GCSE

Sociology

General Certificate of Secondary Education **J696**

OCR Report to Centres

June 2012

CONTENTS

General Certificate of Secondary Education

Sociology (J696)

OCR REPORT TO CENTRES

Overview

Entry levels and candidate profiles have been similar to those of 2011 with the greater proportion of entries for B671 being year 10 candidates, those for B673 being mostly year 11 but with some year 10 and those for B672 almost totally year 11. This once again has proved to be successful and year 10 candidates cope well with the demands of B671. However, from first teaching in September 2012, linear rules will apply. The non-tiered approach also continues to be successful with exam papers which are structured to test the knowledge and skills of candidates across the ability range.

For the third year, papers B671 and B673 were completed within a structured answer booklet with marking of these papers taking place electronically. This year, the same system of answer booklet and electronic marking was extended to B672. This also has proved to be successful with candidates coping well with an extensive booklet required for the choice element of this paper.

The quality of the candidate's knowledge of sociology and their skills in applying this to answer specific questions continues to be impressive. Across the different components, candidates have demonstrated a good understanding of difficult concepts. Some candidates at the top end are using sociological studies to support and inform their answers and some are using simple sociological theory with accuracy. Whilst the top grade can be achieved without this, it is good to see candidates being prepared for more advanced study of sociology and encouraging a more sophisticated approach where appropriate. At the lower end, candidates for the most part are producing sociological answers and even at the bottom of the grade range there is some appropriate use of sociological language.

Overall, candidates continue to be well prepared for the examinations and teachers are using the resources available such as the increasing stock of past papers and the schemes of work to inform their teaching.

B671 Sociology Basics

The paper appears to have differentiated well, stretching the top end through targeted questions, yet still being accessible to the lower end. The examination paper was in a booklet format in an attempt to try and help structure candidate's responses and thus support them in achieving the best marks they were capable of. A large number of candidates took advantage of the additional pages in order to extend their responses for questions 5 and 9. Some excellent conceptual and theoretical sociology was seen by the examination team and candidates and tutors are to be congratulated for their hard work in achieving this.

General Comments

This was not a tiered paper and the spread of marks appropriately reflected this. A wide range of responses were seen by the examining team with all candidates clearly being able to access the paper.

The question paper was thought to be clear and offered a range of formats which allowed candidates of all abilities to access marks. A small minority of candidates appeared to run short of time towards the end of the examination and thus regular timed exam question practice is recommended to centres. Some candidates appear to have decided to answer the lengthier questions (5 and 9) first in order to maximise marks. This proved successful for some but in other cases resulted in other shorter (and often more straightforward) questions not being answered. It is clear that effective time management is crucial to success here.

There was evidence that many candidates had been prepared well for this examination by their teachers and that they clearly understood the rubric implications of the different question styles. Where candidates were not as well prepared they confused different skills and often "identified" where they were required to "explain" or did not fully understand the concept or method being tested, status, hidden curriculum and observation, for example.

Centres are to be reminded that all areas of the specification can be examined and it is thus essential that candidates are prepared for this.

Most candidates showed an at least basic knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and methods, particularly around socialisation and gender. The level of critical thought was also good with the majority of candidates having at least some understanding of research techniques and their associated flaws and weaknesses. Essay technique was much improved this session with few tabulated responses seen and the majority of candidates able to have a debate (at very different levels) around the issue of the effectiveness of the family in terms of socialisation.

Overall, it was clearly felt that the paper had done what it set out to do and had successfully tested candidates on the 'basics' of Sociology at GCSE level.

Comments on Individual Questions

Section A – Research Methods and Evidence

Q1

This was a true or false question testing candidate's sociological knowledge. Most candidates scored well here although not all were clear on the meanings of covert and quantitative 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 thus familiarise candidates with the format requirements.

Q2

This question was typically really well answered this year with most candidates finding plenty of different points to comment on from the Source – most frequently seen were that it was only one observation, only in a female prison and only in California.

Marks will not be awarded here for those candidates who identify and discuss accuracy issues. Centres are advised to give their candidates plenty of pieces of evidence to analyse for these types of issues; old legacy papers as well as past Basics papers should prove useful.

