



General Certificate of Education

Sociology 2191

**SCLY4 Crime and Deviance with Theory
and Methods;
Stratification and Differentiation
with Theory and Methods**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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SCLY4

General

While some candidates were very well prepared, there was evidence that others lacked a detailed knowledge of Theory and Methods. This was apparent in the often brief responses offered to Question 3/6 on feminism and in some responses to the Methods in Context questions 2 and 5, where there were basic errors such as conflating or confusing the concepts of reliability and validity.

Many candidates had difficulty with the 'Identify and briefly explain' questions 2(a) and 5(a) and were unable to apply the features of the methods they had identified to the study of the particular issue specified by the question. Similarly, the Methods in Context essays 2(b) and 5(b) often showed a reasonable knowledge of the method in the question but an inability to apply it to the particular issue of the study of victims of crime or of social class, respectively.

In question 1(b), a significant number of candidates were unable to interpret the contents of a numerical table correctly, even at the level of understanding the difference between absolute numbers and percentages or proportions.

Section A – Crime and Deviance

This was by far the more popular of the two sections on the paper.

Question 1

- (a) A minority of candidates had no understanding of what might be meant by globalisation and little relevant knowledge of how it might be related to crime. However, most candidates showed an understanding of the concept and some offered explicit definitions of it, although others tended simply to equate it with new technology. Most candidates were also able to identify and describe some relevant crimes, such as trafficking in people, arms, drugs etc, various cybercrimes, green crime etc. Some candidates considered both how globalisation has increased the opportunities for existing types of crime and how it has facilitated new types of crime. More successful answers showed explicitly how globalisation might link to the crimes they identified, while less successful answers tended simply to list and describe the crimes with the link to globalisation assumed rather than explained. Some candidates tended to assume that pollution, exploitation, etc were automatically crimes, whereas some sophisticated answers discussed the issue of who may have the power to define these harms as non-criminal.
- (b) The weakest responses came from those who merely recycled elements of the table in Item A or simply translated some of its contents into a prose format. Some other answers went beyond the item to draw some inferences that were a misinterpretation of what the item portrayed. Generally, these candidates mistook percentages for absolute numbers and misread the table as meaning that white people have more contact than other ethnicities with the criminal justice system (CJS). Some of these candidates picked themselves up and went on to offer some explanations of the patterns that they had been taught to expect, while others stuck to their misinterpretation and went on to give a distorted account of the sociology to support their misinterpretation and thus scored poorly. Some weaker answers also drifted into discussions of class and gender

that they were unable to apply to the question. More successful responses interpreted the table appropriately and were able to give some account of one or more of the processes in the CJS, most usually with reference to police practices. More comprehensive answers also recognised that there were other explanations for the patterns in the table, such as the role of the media in creating a moral panic concerning 'mugging' or the left realist explanation of the higher rates of criminalisation among some minority ethnic groups. These were used evaluatively to assess the view in the question, sometimes in terms of a debate about crime rates as facts versus social constructions. In these answers, the work of Hall et al, Gilroy and Lea and Young often figured.

Question 2

- a) Candidates would be well advised to set out their answers clearly and write concisely in response to questions of this kind. Many candidates answered this question in an unduly lengthy, mini-essay format. These were generally poorly organised and often failed to identify three points in a clear and unambiguous way, and some involved lengthy excursions through the work of Durkheim and his critics. In terms of the content of answers, most candidates were able to identify three problems of using data from qualitative methods or sources (such as lack of reliability, unrepresentativeness etc), although – very disappointingly at this level – some confused qualitative with quantitative data and wrote instead about official statistics. Most candidates failed to connect the problems identified to the study of suicide. By contrast, more successful answers identified both the type of data, eg suicide notes, coroner's reports or interviews with family, and the problem of using it. The explanation to link this to suicide generally followed more easily from this type of identifier. For example, some pointed out the problems of accessing suicide notes or the reasons why relatives of the suicide might be reluctant to tell the truth.
- b) The least successful answers tended to recycle material from Item B or to cite some sociological findings from studies of victims – in both cases, without reference to the usefulness of unstructured interviews. Some candidates seem to have thought that the interviews were being used as part of a police investigation or as a form of therapy for victims rather than as a research instrument. Better answers were able to identify and describe a number of strengths and/or limitations of the method, but without reference to the study of victims, and many also confused or conflated reliability and validity. Better answers either went on to make some limited links to victims (though these often did not go far beyond what was in the item), or instead catalogued a number of the likely research characteristics of victims (eg that they might not remember, that they might be traumatised, that they might not know they had been victimised, etc). The latter answers tended to have only implicit links to any features of unstructured interviews beyond the fact that this method involves asking people questions. The most successful answers were able to connect explicitly a number of specific features of unstructured interviews with specified research characteristics of victims and develop a discussion of these.

