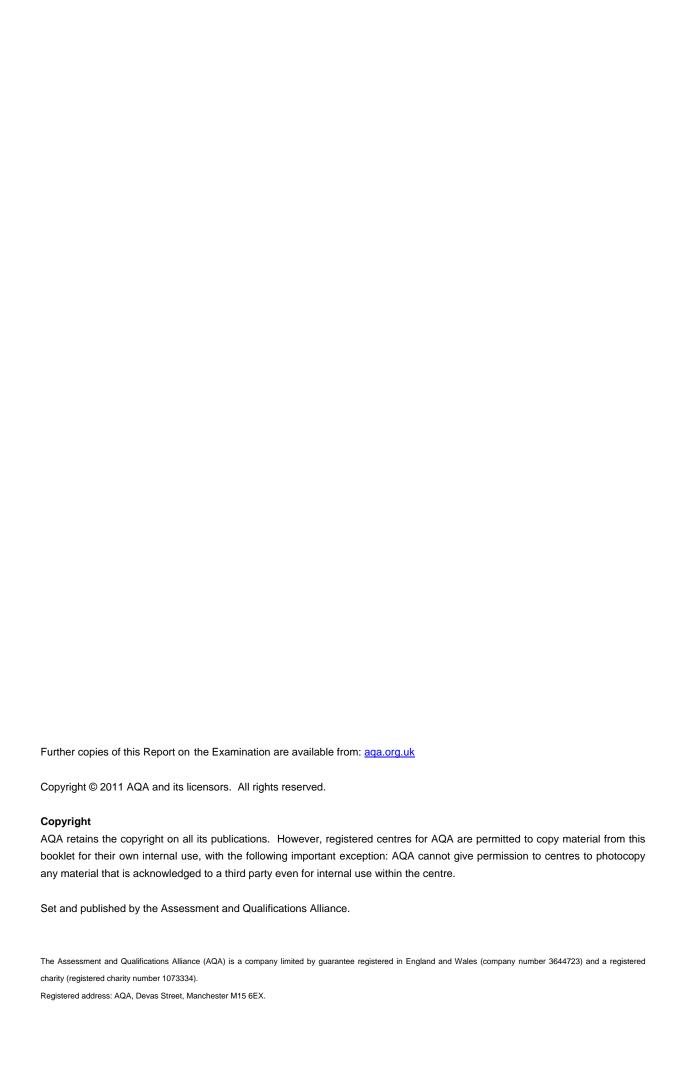**AQA**

**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2011**

Sociology   **SCLY4**

(Specification 2191)

**Unit 4: Crime and Deviance with Theory and
Methods;
Stratification and Differentiation with
Theory and Methods**

Report on the Examination

SCLY4

General

Although many candidates were able to answer the full range of questions for their chosen Section, more candidates than usual were unable to answer the last question (Question 06 or Question 12). In many cases those who did answer this question gave shorter than usual responses. Also, these responses often failed to address the question, tending to discuss values in society rather than the issue of value freedom in sociology. Since this question carries a large proportion of the available marks, these candidates often achieved a relatively poor mark on the paper as a whole.

The Methods in Context questions, particularly the short question, continue to be a problem for many candidates. Many were able only to offer identifications, which were not then explained in relation to the issue in the question. Better responses were seen for the 15-mark question.

General comment from Chief Examiner

Evidence from some of the responses to this paper appears to indicate that some centres are neglecting to teach certain topics. In particular, a significant minority of candidates had little or no relevant knowledge of the debates about value freedom in sociology (Question 06 and Question 12, worth 33 marks out of 90). This is referred to explicitly in the specification. Clearly, the consequence of neglecting important aspects of the specification in this way is to place candidates' performance and results in serious jeopardy.

Section A – Crime and Deviance with Theory and Methods

The great majority of candidates chose this Section.

Crime and Deviance

Question 01

Answers to this question were generally sound. Many candidates had a good knowledge of a variety of crime prevention strategies and were often able to locate their discussion in a theoretical framework. The better responses looked at situational and environmental crime prevention strategies and evaluated them using the criticism of displacement, sometimes with specific evidence. Most candidates were able to identify at least three crime prevention strategies, the most common being CCTV and ASBOs. Some also had detailed knowledge of curfews, parenting orders and target-hardening strategies, which they linked to New Right sociologists and/or politicians. The best answers were able to put their knowledge into a context of right realist compared with left realist approaches to crime prevention. Stronger answers scored better by explicitly addressing the 'effectiveness' aspect of the question.

