GCSE

Sociology

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J696**

OCR Report to Centres June 2016

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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.

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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 stretched the upper end. A number of questions pushed the higher end to clarify their points and keep to the specific context of the question but also gave the lower end students the chance to achieve successful answers. 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 sociology.

In general most areas of the specification appear to have been covered effectively and thoroughly, although a small number of candidates appeared to be unclear about the hidden curriculum, ways the media socialises individuals, the differences between formal and informal social control and ethical issues. There was, in general, a good understanding shown of the command words and rubric implications of the different styles of questions. Where candidates were perhaps not as well prepared they confused different skills and often described where they were required to explain or ignored instructions to evaluate, for example.

Most candidates showed at least a basic knowledge of sociological issues, concepts and methodologies. With the linear structure of the GCSE examination, many candidates used their knowledge, understanding and concepts from their B672 topics to good effect. This appears to have led to good synoptic application and engagement. Essay technique remains generally good with a lot of candidates writing an extended, discursive piece. Most opt for juxtaposition when constructing their debate with a conclusion at the end. Very few bullet pointed responses were seen for Question 9 - suggesting that most candidates had enough time to fully consider and answer all questions on the paper and thus to maximise their marks. Timing did not seem to be an issue; this seems to have been handled well.

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

Question 1
This was a true or false question testing candidate's sociological knowledge. Most candidates scored well here although some had not read the Source material carefully enough or didn't know what certain concepts such as 'secondary data' or 'qualitative data' 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 on a regular basis.

Question 2
This question is best approached as a question about representativeness and generalisability and candidates should therefore focus their answer on issues of sampling and the key word '**all**' in the question. Candidates generally answered this question well, although quite a few simply repeated that the sample was not representative with no further clarification of the difference or specific reference to the source material in the two ways. Some students also failed to pick up on the difference between representation/generalisability and accuracy/reliability so these were used as explanations in the wrong questions (Question 2, 4b). A minority of candidates failed to identify

a point from the source itself (e.g. just saying the sample size was 'too small' or 'same age'). Some candidates only scored one mark as they didn't quite explain far enough or just wrote two identification points, but most scored well on this question. Those who fell short of full credit failed to link it back to why it was not representative of all young people according to the data in the source.

Marks will not be 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 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 best advised in this question to choose two points that are sufficiently different to allow them to clearly demonstrate their sociological knowledge and understanding in their explanations and to ensure that they are not simply repeating themselves – a number of candidates, for example, used '…so it is not representative' as their explanation in both identified points. Points made need to be specific to the source data and candidates should not therefore talk generally here.

Question 3
Candidates were credited for talking about interviews generally here or for being specific about a particular type of interview i.e. unstructured etc. Candidates seemed to find this question more of a challenge this year with some finding the disadvantages of interviews easier to describe than the advantages. Correct answers mostly spoke of investigating in depth, gaining rapport to achieve more valid answers, social desirability, researcher bias etc. Some put generic answers such as 'cheap and easy', 'time consuming' or 'gives qualitative data' as points, none of which gained a mark as they were too vague. Some candidates just gave generic methodological advantages and disadvantages that weren't focused on interviews – it is obviously crucial that candidates pay close attention to the method/evidence in the question and tailor their responses specifically to this. Similarly, just stating that something provides quantitative or qualitative data with no further detail, or that something is valid or reliable is not sufficient to credit. Candidates are advised to remember that this is a 'describe' not an 'identify' question and thus the space on the examination paper is there to guide the amount to be written.

Question 4(a)(i)
Most candidates successfully identified the place where the interviews took place from the source.

Question 4(a)(ii)
A variety of answers were seen, but most candidates gained credit here with the fact that the researcher failed to gain the proper consent. A minority of candidates confused this with 'confidentiality' and a few others failed to engage with the key idea of 'ethical issues' in the question, discussing bias and the fact they were her friends. This was not credited.

Question 4(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 are not creditable. Most candidates were able to find two points from the source that supported the idea that the evidence may not be accurate. Typical answers discussed the noisy and busy setting, writing responses down later and biased interpretation of results as the key accuracy issues. Where candidates could be advised to improve is on the explanations as a large number failed to fully explain why the point they had raised led to issues with the data's accuracy.

