GCSE

Sociology

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J696**

OCR Report to Centres June 2015

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This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and Candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which marks were awarded by examiners. It does not indicate the details of the discussions which took place at an examiners' meeting before marking commenced.

All examiners are instructed that alternative correct answers and unexpected approaches in Candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the relevant knowledge and skills demonstrated.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the published question papers and the report on the examination.

OCR will not enter into any discussion or correspondence in connection with this mark scheme.

CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Sociology (J696)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

B671 Sociology Basics

General Comments:

This year's paper was felt to have been set at an appropriate level, having questions that were accessible to the lower end of the ability range yet still successfully stretching the upper end. The team as a whole felt that the questions were varied and engaging, and a number of questions were answered very well indeed, demonstrating some really good knowledge of sociology.

In general most areas of the specification appear to have been taught thoroughly and well, although a small number of candidates appeared to be unclear about non-participant observation, media materials, status and secondary socialisation. There was evidence that many Candidates had been prepared well for this examination by Centres 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 so for example they often described in places where they were required to explain, or they ignored the instruction to evaluate.. Centres are to be reminded that all areas of the specification can be examined and it is thus essential that Candidates are prepared for all of these.

Most Candidates showed at least a basic knowledge of sociological concepts and methods. Given the linear structure of the examination, many were using knowledge and concepts from their B672 topics to good effect here, and this seems to have helped them with conceptual engagement and application. Essay technique was generally good, with a lot of Candidates writing extended, discursive pieces. Very few bullet-pointed responses were seen for q9, suggesting that most Candidates had enough time to fully consider and answer all questions on the paper and thus to maximise their marks.

Overall, the examining team felt that the paper had done what it set out to do and had again successfully tested Candidates of all abilities on the 'basics' of Sociology at GCSE level.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A – Research Methods and Evidence

Q1

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

Q2

This question was typically very well answered this year, with most Candidates scoring highly. The question is best approached as one about representativeness and generalisability, and Candidates should therefore focus their answer on issues of sampling and the key word '**all**' in the question The most commonly seen answers discussed the small sample size – one class and one school - the composition of the sample of the Year 8 History Candidates and the fact the research was only completed in one place, Blackpool.

Marks are not awarded here for those Candidates who identify and discuss accuracy/bias issues. Centres are therefore advised to give their Candidates plenty of pieces of evidence and data to analyse for these types of issues; old legacy papers as well as past Basics papers should prove useful, but to give Candidates as much practice as possible, centres can also set their own questions using a topical piece of data from, say, the media. In this question Candidates are best advised to choose two points that are sufficiently different to allow them to clearly demonstrate their sociological knowledge and understanding and to ensure that they are not simply repeating themselves. A number , for example, used "…so it is not representative" as their explanation for both identified points. Points need to be specific to the source date and Candidates should therefore not talk generically here.

Q3

A wide variety of responses was seen by the examining team, and the question appears to have differentiated successfully. A surprising number of Candidates were not able to talk specifically about the advantages and disadvantages of non-participant observation. It is essential that all methods and evidence on the specification are covered in order to ensure a full understanding of the issues. Common advantages offered were the ability to remain objective, the ease of note-taking and the avoidance of possible overt ethical issues. As disadvantages Candidates typically mentioned the possible lack of validity if the Hawthorne effect occurred, the inability to achieve a full understanding because not taking part and the inability to ask questions in order to further understanding. The command word, 'describe', was usually well observed, with only a very few Candidates giving a one-word answer. Some Candidates gave only generic methodological advantages and disadvantages which in fact didn't centre round non-participant observations - or even sometimes on observation at all. It is obviously crucial that Candidates pay close attention to the method/evidence required by the question, and tailor their responses accordingly. Similarly, there can be no credit for just stating that something is valid or reliable or that something provides quantitative or qualitative data, without providing evidential detail .

Q4(ai)

Most Candidates successfully identified the media material from the research (TV or News), although there were some that clearly did not know what was meant by 'media materials'.

Q4(aii)

Most Candidates were able to identify an ethical issue found in Source B, and the majority described something relevant to a lack of informed consent. However, there were still a number of Candidates who did not know what was meant by an 'ethical issue', and they obviously did not score the mark.

