account of the secondary sources, or included the sources as part of their response.

In the candidate's responses, references to the questionnaires tended to be more frequent than references to sampling. Although where sampling was mentioned, the points made were generally good.

Some candidates had tried to structure their work with a conclusion to weigh up their points, but in some cases this was just repetition which may have wasted time. The studies were often dealt with very separately with this kind of conclusion simply tagged on to the end. In contrast the best answers at the top end were able to successfully interweave the studies with a compare and contrast style evaluation, though there were few who took this approach.

Overall, the use of sociological language was very strong. Some candidates demonstrated an excellent knowledge of a range of sociological concepts and these were used appropriately throughout their answers. However, some candidates showed a lack of understanding by using them incorrectly. In particular, the concepts reliability and validity being used together or interchangeably was common, even by high achieving candidates.

Candidates at the lower end did attempt to use sociological language but in addition to some inaccuracy, they also tended to repeat the same terminology referring to issues such as the questionnaires being biased or containing open and closed questions.

Overall Comments

Generally, there was a much lower level of 'No Response' than in previous years and candidates seemed to give more developed responses. The general use of sociological concepts was varied, with some candidates using a sophisticated range and many not using them at all. A particularly repeated error was the use of 'reliable' where 'valid' is intended, or the use of both terms together indicating a lack of understanding of either.

Most candidates were familiar with the two pre-release investigations. In particular, it was evident that study and consideration of the questionnaires as a research method had been undertaken.

In general, when candidates are asked to use the source to identify information, they are doing so with accuracy and appear to be less likely than in previous years to make amendments or re-phrase. As in previous years, the main reason for candidates not scoring marks was through not making explicit links to the pre-release investigations or the topic of the investigations.

Overall candidates performed well, showing a good understanding of research techniques and issues related to research such as ethical considerations.

The majority of candidates attempted to answer each question and there was a range of marks; suggesting that the paper was successful in being accessible to candidates from A*-G grades.

Most candidates were able to plan their time well and complete all the questions. Many candidates used additional sheets to complete question 13 and in some cases very long and developed answers were given.

Guidance

Candidates must be familiar with all aspects of the pre-release and in particular any concepts used within it. In addition to having a general understanding of the concepts in the relevant part of the specification, they must also be able to define and explain the concepts with accuracy. They should also be encouraged to provide an example to support their answer as this could enable a weak explanation to gain 2 marks.

Candidates must be aware that if the question concludes with, 'as used in Investigation 1 / 2', they must relate to some aspect of the investigation in their answer. It must be noted that the title of the unit is *Applying Sociological Research Techniques*. Candidates must be reminded to follow the instruction at the top of Section A and Section B of the exam paper to gain the large number of application marks available.

Candidates should be encouraged to practice the drawing of conclusions from different types of sources of data and using information from the source to support them.

Candidates must be very clear about the difference between validity and reliability and must be encouraged to use them appropriately and not interchangeably.

Question 13 tests evaluation skills so candidates must be prepared for this extended answer question so they consider both sides of the debate ie both advantages and disadvantages.

Teachers in centres should encourage their candidates to research the secondary sources further as all are genuine studies or data. They should also encourage candidates in class activities to carry out the primary research methods in order to gain an experiential understanding of their strengths and weaknesses.

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