Question 3

A surprising number of candidates treated this as a question on crime and deviance and proceeded to write an essay on feminist contributions to our understanding of crime. In some of these cases, this may well be because their knowledge of wider feminist theory and research was limited, since a few prefaced their essay with a short and otherwise unconnected paragraph on 'three types of feminism' before settling in to a prepared answer on crime. Another common response was to make a few reasonable points about feminism before recounting a range of other sociological perspectives (often in greater detail than the account of feminism), connected only loosely if at all to the question. These less focused accounts could not score well on interpretation and application and, if they did make evaluative points, they tended to be only by juxtaposition of views or else at a tangent to the question. Some answers reinterpreted the question as being one about the contribution of feminism to society and thus focused on accounts of moves towards gender equality, the impact of feminism on legislation etc.

Other answers showed a rather descriptive knowledge of some feminist theories but were able to add to this an account of feminist contributions in specific areas of empirical sociology (usually the family, work and education, as well of course as crime). Good answers showed a more conceptually detailed knowledge and understanding of a range of feminist theories and of the similarities and difference between them (which also enabled them to gain analysis and evaluation marks). The most successful answers also included discussion of feminist research and examined debates about the relationship between feminist theory and sociological research methods.

Section B – Stratification and Differentiation

Very few candidates opted for this section and the following comments are based on a very limited range of candidate responses.

Question 4

- (a) These answers frequently contained a lot of tangential material relating to the problems of defining ethnicity. They then went on to recognise inequalities but tended to assert these rather than discussing or explaining them. More successful candidates selected a number of areas, such as housing, health, education or employment, and examined evidence of ethnic differences as well as considering sociological explanations such as the immigrant-host model, the divided working class or underclass thesis.
- (b) Some candidates had little concept of what might count as 'recent' changes. Some developed ideas from Item C but did not link them to changes in the class structure. Some candidates drifted into future expectations of the class structure according to different theoretical perspectives. A number of candidates quickly turned the question into one on social mobility or on problems of defining and measuring social class and the resulting answers were, unsurprisingly, often at a tangent to the set question.

Question 5

- a) There were some candidates who did not understand the method or ignored the term 'field' and talked about unnatural conditions. This resulted in answers largely at odds with the requirements of the question. The lack of *verstehen* was frequently given and was accepted as a valid identification point, but candidates found it difficult to explain this in relation to the research issue. Many used the 'PET' (practical, ethical, theoretical) formula for the three problems; while this worked for practical and ethical concerns, it was difficult to link theoretical problems to the research issue. As with question 2(a), candidates often wrote excessively long and poorly focused answers.
- b) Again the 'PET' formula was used here, but to rather better effect, although there was a tendency to lose sight of the particular method or the research issue. There was also a tendency to refer to interviews generically rather than focus specifically on structured interviews. This often led to a slippage into the characteristics of unstructured interviews, which undermined the relevance of the point being made. When the material was applied to investigating social class position, this was often more narrowly defined as measuring class, thereby limiting the scope for scoring marks for application to the demands of the question.

Question 6

This is the same question as Question 3. Please see the comments on Question 3.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.