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. Issues with the representativeness of the sample were not credited. There was a really good focus by Candidates in this session, indicating again that Centres are making good use of the guidance and advice in previous Principal Examiner's reports. Candidates typically focused on the biased nature of the media, and memory issues with both Lynne and Gran. Centres are advised to give Candidates plenty of practice with this style of question and to make good use of past question papers – both Basics and legacy papers. Candidates often identified their point well, though some faltered on the explanation, and sometimes generic explanations were repeated, "…so is not accurate", for example. Some Candidates' explanations were also brief or confused and may have therefore been annotated with 'VG'. Candidates should be encouraged to write a clear and separate sentence to explain the lack of accuracy of each of their identified points.

Q5

Candidates seem to have generally been very well prepared by Centres, so only a very small minority of Candidates misinterpreted the question and answered this as an essay. This is a standard question format where the context and focus will change, and thus it is crucial that Candidates are trained in how to answer it and given lots of practice opportunities. The bullet-point prompts appear to have helped Candidates to focus on the issues of research and evidence required to do well here.

There was generally a good response again this year. The hypothesis was usually understood well. Most Candidates could identify two primary methods as well as secondary evidence, and the majority provided some additional details and development. A small handful described content analysis as secondary evidence, and this needs to be avoided. Most Candidates paid at least lip service to context when describing the samples and reasons for their choices, and some tackled the issue of age comparison really well indeed. Candidates failed to sometimes pick up on the difference between representation/generalisability and accuracy/reliability, and so threw these in somewhat at random – often in the final paragraph. To be credited as conceptual engagement and justification, these need to be used accurately and appropriately. Some answers had aspects of evaluation which didn't attract many marks, as the question is about justifying a research design, rather than discussing general disadvantages. Centres are advised to remind Candidates that this is an application question.

High level and accurate concepts were duly rewarded in the better L3 responses, demonstrating some excellent sociological knowledge and understanding (validity, rapport, bias, generalisations, Hawthorne Effect etc.). The question was accessible to all but also differentiated well between Candidates of various different abilities, – most scoring within Level 2, basic. As one might expect, the level of justification for methodological choices differed quite widely, with the lower end typically focussing on practicalities (e.g. quick and easy, cheap) whilst others were able to link choices to issues of validity, representativeness, reliability etc. Low-scoring scripts simply lacked simply due to a lack of detail and development. Some Candidates also neglected context, which is crucial in this question – Candidates will not be able to score in Level 3 without providing a context for the investigation. Most of the better answers made good use of the additional space in the answer booklet to provide further appropriate development of points and ideas.

Centres will help Candidates if they ensure that Candidates cover the required two primary methods plus a piece of secondary evidence in their discussion. Some Candidates referred to content analysis as secondary evidence, for example; but in the specification this is clearly a primary method. This immediately cost them marks and meant that they could not score within Level 3. A lack of detail and depth on how the method/evidence would be used was also noticed by the examining team in several answers. Similarly, quite a few really good responses remained at the top of Level 2 because the third method/evidence was dealt with only briefly and its inclusion in the research plan was not justified. Focusing on these issues should really help Centres to boost the marks achieved 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. Very few selected the red herring as an answer. A significant number incorrectly matched 'formal social control' to 'the process of learning the correct behaviour, norms and values in society'.

To help Candidates in learning their key concepts, Centres may wish to consider encouraging them to compile their own 'key concepts' glossaries based on the specification. Key concepts can also be used in games such as 'Articulate' as a starter, mid-way review or plenary in a lesson, and will cultivate clarity in Candidates' answers, whilst also being an activity that they really enjoy.

Q7(a)

This was answered well, with most Candidates scoring the mark for 'housewife'. Those that didn't gain the mark either didn't understand what was meant by 'stereotypical' or ignored the instruction to use Source C.

7(b)

Most ,were able to answer this question successfully, although some failed to link their chosen identity with a specific gender, i.e. they simply stated 'nurse' or 'builder'. This was not credited.

7(c)

A wide range of answers was seen here. Many Candidates referred to roles in the home or changes in male and female work habits. Some Candidates missed the second mark because they combined points rather than explaining their identified point clearly. Others failed to explicitly discuss the change in gender norms, and so their explanation mark suffered.