In identify and explain questions such as question 2 many candidates included two identify points in their first answer, i.e "because it was a women's prison in California". This led to many candidates scoring full marks on their first identify and explain but they then could not think of a second point to include because they had used two in the first point. They therefore included a weak point and explanation which often was not creditable. If candidates can limit themselves to one clear point and explanation for each section of the question, this will potentially allow them to gain more marks.

Q3

The format and structure of this question seemed to work well for candidates of all abilities. Some one word answers were seen from some candidates who perhaps referred to observation as being 'valid' as an advantage and 'expensive' as a disadvantage. Candidates are to be reminded that one word is not a description as asked for in the question and thus cannot score the full marks available. The disadvantages of observation were answered more successfully on the whole than the advantages which sometimes were too vague or generic to credit. The best responses here clearly understood observation as a research method and were thus able to pick out two advantages and disadvantages of using it. Centres would be well advised to ensure their candidates keep a methods and evidence checklist of appropriate advantages and disadvantages to revise from to help prepare them for this type of question.

Q4(a)(i)

The majority of candidates were successfully able to identify the secondary data used and a variety of possible responses were creditable i.e. media material, diary, newspaper article and qualitative data. A significant minority of candidates identified Source B as a content analysis or interview (primary methods) so teachers are advised to ensure that candidates are clear on the differences between primary methods and secondary evidence/data and encourage candidates to look carefully at the labels and information included with the source material for guidance.

Q4(a)(ii)

The vast majority of candidates scored full marks in this 'identify' question.

Q4(b)

On the whole, candidates focused well on the wording of the question but some are still losing marks because they discuss sampling/representativeness/generaliseability. Most common answers focused on the fact that the source was adapted, likely to be biased and the issues of distortion/sensationalism associated with media materials.

Q5

It was pleasing to see that far fewer candidates than last examination series seemed to misinterpret the question and answer this as an essay. This is a standard question format and thus it is crucial that candidates are prepared in how to answer it prior to sitting the examination. Hopefully the bullet point prompts have aided in this and reinforced that it is a research and evidence report that is required here. This question was, in general, answered well with many candidates being able to write responses which clearly identified primary methods and secondary evidence that might be used within the context of the investigation. The majority of candidates were also able to provide some description and justification for their choices, although this did not always include sampling and was often a little brief for the chosen secondary evidence. High level concepts were seen and duly rewarded in the better L3 responses, demonstrating some excellent sociological knowledge and understanding. The question therefore differentiated well in terms of outcome between candidates of various different abilities.

- Most candidates knew what a primary and secondary method was and many candidates included subject knowledge and subject specific terminology such as 'unstructured interviews', 'stratified sample', 'observer effect' etc.
- Sampling was not dealt with well on the whole and was often skirted over.
- Context let some candidates down as many failed to discuss all their methods and evidence in the specific context of the question. This said there were few wholly generic responses.
- A number of candidates wasted time discussing the disadvantages of their chosen method, earning them little or no credit unless they were used to justify the choice of their second method or evidence.
- In many answers a conclusion was included that linked to how the research will help them investigate the hypothesis but this was merely a repetition of previous material, earning candidates no additional credit for the time spent. Much better were the answers that included this justification throughout their answer.
- Most candidates discussed interviews, observations and questionnaires as their chosen primary methods. A few methods seen were hugely unrealistic and so difficult to credit, (e.g. building a prison and running it for a year, observing every prison in the UK… spending three months in each one).

Key issues with responses were that at times candidates did not cover two primary methods and a piece of secondary evidence in their discussion. This immediately cost them marks. A lack of detail and depth on how the method / evidence would be used was also something noticed by the examining team. Quite a few really good responses remained at the top of Level 2 because the third method/evidence was dealt with very briefly and its inclusion in the research plan was not justified. Focusing on these issues with candidates should really help to boost the marks awarded in this question.

Sociological language and concepts were used well – even low level responses often had clear terms such as 'non-participant observation' rather than simply 'observation' which is to be encouraged. Candidates need to be clear in the application of key concepts such as representative, valid and reliability, however, as these were often used inaccurately and/or in a very confused manner. There were some very good answers from candidates here and the majority were able to reach at least Level 2.

Section B – Key Concepts in Sociology

Q6

Most candidates scored well here with the most common error being the definition of 'values'. To address this, centres may wish to consider getting their candidates to compile their own 'key concepts' glossaries based on the specification.