Question 5
Only a tiny number of candidates misinterpreted the question and answered this as an essay, this was very encouraging to see. Candidates seem to have generally been very well prepared by centres, understanding the requirements of the bullet points within the rubric.
This was generally a good response again this year. The hypothesis was usually understood well. Most candidates could identify two primary methods and relevant secondary evidence and the

majority provided some additional details and development of their ideas. A small handful of candidates still described content analysis as secondary evidence which needs to be avoided as it will not be credited. Most candidates gave at least some links to the context of the investigation when describing their samples (e.g. young and old people) and reasons for their choices. Some addressed the need for comparison of the two age groups really well which is key to a level 3 answer. Some candidates threw in concepts that were either inaccurate or confused and these were obviously not credited. Candidates that scored particularly well on this question engaged with sociological issues and concepts in a meaningful and accurate way. A number of candidate's answers were far too generic and descriptive, simply discussing the advantages and disadvantages of a selection of methods, samples and secondary evidence. Disadvantages of a methodological choice will rarely be credited as they are not justifying the reasons for using the research methods, samples and evidence selected. This kind of approach should therefore be avoided. Centres are well advised to remind candidates that this is an application question.

High level and accurate concepts were used and duly rewarded in the better Level 3 responses, demonstrating some excellent sociological knowledge and understanding (reliability, rapport, representativeness, generalisations, social desireability etc). The question therefore differentiated well in terms of outcome between candidates of various abilities, allowing all to access it – most candidates scored 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) or simply describing their plans, whilst others were able to link choices to issues of validity, representativeness, reliability etc. Lower level scripts were often limited in the marks that could be awarded simply due to 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 a clear and appropriate context for the investigation. Most of the better answers made good use of the additional space provided within the answer booklet to allow them to further develop points and ideas appropriately.

Section B – Key Concepts in Sociology

Question 6
This question was answered well overall with the majority of candidates scoring full marks and very few scoring less than 2 marks. When candidates did answer incorrectly it was mostly values that caught them out or they confused definitions of achieved and ascribed status.

To help candidates in learning their key concepts, centres may wish to consider getting candidates 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 candidate's answers whilst also being an activity that they really enjoy.

Question 7(a)
This was answered well in general with most candidates scoring the mark for 'police'. Those that didn't gain the mark either didn't understand what was meant by a formal agent of social control or ignored the instruction to use Source C.

Question 7(b)
Most candidates were able to answer this question successfully although some clearly did not know or understand the difference between formal and informal agents of social control. A range of possible answers were acceptable here which made this question very accessible. Courts, Government, Prison and the Army were the most frequent answers seen. A small number of candidates missed a credit by answering with 'law' or an informal agent such as peer group or family as an agent of formal social control.

Question 7(c)
Most candidates were able to identify two ways that female behaviour is socially controlled, although a surprising amount went for simplistic answers such as 'earlier curfews' etc rather than

tapping into their sociological knowledge and using concepts such as manipulation, peer pressure, hidden curriculum, role modelling etc. Most explanations were vague or partial and did not clearly explain. The key for full development here was to link the identified way with explicit discussion of how/why this controlled female thoughts/behaviour/norms in society. Some candidates failed to score well as they talked about controlling behaviour generally rather than specifically on how female behaviour can be controlled.

Question 7(d)
Many candidates scored full marks on this question as they were able to accurately identify a traditional male identity, breadwinner being most popular, and clearly described what the identity is all about.

Question 7(e)
A lot of candidates picked up both marks on offer here. Househusband or New Man was the most common answer here, but not always explained fully in terms of how this had changed over time, instead either referring to how female identity has changed instead or ignoring the element of change within the question.

Question 8(a)
Answers to this question were often vague and did not identify a clear way that the media socialises individuals e.g. role models, imitation, stereotyping etc. Some candidates referred to what people are socialised into e.g. women as sex objects, but failed to specify how this process occurs or, alternatively, talked in vague terms about being 'influenced' which is not clear enough to be fully credited.

Question 8(b)
A well answered question on the whole whereby candidates were able to demonstrate some excellent sociological knowledge and understanding. Typically, candidates discussed punctuality, respect, hierarchy and dealing with boredom due to needing to deal with these things later in life and especially in the workplace.

Question 9
Most candidates showed good time management skills and were thus able to finish the paper and not jeopardise marks in this crucial last 12 mark question. The question seems to have effectively differentiated between candidates of various abilities but a number of one sided answers were still seen which obviously limits 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 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 as this is so crucial for success.