Q7(d)

Most Candidates were able to identify two ways in which individuals are socialised into their gender identities, typically discussing canalisation, manipulation, subject choices and role models. However, most explanations were vague and did not clearly explain why, for example, "girls are given dolls, and boys are given guns to play with", omitting to explain: "thereby preparing girls for motherhood". Many referred to manipulation and canalisation here, but again vague explanations often referred to what these are or simply gave examples, rather than providing the explanation required by the question.

Q8(a)

Response was mixed here, with some Candidates not being clear as to what is meant by the term 'status'. This is disappointing, as it is a core component of the specification. Those who did know the concept typically described 'ascribed' or 'achieved' status, with a few also focusing on 'high' status. Several confused it with 'identity' or 'role', which could not be credited, and some merely stated: "a type of status is ascribed". It is therefore crucial that Centres be sure to cover and illustrate all key concepts equally in order to help Candidates with their descriptions.

Q8(b)

A range of agents were referred to here, as expected. Most Candidates were then able to describe clearly and accurately the particular agent chosen. However, a few Candidates did not refer to an agent and mentioned an example instead, e.g. 'friends' or 'school' instead of 'peers' or 'education'. Some also were too general in their description, referring to 'teaching norms and values' rather than going on to clearly explain the processes of control of the specific agent identified.

Q9

Most Candidates showed good time-management skills and were thus able to finish the paper and not jeopardise marks in this crucial last question. The question seems to have effectively differentiated between Candidates of various abilities, but there was a number of answers only one-side long. These are so short as to be likely to reduce the marks that can be awarded. The question clearly asks for points for and against the claim and thus Candidates cannot score highly if they fail to follow this rubric. Centres might want to practise this essay question as a 'debate question' or 'arguing question' and thus encourage Candidates never to look at just one side of an argument. This is crucial for success.

Essay structure for this question was generally very good, with Candidates mainly offering a balanced argument that was summed up in a conclusion at the end. Candidates need to aim for range, detail, examples, development and conceptual engagement in their answers. Some Candidates struggled to talk specifically about agents and processes of primary and secondary socialisation and produced instead a generic response with a lack of relevant points. The Candidates that did engage with specific agents used this to their advantage, referring to the specific processes of socialisation and using relevant examples and concepts to illustrate their case.

Some Candidates got side-tracked into discussing social control, and devoted whole paragraphs to the police and courts. A few also spoke of peers/school being solely primary agents. Many received low marks due to their answers being largely common-sense or providing only a narrow range of points/agencies. Many referred to good case studies, such as Oxana Malaya or Genie, to illustrate the importance of primary socialisation for individuals.

Most answers ended with conclusions. Stronger conclusions picked one side of the argument and justified their reasoning referring to the key points made during the essay; although some also recognized that perhaps there is no simple answer and that the effectiveness of a sanction actually depends upon the individual in question (age, gender, status etc.).

B672 Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments:

This year's paper was felt to have been set at an appropriate level, having questions accessible to the lower end of the ability range whilst still successfully stretching the upper end. The team as a whole felt that the questions were varied and engaging, and a number of questions were answered very well indeed.

In general most areas of the specification appear to have been taught thoroughly and well. However, in a minority of areas there seemed to be some inconsistency. The majority of Candidates were able to access the one and two mark questions, although a small minority did struggle with these. Candidates attempted all 6 sections, with only a minority answering only the one and two markers. Most sections showed a variety of responses, with Crime and Deviance, Youth and Family being the most popular.

As last year, there were some extremely good scripts, with Candidates answering at a level above GCSE standard. These included concepts such as university of crime and correct use of theory. Examiners were again pleased to note that more Candidates are using theory. However, whilst some Candidates used theory correctly, weaker Candidates continue to just drop in words such as New Right, Functionalism, Marxist, either with no explanation, or with a generic or wrong explanation. Theory should be used to stretch those at the top end, but in no way is an expectation at GCSE. Again it was impressive to see so much empirical knowledge used. An increasing number of Candidates are trying to use statistics as evidence. Whilst this is welcome, and scores accordingly, statistics need to be sourced and accurate.

Handwriting and spelling presented problems in a very small number of cases. It is worth noting that it is important that Candidates do write clearly to avoid any adverse effect on the interpretation of their work. It will also be helpful if Centres train Candidates to notify examiners when they continue their answers elsewhere, such as on extra paper. Similarly, Candidates should be sure to label their questions.

1 markers

Overall most Candidates could answers questions from the source, but Centres should remind Candidates that they should not be repeating ideas from the source.