Q7(a) and 7(b)

This question demonstrated a real split in knowledge between those candidates who were familiar and confident in their understanding of the concepts of 'ascribed' and 'achieved' status and those who were not. Centres need to ensure that candidates are familiar with all aspects of the specification as all can be examined.

Q7(c)

Within question 7 candidates were typically able to identify an element of the hidden curriculum but very few were able to link this to gender identity meaning that very few candidates scored full marks on this question. Some candidates did not know what this concept referred to and thus failed to link it with education and/or gender.

Q7(d)

This question was typically answered very well by candidates. Most candidates chose to answer by an identification of a formal agent of social control coupled with an explanation of how they control us. Some candidates successfully looked at formal control within, say, the workplace or education.

Q8(a)

Many candidates gained full marks on this question as they were able to identify a norm and describe how it has changed over time. Some candidates did not gain full marks as they didn't describe a change, thus only being credited for the identification point. A few strange norms were seen, as expected, but many could still be credited because they showed clear understanding of what is meant by a 'norm' and how the norm has changed over time.

Q8(b)

Most candidates engaged well with this question and were able to clearly identify an example of how men are stereotyped with 'breadwinner' and 'strong' being frequently referred to. Where full marks were not gained, this tended to be because the description merely repeated the identified stereotype or described a different stereotype altogether.

Q9

Most candidates showed good time management skills here and were thus able to finish the paper and not jeopardise marks in this last question. The question seems to have effectively differentiated between candidates of various abilities with very few one sided answers seen.

A sizeable number of candidates gave too little time to discussing the family, as directed in the question, and focused on listing points against instead. Where processes were mentioned a number of candidates listed them without explanation or development, e.g. 'the family uses canalisation to teach children gender roles', then move onto another point. Working on improving these issues would help candidates to increase the marks they achieve in this question.

- The strongest answers tended to refer to some sociological research and evidence which demonstrated their knowledge and understanding well.
- A lot of candidates used sociological terms and concepts well such as 'canalisation' and 'manipulation' and demonstrated that they understood what these terms meant. Specific focus on this process of socialisation was often the difference between a L2 and a L3 response.
- Candidates should be reminded to ensure they discuss the primary agent in the question (the family) in some detail (including processes) as many moved on too quickly to trying to discuss and evaluate the many other agents of socialisation without demonstrating enough knowledge of the main issue.
- Conclusions were included by the majority of candidates but too many of these tended to be descriptive and merely repeated the content from the main body of the essay rather than making a clear judgement on the debate.
- On the whole, candidates have demonstrated a clear understanding of sociological concepts and some top level candidates even showed understanding of A Level material well (e.g. sociological perspectives and specific studies). However, candidates should be warned that they should stay focused on the question in hand as many were side-tracked by trying to demonstrate their knowledge where it was not really relevant to the demands of the specific question.

Examiner hints, tips and advice:

- Ensure candidates have regular practice at the various styles of examination question well before they sit the paper to help with familiarity and to pinpoint any issues that they may have with particular skills and time management.

- Encourage candidates to keep glossaries of the key terms covered as these will always be needed as a basis for the sociological knowledge and understanding on the examination paper.

- Understanding the command words in the questions correctly will, of course, be crucial to overall success on the paper. The differences between identify, describe, explain, justify, evaluate etc need to be covered by teachers as part of the preparation for the examination.

- For Q5 ensure that candidates understand the requirements of the research plan and are able to appropriately select, describe and justify their choices of methods and evidence within the context of the hypothesis. Remind them of the need to consider sampling for their primary method choices. It is also crucial to remember the context of the investigation as candidates will not be able to reach L3 if their response is a generic one.

- For Q9 a one sided answer must be avoided as the key command word is 'evaluate'. Candidates should be encouraged to make a point, explain and expand upon it and give an example. A range of points should be included in the essay. Best practice is to clearly 'flag up' to the examiners when evaluation is occurring via phrases such as 'however', 'on the other hand' etc. A conclusion should be offered to sum up the points made and to make a judgement on the claim.

B672 Socialisation, Culture and Identity

This was the first series that this unit was marked online. The paper remains untiered and the marks are out of 120. We were pleased to see the paper differentiate well. Overall the majority of candidates did only answer the three required sections, however there were more candidates this year who ignored that instruction and attempted the whole paper and thus not scoring well.

The candidates seemed to do well working in booklets for the first time and it prevented the time wasted on copying out the statements in the mix and match activity shown in previous series. Some candidates needed to be clear when using extra sheets and others need to adhere to the instruction that they must only work in the space provided.