Weaker responses listed crime prevention strategies with a lack of focus on effectiveness. Some candidates became sidetracked onto general causes of crime or came up with fairly commonsensical strategies of having more police or harsher sentencing. Some less successful answers discussed punishment rather than prevention. Some candidates were unclear about the difference between zero tolerance and environmental prevention ('Broken Windows'). Some candidates identified a strategy but did not explain it.

Question 02

Many candidates struggled to identify clearly what constituted Marxist views. These answers gave a general tour of possible theories of crime including labelling, subcultural and Mertonian without relating them to the question. More successful candidates were able to link some of these theories with some Marxist ideas, eg Merton and inequality, although Merton was often assumed to be a Marxist. Poor answers tried to take ideas from the Item and describe what they meant (eg 'police target working class', 'middle class don't get punished', unequal distribution of wealth, capitalist society), but added very little to the Item. Weaker responses recycled the Item with minimal development. Many candidates were able to present at least a basic account of some Marxist ideas, linked to a greater or lesser degree to crime and social class. Some responses did not focus on crime, giving an overview of Marxist theory in general. Good answers cited issues such as criminogenic capitalism, law creation, consumerism, ideology, inequality, corporate crime and selective law enforcement.

Many candidates considered traditional Marxist and neo-Marxist approaches. Good answers were able to discuss several differing views including traditional Marxist, Neo Marxist, Marxist Feminists and Left realism and were able to develop the points in the Item quite effectively. A few candidates developed material on ethnicity without making an explicit linkage to class. Much of the evaluation was juxtaposed. Some answers listed evaluative points such as "too deterministic", "ignores women", "crime occurs in Non capitalist countries" but more effective were answers that wove evaluation throughout the answer in a way that applied to the specific point that was being addressed.

Methods in Context

Question 03

Most candidates achieved at least one mark for this question, and almost all referred to the problems of lying or non-response. Another popular identification was response rate. A significant but smaller proportion were able to explain these in terms of avoiding prosecution or damaging the company's reputation. Partial explanations included the problem of fear of getting caught committing a crime, and the best ones went further and linked it to respondents' fear of losing their jobs.

Question 04

This question was not answered well. Some candidates were able to identify problems of experiments but not link them to juvenile delinquents or the media. When candidates took the example of Bandura they were able to identify the ethical problem of potential harm if children are shown violent media and then in turn become more violent themselves. A small number used the problems associated with the unpredictability/unoperationisability of the media and media effects. While most candidates could identify one or two potential problems with experiments, usually the Hawthorne Effect, control of variables, lacking ecological validity, or artificiality, hardly any were able to discuss these problems in the context given. Many candidates scored no marks as they wrote about the media rather than experiments. Unfortunately many did not recognise that the question was about experimental design and assumed an experiment was any method.

Question 05

This question was generally answered reasonably well, with the hooks from the Item being used effectively and students trying to write answers according to the requirements of the application skill. Candidates were generally able to identify and explain a range of strengths and weaknesses of unstructured interviews and these were often linked to perspectives and concepts. Many candidates were able to link possible strengths and limitations of using unstructured interviews to the investigation of domestic violence, such as difficulty of access, sensitive nature, guilty knowledge etc. The strongest candidates put the two elements of method and context together very well. Dobash and Dobash appeared regularly, and most were able to make a L3 point or two, with the better answers sustaining the application over several paragraphs.

A surprising number of candidates appeared to think that the interview was being carried out by or for the police, perhaps in order to discover more about a particular crime. In less developed responses, those that were able to discuss research characteristics of victims of domestic violence tended to know little about the strengths and limitations of unstructured interviews, whilst those who knew a lot about the method tended to ignore the link to the topic area. For example, some candidates considered at length the problems of finding victims and that they may not want to speak out, without considering what it is about unstructured interviews that might help or hinder the process. Many relied heavily on the Item for links to the issue. The better responses looked specifically at practical, ethical and theoretical aspects of unstructured interviews. Many candidates, however, focused solely on practical issues.