Mix and match

On the whole well answered.

8-markers

High-scoring Candidates clearly separated out their ideas and gave examples to illustrate points. Those scoring the highest mark clearly formatted their answers to suit the question, e.g. "One idea is… this is when …which means/the implications of this …".

A number failed to develop their answer or merely repeated the question. The elimination of these faults should be focused on in class. In addition,on some of the questions noted below, Candidates did not read the question carefully and so misinterpreted what it was asking for. This year some Candidates lost marks by using the same explanation/development for both ideas. Tips/examples of how to improve on this are shown in the topic sections.

24-mark question

Examiners noted that at the top end, Candidates are increasingly capable of writing a discursive essay. The teaching of connectives was clearly evident in the essays, helping Candidates to explicitly demonstrate their understanding and manipulation of ideas. This helped Candidates achieve the top level.

This year fewer Candidates are using subtitles to illustrate a two sided argument, a practicewhich restricts their AO3 marks; there is no need to do this if connectives are effectively taught.

In this session, many Candidates provided a conclusion as required by the mark scheme if full marks are to be achieved on AO3. But there did seem to be a slight increase in the numbers of Candidates not offering a conclusion.

Again this year some very strong essays suffered because Candidates did not fully develop their ideas. Similarly, weaker Candidates did not consistently use evidence in their essays, and this prevented them scoring in the higher levels.

Candidates seem to have again used their time wisely, spending 30 minutes on each section. As the years go by, this continues to improve. It is still very useful to attempt timed practice of a whole paper before the exam. This should help prevent the situation whereby a minority of good Candidates do very well on their first two sections - some even gaining full marks for both - but then have insufficient time to do well on their third section, thus reducing their overall mark.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A – Family

This continues to be a popular Section answered on the paper.

Question One – Well answered by the majority of Candidates. However, a minority of Candidates could not accurately name two types of families that have increased due to divorce.

Examiner tip:
Ensure that Candidates follow the instructions. Provide them with a mixture of source/wider sociological knowledge questions so they get used to reading the paper carefully.

Question Two – Most Candidates could accurately match all four key concepts.

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 should revise these thoroughly. Ideas for revision games relevant to the schemes of work are available on the OCR website.

Question Three – Successful Candidates used primary socialisation and discussed the norms and values that are basic, alongside evidence from Parsons, with Oakley showing gender socialisation through canalisation and manipulation. However, some failed to score as they confused this question with functions of the family, thereby discussing irrelevant ideas that were not examples of socialisation.

Examiner tip:
Ensure Candidates practise for the 8-mark question. They need to be able to separately identify and explain. Show Candidates a clear format: "One way in which families socialise individuals is gender socialisation. This is achieved by…"

Question Four – Whilst all Candidates could attempt the question in some way, there were some who confused it with whether the traditional family is good. These lost time and marks discussing whether Feminists or Marxists thought the traditional family disadvantaged some, rather than

debating whether the traditional family exists. Overall there seemed a better understanding of the JU arguments than the EVAL. Good knowledge was evident, including Oakley, Wilmott and Young and Sue Sharpe.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to plan essays, being sure to display sociological content and understanding of the debate. Those who struggle 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.

Section B – Education

Q5

Whilst many could at least name one, some Candidates were unprepared either for this or for citing changes that preceded 1988. Teachers must be careful to check the specification for dates on what is required knowledge.

Examiner tip: Ensure dates are learnt when teaching changes to education.

Q6

Most Candidates knew some of the concepts. However, there was still evidence of confusion between setting and streaming.

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.

Q7

Candidates had been prepared for this question, but need to ensure they can provide some conceptual evidence for each idea.

Examiner tip:
Ensure that Candidates practise for the 8-mark question. They need to be able to separately identify and explain. Show Candidates a clear format: "One function of education is social control. This is achieved through…".

Q8

Most Candidates engaged with the debate. Often there were good answers: many Candidates were able to articulate both sides, using good key concepts. However some were confused about the meaning of cultural deprivation, linking it to lack of money for trips or to students from ethnic backgrounds not understanding the language. This seemed more of an issue this year than any other time this section of the syllabus was examined. Best responses considered a wide debate and considered the role of family/peer group/government and identities such as ethnicity/class and gender.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to practice using concepts throughout their essays. They should practice their evaluative skills to ensure clarity.