Candidates referred to a variety of agents in their responses but often fell down on not using this in the context of young people. Some candidates lost marks because they did not unpack the various ways that the peer group can influence young people. The better answers made separate discursive points from such areas as peer pressure, negative sanctions, positive sanctions, anti school subcultures, pro school subcultures and gangs. Those scoring least well did not make a judgement and were confused with their for and against points or made common sense/simplistic arguments. Those who scored highly covered multiple agents on both sides of the argument, made an informed judgement and used knowledge of concepts/theorists/studies in their examples. They also engaged specifically with the processes of socialisation thus resulting in some very strong sociological responses being seen by the examining teams. Very few no responses were seen which indicates that the question was accessible to all ability levels. Answers typically ended with conclusions which is great to see. Stronger conclusions picked a side and justified their reasoning based on the key points made during the essay, although also recognising that perhaps there is no simple answer and that an agent can only be judged to be 'most influential' when the context of the individual is specifically taken into account.

B672 Socialisation, Culture and Identity

General Comments:

The paper differentiated well with most candidates being able to engage with most questions. The top end managed their time well and wrote essays that were fully and consistently substantiated with sociological evidence.

Scripts showed that the majority of candidates were prepared for most areas of the specification. The one and two mark questions were largely answered well with a minority mixing up concepts. As in previous years Family and Crime and Deviance remain the most popular topics, however there seemed to be a growth in those answering the Education section. Media and Youth were both still popular with a minority of candidates answering the Work section. It was pleasing to see that the quality of those answering the Work section had improved.

As in the last few years there were some extremely good scripts, with candidates answering at a level above GCSE standard, substantiated with empirical evidence and correct use of theory. However, whilst some candidates used theory correctly, weaker candidates continue to just drop in the words New Right, Functionalism, Marxist with either no explanation, or generic or wrong explanation. Theory should be used to stretch those at the top end, but in no way is an expectation at GCSE. Candidates often are trying to use statistics as evidence; whilst this is welcomed and credited they need to be sourced and accurate, whilst many are not.

Handwriting and again spelling still present problems in a small number of cases. As reported last year some centres let their candidates down as the handwriting was so illegible they should have considered the candidate word processing their exam answers. Over the years there is an increase in those word processing their exam answers and this is to be encouraged for those whose handwriting is so illegible it impacts on the interpretation of their answers. Examiners have also felt that centres should be training candidates to notify examiners when they either go onto extra paper and/or if they continue elsewhere. This alongside some papers where candidates do not label their questions, results in confusion for examiners. Extra paper is within the booklet (pages 33 – 35) but some candidates did not spot this and went onto additional booklets unnecessarily.

1 mark questions
"From the source questions" were generally answered well.
The part b questions where a candidate needs to "use their wider sociological knowledge" in many cases were not as well answered, in specific areas this showed a less comprehensive knowledge of the specification.

Mix and match
On the whole well answered.

8 mark questions
Highest mark answers clearly separated each idea and gave examples to illustrate points. Those who were gaining the highest mark clearly formatted their answers to suit the question, e.g. one idea is… this is when …. which means/implications of this ….
A number failed to develop their answer further or merely repeated the question and this should be focused on as an aspect of teaching. In addition, on some of the questions candidates did not read the question carefully and misinterpreted what it was asking for. This year some candidates repeated their explanation as their development and therefore gained no additional credit.
Tips/examples of how to improve on this are shown in the topic sections.

24 mark questions

Examiners noted again at the top end, candidates have clearly strengthened their ability in regards to writing a discursive essay. The teaching of connectives was clearly evident in the best essays, which enabled candidates to explicitly demonstrate their understanding of for and against ideas, this assisted candidates in reaching the top level.

This year even fewer candidates are using subtitles to illustrate a two sided argument which then restricts them on their AO3 marks; there is no need to do this if connectives are effectively taught.

One thing that is really holding weaker candidates back is the need to arrange ideas into paragraphs, this would then make clear where ideas begin and end and help them ensure a wide range of substantiated ideas are used. A further issue for weaker candidates is not making clear if their idea is justifying or evaluating the claim. Planning their essays first would help them with this.

In this session, only some candidates provided a conclusion as requested in the mark scheme for full marks on AO3. Also again this year some very strong essays were held back by candidates not fully developing their ideas or by not having a range of ideas. Another notable thing is that weaker candidates are not ensuring consistent use of evidence in their essays which prevented them scoring in the higher levels. On occasion candidates are also misreading the question, arguing for instead of against.

Timing continues to be better this year with most candidates using their time wisely spending 30 minutes on each section. It is still good practice to attempt the whole paper timed before the exam to prevent a minority of good candidates doing wonderful sections for their first two, some even gaining full marks for both, but then not having time to do well on their third section which will lower their overall mark.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Section A - Family
Question (1)(a)
Most candidates were able to successfully answer this question.