The most popular options were Sections A, E and F. A smaller cohort of centres answered Sections B and C, but only a few candidates answered Section D. These seem to be a couple of centres who had been taught it alongside a few errant candidates who either chose to answer the whole paper or thought it looked manageable. Those who did not seem to have studied it did not do well.

As last year; there seemed to be some centres who clearly taught 3 of the 6 sections and their candidates often had enough wide ranging knowledge with detail. However some centres seemed to have opted for teaching more than the required amount of sections. Whilst for some the candidates were still successful, there was evidence that this worked against many. Either they did not have enough wide ranging ideas or detail in their work, or worse still they dithered over which sections to answer which was seen when some then answered too many, others started one section, crossed it out and moved on.

General Comments

Strong candidates clearly were prepared for the paper, having sociological evidence to discuss, however the less successful candidates relied largely on common sense. This distinction was more apparent on the essay questions and the 8 mark questions. Essay structure remains impressive with some extremely discursive essays. The majority of candidates were able to use evidence both for and against, presenting sustained evaluative arguments on most of the essays. The number of candidates that fail to offer a conclusion again remained low. There were less candidates relying on subtitles to construct their arguments.

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

The majority of candidates did well on the multiple choice key concept questions. It was pleasing to see that candidates not only knew the key concepts for the matching activity, but also seemed to consistently use them throughout their answers.

Sociological knowledge has correctly been taught in a diverse set of ways with candidates confidently using concepts, but also empirical evidence and lots of studies alongside contemporary examples referring to cross cultural ideas and the law. There is a growing use of sociological theory in the candidates work. Largely it is based around a very generic view of Marxism (it is all about money, often just labelling any material discussions as Marxist) and a generic idea of Functionalism. Historically the use of theory has been a problem for candidates who either are inaccurately using theory or generalising it. However, some centres have taught it well and candidates were showing an impressive and applicable use of theory especially in the

Family section (to be discussed later). Overall though theory should be used to extend the learning of those who are able to confidently use other forms of evidence as it is not a necessity.

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

Section A – Family

Q1

Most candidates accurately identified ways the daughter and son had been influenced by gender socialisation. A minority did not follow the instruction "From the source" and therefore were unable to score. However, whilst the majority could use their wider sociological knowledge to show other ways gender socialisation occurred some candidates gave generic answers such as the TV they watch or the toys they play with causing repetition in 1b and 1d and therefore sacrificing 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.

Q2

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 revise these thoroughly. There are ideas for revision games on the schemes of work available on the OCR website.

Q3

The majority of candidates could discuss sociological reasons for an increase in cohabitation. However there were candidates who did not understand the concept and thus did not score any marks. There is a clear divide between candidates who give concise reasons, use some evidence, explain the increase and develop their answer; while others, who do not use evidence, do not focus fully on the *increase* and use common sense ideas such as trial marriage. A few wrote generic answers that seemed to focus more on the increase in divorce, not cohabitation.

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 for the increase is… This increase has occurred because…".

Q4

All candidates engaged with this question and it differentiated well. Those who were most successful could articulate why the traditional nuclear family is better. This question was the best answered essay with theory e.g. Feminism vs. New Right/ Functionalism. Very strong candidates were able to name and use sociological studies well with a fluid use of concepts; weaker responses did not include enough key terms to express their ideas focusing on practical advantages of living in a nuclear family. Successful answers were diverse from using Parson's Warm Bath Theory, to a detailed evaluation of the diverse types of family in the contemporary UK.

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

Section B – Education

Q5

Most candidates were able to answer all the source based questions dealing with the quantitative data well. Candidates must remember to take their answers directly from the source when requested. Most candidates were then able to identify a subculture found in schools and show understanding of their expected behaviour. Best responses focused on school subcultures such as pro or anti. However some candidates neglected to focus on school subcultures.

Examiner tip:
Ensure candidates follow the instructions. In homework give them a mixture of source/ wider sociological knowledge questions so the get used to reading the paper carefully.

Q6

Most candidates were able to match the relevant concept with the appropriate statement, however a small number of candidates were confused by selection and setting.