Section C – Mass Media

Q9

Candidates were able to analyse the source, but some were confused by the second part of the question. Instead of discussing how audiences affect content, they wrote how media affects the audience.

Examiner tip:
Ensure that Candidates are demonstrating accurate understanding of questions by practising interpretation.

Q10

Most Candidates were well prepared for this mix and match

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.

Q11

This question was answered well by those Candidates who were prepared for a question on ownership and trends. However, a number seemed ill prepared. Some tried to answer the question by discussing ownership but not as trends. Ideas for accurate answers can be seen on the mark scheme.

Examiner tip:
1   Ensure that Candidates practise for the 8-mark question. They need to be able to separately identify and explain. Show Candidates a clear format: "One trend in media ownership is... This is when…".
2   Teachers should check the mark scheme to ensure they are teaching the necessary sociological content required by the question.

Q12

This essay really differentiated the Candidates. Whilst all engaged on some level, there was a clear distinction between those who had prepared and considered the debate, as opposed to those who tried to answer the question using merely common sense, including a small minority who did not even understand the term 'censorship'. Best responses were wide-ranging, with lots of excellent contemporary examples.

Examiner tip:
1   Candidates need to plan essays so as to provide sociological content. Practice essay titles can be found on the OCR website for past papers.

Section D: Work

This section was again only answered by a minority of candidates. There was an improvement in answers for the few that answered this section.

Q13

Most Candidates were able correctly analyse the data.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to be able to retrieve information from unseen sources, both qualitative and quantitative. Teachers should ensure Candidates practise this skill.

Q14

Most Candidates were prepared for this mix and match.

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.

Q15

Candidates managed to engage with the question, but often did not substantiate their ideas with evidence. To gain full marks, they must provide sustained use of evidence, i.e. both ideas must have a concept/study/statistic. Terms such as 'discrimination' and 'ageism' were expected for full marks. Often answers were accurate but simplistic, e.g. "The old will not be employed because they may die soon and young are not employed because they lack experience".

Examiner tip:
1	Ensure that Candidates practise for the 8-mark question. They need to be able to separately identify and explain. Show Candidates a clear format: format "One way is… This is when…".

Q16

Whilst all Candidates could engage with this debate, weaker answers relied on commons sense and offered no substantiation. The best responses discussed alienation, de-skilling, re-skilling and even Marxism.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to plan essays and provide sociological content. Those who struggle 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.

Section E – Crime and Deviance

This section was the most popular, with most Centres answering it.

Q17

Most Candidates were able to analyse and interpret the source. However, some did lose marks by repeating ideas in several of their answers. Some also failed to score because they gave generic crimes without relating them to age.

Examiner tip:
Ensure that Candidates practise source questions, in which they must adhere to the instructions, i.e. "…from your wider knowledge… (viz. not the source)".

Q18

The question was well answered. However, a minority of candidates are still confusing formal and informal.

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.

Q19

This question really differentiated Candidates. Whilst most could engage with the question on some level, there were some issues: Candidates often confused the difference between self-report studies and victim surveys; they lost marks due to repetition in their explanation/development of the two ideas; and /or they relied on simplistic common-sense ideas, e.g. count how many crimes are committed.

Examiner tip:
Ensure that Candidates practise for the 8-mark question. They need to be able to separately identify and explain. Show Candidates a clear format: "One example is… This is when…".
……

Q20

Some Candidates were particularly strong on this question and used a range of question-specific concepts, as well as a range of generic terms and supporting evidence. Most Candidates understood the debate well and provided a well-balanced argument with a clear conclusion. Best responses had considered the benefits of community service in relation to cost/re-offending rates/ lack of negative resocialisation and evaluated a plethora of other options, fully explaining why they were better than community service. A small minority did not know what community service was.

Examiner tip:
1   Candidates need to plan essays to include sociological content. Those who struggle 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.

Section F – Youth

Q21

Many Candidates were able to cite two reasons why gang members were often from the working class. However, a minority chose generic ideas which failed to score, as they had little obvious link to the working classes.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to revise the links between types of identity and gangs, i.e. gender, class and ethnicity.

Q22

Most Candidates were well prepared for the mix and match. However, some used rite-of-passage and transition inaccurately.

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.