Question (1)(b)
This question exposed many candidates who were not prepared to answer a question on how ethnicity affects family life. This is on the specification and best responses considered the impact of an ethnic group on either roles e.g. patriarchy or types of family e.g. more likely to be in extended families. Poor responses discussed unsubstantiated common sense ideas such as Asian families are strict or used religious groups and their religious practices. It is important to note that all areas on the specification can be asked about in the exam.

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 all parts of the specification are taught and revised.

Question 2
Well answered generally although a minority confused conjugal roles and househusband.

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 3

Best responses clearly focussed on sociological reasons why marriage is less popular. Many chose to discuss the changing social attitudes e.g. secularisation and changing role of women e.g. Sharpe's study of women choosing careers over family life. However some candidates are either not displaying understanding of rote learnt terms e.g. secularisation, dropping it into their answer with no development, or they misunderstood the term altogether (often writing there has been a decrease in secularisation.) Weak responses failed to offer sociological ideas, focussing purely on individual reasons e.g. not in love. Other responses ignored the question answering why there is a rise in divorce.

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 there has been a decline in marriage is due to changing social attitudes. One example of this is secularisation. This is …..".

Question 4

Candidates did not struggle to engage with the claim, but some did misinterpret the question. There were two ways the essay could be debated: family and functions OR which agent is most important for social control. Best responses clearly knew the many functions of the family and had considered on a sophisticated level which of those were about control. Weak responses misunderstood the claim and debated whether families should control their members. Some candidates lost marks for not ensuring they used evidence in each of their ideas.

Examiner tip:

Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content and understanding of the debate. 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.

Section B - Education

Question 5(a)(i)(ii)

Well answered.

Question 5(b)

Many managed to gain credit for 'other' functions of education, but a minority gained no credit for repeating ideas from the source.

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.

Question 6

Well answered

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 7

This question really divided candidates. Best responses made clear that they knew what the national curriculum was and its purpose / impact. However some candidates clearly did not know what it was. Some responses contained changes from way before the 1988 Education Reform

Act. Best responses focussed often on core subjects and equality and marketization and league tables.

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 impact of the national curriculum is…. This is because ….."
Ensure candidates plan for 8 mark questions to ensure two distinct and relevant ideas.

Question 8
Candidates were able to engage with this question on all levels. However, there were common errors in answers. Cultural deprivation is still often misunderstood or listed alongside material deprivation with no understanding shown. Best responses were very wide ranging and were clear in their debate. They commonly used material deprivation, labelling, peer pressure and cultural deprivation for their ideas. Some even included theories such as Marxism and Functionalism. Weak responses failed to even state if their ideas were for or against the claim merely listing ideas.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content and understanding of the debate. 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.
Ensure candidates practice their evaluation skills, both in planning ideas for and against claims, and in applying them to the claim throughout essays.

Section C – Mass Media

Question 9(a)
Well answered

Question 9(b)
Many either repeated ideas from the source or did not refer to how media was global which meant they did not gain the marks.

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.

Question10
Well answered generally.

Examiner tip:
Ensure that candidates are given the list of key concepts for 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 11
This question saw a mixed response. Best responses could name a social group e.g. teenagers and show HOW the media stereotypes them, not merely give examples of stereotypes. Concepts such as repetition, moral panic, invisibility allowed them to develop their ideas and gain full marks. Weak responses picked social groups that did not really allow for stereotypes to be discussed e.g. gangs then just described what a gang was.

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 social group often stereotyped in the media is…. This is done through ……."
Ensure candidates plan for 8 mark questions to ensure two distinct and relevant ideas.

Question 12
This essay saw a mixed response. Best responses clearly debated audience control vs owners/editors/advertisers and control. They made great use of a combination of key concepts such as interactivity, theory such as Pluralism and contemporary examples such as Murdoch. However weak responses did not answer the question, they wrote about media effects using two step flow and cultural effects models to argue the audience is controlled by the media. Whilst a sophisticated few did use some of the media effects models to illustrate their points about control, on the whole any use of media effects was not relevant and failed to gain marks.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content and understanding of the debate. 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.
Ensure candidates practice their evaluation skills, both in planning ideas for and against claims and in applying them to the claim throughout essays.

Section D - Work

Question 13
Generally both parts were well answered.

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.

Question 14
Generally well answered.

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 15
Most candidates engaged well with the question, but a common error was to state a type of discrimination such as ageism, then just rephrasing the term as their application, ie discrimination based on age, which failed to gain credit for repetition. Best responses commonly discussed sexism and racism. A minority failed to gain marks for development as their ideas were not about discrimination in the workplace.

Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format "One type of discrimination is sexism. In the workplace women often face a glass ceiling. This means…."
Ensure candidates plan for 8 mark questions to ensure two distinct and relevant ideas.

Question 16
Candidates were able to discuss satisfaction in the workplace citing concepts such as intrinsic satisfaction evaluating it with extrinsic satisfaction. Poor responses were based on common sense or based purely on assertion i.e. people like their jobs, some people don't like their jobs

without developing why. Another common issue on this question was a failure to provide a wide range of ideas, some not being able to go beyond 2 ideas.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content and understanding of the debate. 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.

Ensure candidates practice their evaluation skills, both in planning ideas for and against claims and in applying them to the claim throughout essays.

Section E - Crime and deviance

Question 17(a)
Well answered, although a few did not cite types of deviance but examples and thus failed to score marks.

Question 17(b)
Candidates that failed to score both marks often did not show how deviance had changed over time, just writing single words such as homosexuality. Some candidates focussed on why deviance changes over time e.g. laws change which lead attitudes, which was credited. Others showed an idea with a minimal reason of how it has changed e.g. homosexuality is more accepted, which gained full marks if done twice.

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.

Question 18
Generally well answered.

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 19
Many candidates were well prepared for this question knowing a range of effects prisons can have on criminals. However a minority failed to gain marks as they did not focus on the effects on the criminal i.e. safety of the public. Others did not consistently use sociological evidence in both ideas.

Examiner tip:
Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show students a clear format "One effect prison can have on the criminal is…. This is because …."
Ensure candidates plan for 8 mark questions to ensure two distinct and relevant ideas.

Question 20
All candidates engaged with this question. Those who were most successful
could articulate why socialisation may or may not be the most important reason people commit crime. Best responses discussed a variety of reasons considering which is most important. Some sophisticated responses considered how inequalities such as age, class and gender also impacted on likelihood of committing crime. A few candidates misinterpreted the question and talked about socialising rather than socialisation. Arguments against the claim were usually of

higher quality covering areas such as boredom, labelling, white collar crime. A common issue is a misunderstanding/application of status frustration, claiming it is crime to regain status, ignoring that it is crime out of rebellion/anger.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content and understanding of the debate. 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.
Ensure candidates practice their evaluation skills, both in planning ideas for and against claims and in applying them to the claim throughout essays.

Section F - Youth

Question 21(a)(b)
Generally well answered. However a minority did fail to score as they gave formal agents of social control or gave more generalised responses such as teachers.

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.

Question 22
Generally well answered.

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 23
Whilst most candidates could give 2 reasons the working class join gangs some answers were impaired by the misunderstanding of status frustration (see comments on Q24). Others failed to gain full marks as they did not ensure a consistent use of sociological evidence e.g. discussing joining gangs for money. Best responses used concepts well such as: Social Network, status frustration, material deprivation and / or sense of belonging.

Examiner tip:
Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show students a clear format "One reason working class youth join gangs is…. This is because….. "
Ensure candidates plan for 8 mark questions to ensure two distinct and relevant ideas.

Question 24
Candidates that did well engaged with this debate, some providing excellent answers full of empirical evidence on a range of subcultures such as skinheads, mods and rockers, bedroom subculture. Candidates also identified an impressive number of studies. Weaker candidates gave repetitive responses and had a weak understanding of the concept social class. A number of candidates were convinced that Teddy Boys and even skinheads were upper class. Candidates citing wrong names of social researchers or gave names of subcultures but did not have any specific details on them did not gain any credit e.g. Goths all like to dress the same. Some candidates ignored the term subculture and merely wrote an essay on the working class and gangs, which inhibited their ability to debate a wide range of ideas.

Some candidates are clearly studying Youth and Crime and deviance, these did use a lot of the same material in both sections. Whilst this does gain marks it does inhibit fully developed and focussed essays if not applied to the question.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content and understanding of the debate. 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.
Ensure candidates practice their evaluation skills, both in planning ideas for and against claims and in applying them to the claim throughout essays.

B673 Applying Sociological Research Techniques

General Comments:

B673, Applying Sociological Research Techniques in 2016 is now an established examination having now been offered for seven years as part of the GCSE specification. This is the third 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 two hour long session.

There continues to be a basic structure to the paper with Section A based on Investigation 1 and Section B based 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 of the two investigations or both. However, within sections A and B the format of the questions changes each year.