Generally in answers to Question 03, 04, and 05 candidates seem to think they are making a link to the context by just using the words eg domestic violence/corporate crime etc without being explicit about what the particular issue is concerning that research topic.

Theory and Methods

Question 06

There were some very good responses to this question which applied positivism, interpretivism, Weber, Gouldner and Becker to the issue of value freedom. The 'can' and 'should' elements were often not differentiated but some candidates managed to do this well. Good answers were more likely to focus on 'can' and compare positivist/Durkheim with interpretivist approaches – often better on interpretivism and the significance of values (some had long accounts of suicide that contributed nothing to the answer). Some good answers were able to discuss Weber's views in greater depth.

In some less successful responses positivism and interpretivism were juxtaposed in varying depth. A significant number of candidates did not seem have knowledge and understanding which they could apply to the question set and some made no attempt to answer the question at all. Some candidates were able to discuss the role of values in choosing a topic and interpreting findings, some were also able to discuss funding/paymasters.

Other responses took a methods only route and looked at various methods and explained the extent to which values interfered, eg leading questions, interviewer bias etc. Other weaker candidates wrote about the views that sociological perspectives have on the role of values in society. A significant proportion of candidates focused on sociology as a science rather than value freedom. There were unfortunately a significant number of candidates who were unable to even try an answer.

Section B – Stratification and Differentiation with Theory and Methods

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

Stratification and Differentiation

Question 07

Most candidates were able to give a reasonable account of patterns of social mobility. Candidates were familiar with several pieces of research on mobility, but were less able to apply these. Candidates did not focus on the most recent evidence. Many of the examples used did not fit with the 30 year time frame specified in the question. In many cases candidates gave a discussion of the reasons for patterns, showing analysis, but evaluation was much more limited.

Question 08

Overall this question seems to have been answered well. Most candidates were able to give an account of sociological explanations of gender differences in life chances. Stronger candidates were able to use a range of life chances. Additionally, good responses used a range of perspectives to analyse and evaluate. This ranged from different branches of feminism to a range of other perspectives with functionalism and New Right being used evaluatively. Weaker responses focused on a more limited range of life chances usually work or education and used a more limited range of perspectives.

Methods in Context

Question 09

Overall, this question was poorly answered due to a lack of application to the topic of social class. Many candidates could identify a problem but few were able to apply it to the issue. Examples of candidates scoring full marks were those who looked at the problem of official statistics being objective and therefore lacking a subjective view of social class.

Question 10

Answers to this question were more competent than those to Question 09 and most candidates gained reasonable marks. Many candidates were able to identify two relevant advantages of official statistics. Good responses referred to the availability of a large sample and this giving comparability of social classes and/or social mobility. Others referred to use of census data. Weaker responses were unable to link the advantages to the issue of investigating social class.

Question 11

This question was quite well answered in regard to L1 and L2. All candidates were able to list some strengths and limitations of participant observation and develop one or two points from the Item. However, application to the issue tended to be Item driven. Of the PET aspects, there was more practical than ethical or theoretical points made. Candidates seemed to assume that all older people live in homes for the aged. Where application was made this was limited mostly to access and care homes showing a lack of development. Most candidates realised that the method had to be linked to the context. Some candidates gave a clear and thorough account of the method including relevant concepts but failed to give any application to the issue. Others seemed be more limited in their knowledge of the method but made a greater attempt at application to old age.

Theory and Methods

Question 12

There were some very good responses to this question which applied positivism, interpretivism, Weber, Gouldner and Becker to the issue of value freedom. The 'can' and 'should' elements were often not differentiated but some candidates managed to do this well. Good answers were more likely to focus on 'can' and compare positivist/Durkheim with interpretivist approaches – often better on interpretivism and the significance of values (some had long accounts of suicide that contributed nothing to the answer). Some good answers were able to discuss Weber's views in greater depth.

In some less successful responses positivism and interpretivism were juxtaposed in varying depth. A significant number of candidates did not seem have knowledge and understanding which they could apply to the question set and some made no attempt to answer the question at all. Some candidates were able to discuss the role of values in choosing a topic and interpreting findings, some were also able to discuss funding/paymasters.

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Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

Converting Marks into UMS marks

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

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