Q23

This question differentiated candidates. Some scored fully through taking a diverse approach: invention of childhood (Aries) v. disappearance (Postman). Others used precise changes in legislation in reference to education and other ideas. However, others lost marks by using what was in effect only one idea with a lot of overlap.   Weaker Candidates also were confused by legislation.

Examiner tip:
Ensure that Candidates learn detail when revising legislation. Without detail (e.g. date or name of law or explicit change) they will not be credited fully on AO1.

Q24

This essay differentiated Candidates. Best responses considered their reasons for joining subcultures and evidenced it thoroughly with detailed examples, e.g. bedroom subculture – girls' subculture. However, many simply listed names of subcultures without giving any defining detail, e.g. 'Boys are skinheads'. Others failed to score as they "made up" their understanding of gender and subculture, e.g. "Girls would not be skinheads as they have long hair". Other weaker Candidates misunderstood the question and discussed socialisation. In the past few years youth subculture has been an area where Candidates have shown wonderful empirical knowledge, but this was not often the case this year.

Examiner tip:
1   Ensure Candidates practise essays in which they answer the question set precisely.

2   When teaching subcultures and why people join them, ensure Candidates see that gender/ethnicity and class are factors alongside sense of belonging, shared interest, lack of positive role models and status frustration.

B673 Applying Sociological Research Techniques

General Comments:

B673, Applying Sociological Research Techniques, is now an established examination, having now been offered for six years as part of the GCSE specification. This is the second year that it has had to be taken in the same (award) year as the other two units. It is now taken in the same examination session as B671, meaning it is answered in the second hour of a long two-hour session.

This paper continues to contribute 25% of the overall GCSE qualification. The entry has increased to just over 5000, the same as for B671 and B673.

The basic structure of the paper is that Section A is based on Investigation 1 and Section B on Investigation 2 of the pre-release material. Section C consists of one question which requires a more extended response, and can be based on either one or both of the two investigations. However, within sections A and B the format of the questions changes each year.

As with the other units, B673 has questions structured to test the full ability range from A* to G. It is therefore anticipated that some Candidates will find particular questions, such as 6, 12 and 13, to be challenging. Conversely, all Candidates should find some areas of the examination paper to be accessible, particularly the questions at the start of Sections A and B.

Although Candidates are required to demonstrate their sociological knowledge, the paper is weighted towards the testing of skills. Candidates need to demonstrate their ability to apply their knowledge, understanding and skills of interpretation to the pre-release investigations. From 2015 this material will be made available in September 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.

It was evident this year that most Candidates were knowledgeable about the pre-release material and many had a good understanding of the methods and sources used. Clearly, teachers had undertaken successful work in the classroom.

Most Candidates used sociological language appropriately, but a continued weakness is that the concepts of validity and reliability are often used interchangeably. This was noticeable particularly on question 9. Teachers should ensure that Candidates have an understanding of, and can define precisely, all the concepts in the specification, particulalrly those used in the pre-release material.

The more advanced skill of evaluation is demonstrated mainly by the higher level Candidates but most Candidates were able to find, when required, some flaws in the methods and sources in the pre-release investigations. However, Candidates continue to find keeping a balanced approach to be challenging.

Improvement in Candidates' performance could be made by focusing on AO2 marks. Candidates who are taught to relate back to the investigations, where required, are being prepared well for the exam.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Q1

Most Candidates accurately identified one of the aims listed in the pre-release. The majority selected the shortest. Most of those who were not credited provided an adapted version of the hypothesis.

Q2

Most were able to identify the two primary methods used in Investigation 1 and gained two marks for this question. However some only gained one mark by just writing 'interview' and not specifying that it was a semi-structured interview. Other incorrect answers were 'open and closed questions'. A minority identified 'observation', which was a primary method used in Investigation 2.

Q3

This question was answered well, with most Candidates gaining at least one mark by showing awareness that is was a 'trial' or 'test' study done before the main research. Many were able to develop this and gain the second mark by describing it as a process used to check for errors, problems, to test respondents' understanding of the questions or to test the suitability of the hypothesis. A small number described the pilot study used in the investigation and were given some credit for this. Few gained no marks.

Q4(a)

Compared to question 4b, Candidates found it more difficult here to identify and explain how the sources agree rather than disagree. Many gained one mark for, 'they both think prison doesn't work' or 'they both think that not enough money is put into education in prison'. Fewer made a clear reference to investigation 1, and so some managed only one mark on this question through identification of how persons A and B agree. Most of those who gained two marks identified the two views as, 'prison does not work' and 'prisons don't seem to stop crime'.