As with the other units in the specification, 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 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 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. For the first time, this material was made available in September 2015 ie. the year prior to the examination. This will happen again for the 2017 paper with the pre-release available to centres in September 2016. 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.

Again this year, it was evident 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 to facilitate this.

Most candidates used sociological language appropriately but the concepts of validity and reliability used interchangeably continues to be a weakness. This was noticeable particularly on question 13.Teachers should ensure that candidates have an understanding of and can define precisely all the concepts in the specification and in particular, those used in the pre-release material. This was a weakness this year.

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

Improvement in candidates' performance could be made by increasing AO2 marks. Candidates who are taught to relate back to the investigations where required, are being prepared well for the exam. Answers to question 12, which requires reference back to the topic or pre-release, could be much improved.

Comments on Individual Questions:

Question 1
A large majority of candidates were able to quote directly from the pre-release and gain the mark.

Question 2
Most candidates answered well and gained two marks. They were generally able to identify two different primary methods used. The most common responses were interview and observation. The common mistakes on this question were the inclusion of case study, survey, or identifying a secondary source.

Question 3(a)
A large majority gave the correct number. However, the response '10' was given a number of times as some candidates were confused between the amount total and the amount selected. This demonstrates the importance of familiarity with the pre-release material and reading the question correctly.

Question 3(b)
Most candidates were able to correctly identify sweets. However, some were not credited because they wrote 'and comics'. A significant number of candidates were able to gain the second mark by correctly stating the number of replies. However, many candidates did not gain the second mark as they simply described some of the replies, for example, 'I bought as many pink and white foam mushrooms as I could'. The data should have illustrated and supported the idea that sweets were most common by use of statistics and numbers

Question 4(a)
Many candidates gained both marks as they were able to state the two different amounts or percentages with an indication that the children thought it was higher than the parents. Some candidates just gained one mark as they simply stated that there was a difference without stating the amount or percentage. A significant number of candidates didn't gain any marks as they misread the source, referring to how much pocket money parents 'received' rather than how much they gave (many incorrect answered referred to children getting £6.50 and parents getting £5.75).
This is a 'use the data' question, so all candidates need to make explicit reference to the source, and avoid using vague amounts such as 'most'.
Some candidates looked at the wrong source and referred to other information, which is disappointing as the source to be used is stated clearly.

Question 4(b)
Many candidates gained two marks; however, a significant number of candidates were credited with all four marks. Most candidates, even on low-scoring scripts overall, were able to identify problems, most frequently, 'data is missing', 'only says up or down' and 'only shows five regions'. The least common answers referred to the data being collected by two companies and why this was an issue. Many candidates were then able to explain the problems or relate back specifically to the table to gain the second mark. For example, 'the change in amount column only says up or down and therefore we don't know the exact difference to be able to compare'. When candidates were not credited, most frequently this was due to stating that the table was out of date, simply stating it was unrepresentative, or trying to explain that some areas were more affluent than others.

Question 4(c)
This was generally answered well. Many candidates gained both marks by correctly comparing Source 1, where pocket money was mainly spent, to Source 3, where 55% saved their money. The high proportion of candidates correctly stating 55% would seem to suggest that this had been explicitly taught by teachers. Where candidates only gained one mark, this was due to a generic response which showed an understanding that the difference was between spending and saving. Some candidates lacked accuracy by stating that none of the people in Source 1 saved.

Question 5(a)
Most candidates gained one mark for identifying the division of a sample into sub groups. However, few candidates received the second mark as they didn't relate this proportion with regard to the wider population or target population. Some candidates confused stratified with systematic sampling. Teachers need to ensure that all concepts in the specification and in particular, those used in the pre-release, are understood fully by candidates.

Question 5(b)
Some candidates answered this question very well and gained all four marks. The best answers were those in which the candidate had commented on representativeness and generalisability. For example,' no sixth formers asked and therefore not representative' and 'only one school in one area and therefore you can't generalise to the whole of the UK'. However, many candidates lost marks on this question by incorrectly identifying that only girls had been asked, no year 11s had been asked, only year 7 and 8 had been asked. This indicated a lack of knowledge of the pre-release or not reading the relevant section with care. This meant that responses which claimed an overall gender or age bias could not be credited. Quite frequently, candidates were repeating the same explanation for both points made (most commonly representativeness) and therefore gained 3 marks overall.

A significant number of candidates stated a small sample size to be a problem. This was not credited as 53 is quite a reasonable sample size. The pre-release material would always make it very clear if sample size was going to be an issue.

Question 6
This question was generally answered well. Most candidates gained at least level 2 and a significant number were able to meet the criteria for level 3.
Within all levels on this question, candidates were far more likely to discuss advantages rather than disadvantages of the questionnaire.

This is an evaluation question and candidates need to consider both sides of the debate. Most candidates were able to make at least one applied point which meant that they were able to gain three marks within level 2. A significant number of candidates were able to make an applied point and then develop it, and make at least one more point to gain the four marks. Other candidates made a variety of applied points across the different questions within questionnaire, however the development was implicit and therefore they could not be credited in the top level. A typical example of this was for question 4, candidates were able to say that younger students wouldn't understand the word 'affluent', but then didn't go on to develop the point by stating that this would lead to the student guessing, writing the wrong answer or not responding etc. A quite significant number of candidates fell within this level, and missed out on the top level, as they weren't able to make at least two applied and well-developed points.

Quite a number of candidates were credited within level 3 as they were able to make developed points across a range of questions. Where candidates met this level, it was predominantly where they had met the criteria for 5 marks. Not many responses were credited with 6 marks. The main reason for this being that there were either no advantages given, only disadvantages, or the advantage given was not applied to the source – it was often a generic reference to open and closed questions and the type of data produced.

Where responses were credited with 5 marks, often three or four clearly developed points were made, the most frequently developed points made were in relation to 'overlapping boxes – may not choose the correct box', 'affluent – hard to understand so answered inaccurately' and 'drugs and cigarette option – won't admit/ will not tell the truth'. Candidates generally seemed to access the ideas with relative ease and it seemed as though this had been taught quite explicitly. Some lower scoring papers overall were often able to at least access level 2 on this question, and were sometimes able to be credited within the top level.

Responses which typically fell into level 1, often made points about the questionnaire that weren't clearly applied, for example, simply stating 'overlapping boxes' with no reference to either the question number or what the question contained. They also made simple generic points about questionnaires, such as, 'they're quick to do'.

References to sampling or ethical issues did not gain marks. The question was about accuracy of data and only responses which related to this were credited.

There were few no responses as in general, candidates found this question to be accessible. However, many candidates spent too long on this answer, often using additional pages to extend their response.

Question 7
Most candidates did well on this question and identified an aim. However, some rephrased it as a question and others incorrectly identified 'to find out what childhood means'.

Question 8(a)
Most candidates were able to identify a relevant article and were credited with either the number of the article or accurate written description, making it clear to which one article they were referring. The most common articles listed incorrectly were about being separated from parents (9) and education (28), and not being given a name or nationality (7). These could not be supported by the source.

For the additional mark candidates needed to give an explanation of how the right was not being met in the case study rather than simply repeating the article in negative – i.e. parents were neglecting him.

Question 8(b)
The majority of candidates gave the correct answer of 24

Question 9
Many candidates only achieved one mark on this question for being able to correctly identify an example such as TV or newspapers. Where candidates gained both marks it was usually because they had correctly stated it was a secondary source. A small number of candidates had recognised that it's a form of communication that is transmitted to a very wide audience.
A very common incorrect answer which was not credited was 'material you get from the media', with no other explanation.

Question 10
Candidates were frequently able to gain either one or two marks on this question as they were able to correctly identify advantages of non-participant observation, the most common being, the researcher can easily take notes and remain objective. Candidates found it more difficult to gain the two explanation marks on this question as they were unable to clearly link it to childhood or Investigation 2. A significant number of candidates were unable to gain any marks on this question as they interpreted the question incorrectly and identified the advantages of covert observation rather than non-participant. A number of candidates gave generic advantages of observation; this was often that you can see behaviour for yourself.

Question 11(a)
The concept of case study is in the specification and was also included as a concept in the pre-release material. In addition, more than one of the secondary sources used case studies. It was therefore expected that candidates would have a good understanding of this term.
A large number of candidates were able to gain two marks by reference to 'an in-depth study on an individual or small group'. However, many candidates gained only one mark as they identified 'in-depth study' but then didn't make it clear that it was a small group or individual. Other candidates were not able to gain any marks as they did not know what a case-study was and wrote a generic statement relating to research in general, referred to a police case or confused it with a pilot study.
A few gave an example of a case study from the pre-release material which provided support for weaker responses.

Question 11(b)
This question raised a range of answers. Overall most candidates could identify some ethical issues within the investigation. A significant number of candidates were able to gain all four marks on this question as they identified two clear ethical issues with two distinct explanations. The most common ethical issues raised were, observed or recorded without permission or informed consent and, put on social media which breaks privacy or confidentiality'. The best responses often expanded on points made and included ideas such as risk of embarrassment or harm.