Q4(b)

Many Candidates gained full marks for this question by identifying that Person A thinks that prisoners don't really care about how people have suffered, whereas Person B thinks that many prisoners do care and understand how they upset their victims. Some went on to gain full marks. Some Candidates confused two different issues, for example, 'prisoners don't care about how people have suffered' with, 'they can't get jobs when they leave', and therefore they were not credited. The commonest answer that gained only one mark was, 'they have different views about how prisoners feel about their victims'. Candidates should be discouraged from expecting to gain AO2 marks by simply referring to line numbers in the pre-release.

Q5(a)

Most Candidates were successful in defining the term 'secondary sources' as those collected by 'someone else' or 'another sociologist'. They were therefore able to gain one mark. A number failed to score the second mark for which they had to identify that this was information that was to be used by another researcher, or in the Candidates' own research, or in another type of secondary data, such as newspapers, official statistics or the internet.

Q5(b)

Very few Candidates were unable to interpret the table and give the correct answer of 57%. A small number of Candidates added together the three percentage numbers on the table.

Q5(c)

This was answered well by the majority of Candidates, who scored at least one mark for pointing out that prison sentences of up to a year were the least effective and that community service was the most effective. However, some failed to support this answer with statistical evidence from the source to get the second mark. This was despite the fact that Candidates are told to do this in a statement written at the end of the question. They should also be reminded to do this by working practice questions in the classroom.

Q5(d)

Candidates were expected to have an understanding of official statistics, and some demonstrated this. The most common disadvantage identified was that the statistics had been adapted.

However, most did not refer to 'The Ministry of Justice' and were therefore limited to one mark, as this is a generic answer. Another common response which also was credited with one mark was that quantitative statistics do not give reasons and in-depth information. To gain the second mark, Candidates had to relate this idea to the table and/or re-offending rates. A large number of Candidates, who have studied Crime and Deviance as a topic, referred to 'the dark figure of crime'. However, without reference to re-offending, they were unable to gain marks. Many identified 2011 as being out of date. This was not credited, as the investigation was dated 2013 and in any case something only two years old is not considered to be out of date. Candidates should be discouraged from identifying any source under five years old as being out of date.

Q6(a)

Many Candidates did not achieve a mark here. The most common incorrect answers were 'content analysis' and 'observation'. Candidates should ensure they know the method used in each part of the pre-release as part of their classroom preparation.

Q6(b)

A significant number of responses for this question were in Level 2 and gained three or four marks. Many Candidates were able to identify at least one or two advantages or disadvantages, and could often relate them to the source. These largely centred round the Danish prisons not being representative for the UK, being able to compare prisons in two different countries, the small number of inmates in the Gartree prison and the quotes from Gartree prison about prisoner experience in relation to meeting the aims of the investigation. Generally, Candidates included quite balanced responses which highlighted an advantage followed by a disadvantage or vice-versa. This skill seems to have been taught.

Many Candidates could not be credited in Level 3, as their responses were not developed: for example, 'Gartree prison only had 8 inmates'. Candidates who gained Level 3 would develop this into: 'This is a small sample size from one prison, and therefore you can't make generalisations for the whole UK prison population'. A number of Candidates were also not able to gain level 3 as they focused on only one investigation. This was unfortunate, as some of these responses included well-developed points with evaluation.

A large number of responses contained errors. Some identified the sources as being out-dated. For source 2a this was creditable but not for source 2b. Finally, a significant number of Candidates incorrectly dismissed the relevance of the Danish prison case study because it was not in the UK, stating that the researcher was only looking at prisons in the UK.

Candidates credited in Level 1 and lower Level 2 identified only general advantages and disadvantages. These were mainly in relation to the media, and included generic statements about media bias, distortion or exaggeration.

Q7

This question was almost always answered correctly, with either 'young black male' or 'had friends in gangs'. The rare incorrect answers referred to him wanting to be a journalist.

Q8

Many Candidates gained two marks by identifying a hypothesis that related in most cases to gangs and to drugs. Those who gained only one mark posed it as a question rather than a statement.