Many candidates gained three marks as they used the same explanation twice, typically 'no informed consent'. Two distinct issues and explanations are required. Candidates need to be encouraged to relate specifically to the source so the response does not remain generic. Few candidates showed no understanding of the term unethical. Responses which weren't credited often made reference to what the person was studying or the method chosen, rather than the ethical issues concerned with how it was being carried out. Some confused ethical with validity. Some common misconceptions included the idea that observing people or posting videos are illegal. This was not credited.

Question 12
This question was not answered well and many candidates gained only one or two marks. This question is one which is follows the same structure year on year with a change in the method and topic. Teachers need to prepare their candidates for this question more effectively. Candidates have three possible application marks here ie applying the advantages of interviews to the topic of childhood or to Investigation 2. A small minority of candidates made any links to childhood in their responses and some of them merely copied part of the question ie 'Experience of childhood' and were not credited with AO2 marks.

Another reason for low marks was the large number of responses which did not specify the type of interview they were identifying an advantage for. Answers often identified the advantage of in depth data or follow on questions without referring to unstructured interviews. It is expected that candidates would have an understanding of different types of interviews and how they produce different types of data. Some candidates simply listed different people who could be interviewed and what they could be asked. Whilst this is a challenging question, designed to differentiate, candidates who are prepared well for this question should be able to gain high marks.

Question 13
This essay style question is challenging and an opportunity for the 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). The question asked candidates to focus on the sources across the Investigation 2. Few candidates made the error of using the primary research or Investigation 1 and most candidates were able to discuss a range of sources, with many considering all six although this was not a requirement for full marks.

In level 1, candidates typically made largely descriptive and implicit points about the sources. For example, simply stating that source A is from the UN, source B is a tabloid, source C is from the BBC etc. Some made sound evaluative responses but this was limited to one or two points or one source. It is possible these candidates did not plan their time effectively

In the higher levels, those who did answer it well went through the different sources one by one. Some candidates demonstrated an ability to evaluate as they went along. There was a fairly even mixture of responses that used the three bullet points for structure and others that just listed as many sources as possible and the issues with them. The accuracy of the sources was often linked to the date, the sources being adapted or shortened or the fact that it was from a media source although a number of candidates described the BBC as being unreliable.

Candidates were not credited for describing sources from 2013/14, for a study supposedly conducted in 2015, as outdated. This would seem to imply a lack of knowledge of the pre-release as well as not being taught that only data 5 years or older is accepted as outdated for this paper.

The better answers focused on the content of the sources. They did not simply use the same disadvantage for multiple sources (outdated/media bias/not representative). However many lower to middle range answers did so, limiting their ability to demonstrate real understanding of the source. Good responses considered the sources and explained why the actual content of the source may be useful or not. At the very top level, candidates were linking sources, explaining how comparing the data present could improve their usefulness.

Some candidates who were not credited in the top level did not answer the second part of the question and link the use of secondary sources back to childhood. The candidates who did do this and were placed in the top end of level two and level three, did it by referencing the relevance to the aims e.g. whether a source showed children are valued everywhere and whether it shows how childhood has changed were the two most referenced.

Evaluation was used in a large proportion of answers although as expected the quality, development and application of the evaluation varied greatly. The majority of answers focussed on the negatives of the sources and the highest scoring responses had balanced evaluation and development within sources and within a wider structure.

Candidates credited in the top level, were mostly in the lower part of the band with 9 or 10 marks as they either didn't look at a wide enough range of sources for the very top, or they looked at all/ or most of the sources without enough depth. Candidates placed at the top of Level 3 produced well-developed, well-balanced debates across most of the sources.

Typical answers at this level were able to look at a wider variety of issues and make more sophisticated points that were quite closely linked to the issue of childhood. This was particularly evident when discussing source E, with points that included; not everyone would phone that had a problem, doesn't show evidence for children that are happy, we don't know how many are repeat calls and some of the categories may overlap, such as depression, suicidal issues and mental health issues.

Teachers should be aware that all the sources had strengths and weaknesses for the investigation. Source F was often totally discounted by candidates and any worth it might have was overlooked. Candidates with good knowledge of the sources and thorough preparation in lessons were able to discuss the number of minutes spent by adults on childcare and how this may impact on childhood experience.

Some candidates are still describing an advantage as making data valid and reliable and must learn that these are two different concepts. Use of the two concepts together is not credited. It is important for candidates to demonstrate understanding by use of the correct term.