Q9

Many Candidates gained only 1 mark for describing 'valid data'. They were able to identify it as data that is accurate or truthful or true. However, a large majority failed to expand their answer to include information or research and thereby achieve the two marks available. A number failed to achieve any marks, as they included the term 'reliable' alongside 'accurate' or 'truthful'. Candidates must be discouraged from using the terms 'valid' and 'reliable' interchangeably.

Q10(a)

Only a small number of Candidates were able to describe this term correctly. Many made the educated guess that it was, 'a schedule or timetable of who and what was being observed at different planned times'. One mark was given for reference to planning or listing things to look for in an observation. A few Candidates correctly identified it as being a list of behaviours before an observation that the researcher will look for and tick off.

All the concepts in the specification that are used in the pre-release investigations should be understood by Candidates. 'Observation schedule' is in both.

Q10(b)

Many Candidates answered this incorrectly. A large number hedged their bets and answered 'covert' for both questions. Many responses referred to the pre-release, rather than identifying any actual research method, such as 'talked to sociologist' or 'interviewed people he knew'. The reference in the source to the respondents as 'willing to help with his study' indicated that the correct answer was 'overt'. A detailed study of the source in classroom preparation was required to ensure Candidates had a full understanding of the methods which apply to each source.

Q10(c)

The majority of Candidates correctly identified 'covert' as the type of observation.

Q11(a)

Most Candidates were able to identify one or two advantages from a range which included being able to go into more depth, provide qualitative data and achieve good understanding through involvement. This meant that many Candidates achieved two marks. However, few successfully gained both of the AO2 application marks by linking the advantages to the issue of gang culture and how it can be studied.

Q11(b)

Despite their similarities, Q11(b) was answered better than Q11(a), as Candidates seem to find it easier to identify disadvantages rather than advantages, and many gained two marks. Candidates were much more aware of how the disadvantages of participant observation could affect the researcher when studying gangs specifically. Credited answers included points such as participant danger, going native, deception, being unethical to gang members (as they would most likely have refused the researcher entry into the gang) and getting in trouble with the police due to illegal activity.. Some Candidates related back to the pre-release material, e.g. to the work of James Patrick or to the primary research, and were credited for this.

Q12

This question differentiated well and the majority of Candidates gained 2 or 3 marks. Some struggled to gain all three marks for the identification of advantages. Unless they gave a generic advantage of interviews, Candidates had to distinguish between the different types of interviews (unstructured, semi-structured and structured) to be able to identify the data produced by the interview as an advantage, e.g. Unstructured interviews enable qualitative data to be collected. Few Candidates related three advantages to the topic to gain full marks. Simplistic references such as 'gang life', 'gang activity' and 'this helps us to understand gangs' could not be credited with the AO2 mark. Answers which did gain the application marks commonly made reference to violent gang behaviour, illegal activities, gang hierarchies, poor literacy and reading skills and the absence of gang peer pressure. Some Candidates referred to the pre-release material, e.g. the primary research or the work of Dick Hobbs, and were credited for this.

Q13

This essay-style question is challenging but is also an opportunity for Candidates to really demonstrate their sociological knowledge. Marks awarded covered the whole range but most Candidates were credited in the bottom and middle of Level 2 (5 – 7 marks). Although the question asked Candidates to focus on the sampling across the two investigations, it was interpreted by many that only sampling in the primary methods should be discussed. This meant the range of sources discussed was narrow.

Candidates who were credited at Level 3 produced well-developed, well-balanced debates across both investigations. In general, Candidatesfound many more disadvantages than advantages. However, Candidates managed to write a more balanced debate for this question than in previous years. Many Candidates were able to identify advantages, especially in relation to snowball sampling being a good method to use for hard-to-access groups.

Those credited at Level 1 either wrote very little and focused primarily on aspects of one investigation with limited reference to sampling, or wrote substantial amounts of irrelevant material rarely connected to sampling or the question being asked. Those credited at the lower end of Level 2 were able to distinguish a few ideas around sampling, but with little development or evaluation. The Candidates credited at the top of Level two were able to discuss two of the investigations in detail, with application, development and evaluation. The majority of answers that scored 8 out of 12 were very well written, with accurate use of sociological concepts and good sociological knowledge. However, the main reason they were not credited in the top

level was because they discussed only a narrow range of sources or methods. Those who did refer to more than two methods or sources, and used sociological concepts and knowledge throughout, were credited in the top level, with a few more developed and wider ranging responses scoring full marks.