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

Most candidates successfully identified what may be learnt in the hidden curriculum. The best answers thought about what was learnt and then gained AO2 marks through discussing *how* it was learnt i.e. negative sanctions, which then allowed them to develop their ideas and ensure they used sociological evidence. Weaker responses were practical only i.e. learning manners without any development or use of sociological language. A minority of candidates did not engage with the question as they did not understand the term.

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 thing learnt is… This is taught through …".

Q8

Candidates needed to understand the term social class to score on this essay. Best responses were detailed and wide ranging often debating material and cultural deprivation vs meritocracy and the importance of other factors that affect education. Again some candidates used theory well but others just got confused by it. There does still remain a number of candidates that use the term cultural deprivation, but do not understand it.

Examiner tip:
1   Centres need to ensure that candidates understand the term social class.
2   Candidates need to practice using concepts throughout their essays.

Section C Mass Media

Q9

Most candidates successfully analysed the quantitative data. Candidates were diverse in their examples of female stereotypes from the media. Best responses were concise and precise i.e. homemaker and sex object. Others showed a lack of understanding of the term stereotype, with a few candidates not reading the question and discussing males.

Examiner tip:
Ensure candidates are clear on the term stereotypes and can note examples considering strata such as gender, class, ethnicity and age.

Q10

This was generally well answered, although some candidates struggled to match self-censorship and socialisation.

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

Weaker responses did not clearly identify two ways with overlap and confusion and a lack of sociological concepts, basing their answers on asociological examples. Best responses considered the work of Trowler and considered *how* the mass media influences identity. As can be seen in the mark scheme there was a diverse and wide range of acceptable answers. Some scored highly through the use of concepts, others through studies such as Gillespie.

Examiner tip:
1   Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format "One way is through…This affects identity by….".

2   Ensure candidates practise considering how identity is affected by the agents of socialisation (in comparison to behaviour or norms or values)

Q12

The focus of the question was *new developments,* which as shown on the specification asks candidates to consider globalisation, interactivity amongst other changes. Some candidates wrote asociologically about the practical merits of having a smart phone and did not score highly. Best responses debated globalisation with some wonderful discussions of government filtering of the internet vs eradicating hidden torture. Weak responses did not focus on the question merely discussing whether the media is good or bad. Some centres need to ensure their candidates remember their concepts throughout their essays.

Examiner tip:
1   Candidates need to plan essays ensuring sociological content. Practice essay titles can be found on the OCR website for past papers on the legacy specification.
2   Teachers should check the mark scheme to ensure they are teaching the necessary sociological content required from the question.

Section D: Work

Q13

Most candidates were able to analyse the qualitative data noting what the source stated as norms the worker was expected to follow. However there was some repetition and ignoring of instructions when asked to find other norms, *not stated in the source.* Most candidates could cite being sacked as an example of how a worker may be punished for not following norms.

Examiner tip:
Candidates need to be able to use unseen sources and retrieve information from this. Teachers should ensure candidates gain practice of this skill.

Q14

Most answers showed a good knowledge of the key concepts. However there were some that confused instrinsic and extrinsic satisfaction.

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

Many candidates did not understand the term 'patterns of work'. As stated in the specification and the mark scheme best responses referred to flexible work patterns, working from home and part time work.

Examiner tip:
1   Ensure candidates have an understanding of the term patterns of work.

2   Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format "One pattern is… This is when…".

Q16

Responses were clearly divided between anecdotal weak responses that often lost focus and just looked at why people work using asociological discussions and did not stick to the question: *the worst effect of not working.* Some strong responses did discuss material deprivation vs lack of self esteem and socialisation. Whilst some gave unbalanced answers (as is the nature of the question) they still managed to score highly ensuring plenty of sociological language and a strong evaluation of the different arguments against the hypothesis.

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

Section E – Crime and Deviance

Q17

Most candidates were successful in analysing the quantitative data. However 17c divided candidates: some picked any crime, even rape, and were unable to score. Best responses noted prostitution.

Q18

This question was exceptionally well answered. Most candidates were able to accurately match the concept and the statement. However there were a few answers that did not match conformity and delinquency accurately.

Examiner tip:
Ensure candidates consider patterns of criminal activity in relation to strata i.e. gender, age, ethnicity and social class.

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

Candidates did well to explain two sociological reasons for why working class boys commit more crime. Best responses were highly conceptual discussing status frustration, Marxism and/or labelling. Weaker responses did not use any sociological evidence whilst recalling accurate ideas such as boredom and thus could not score highly. There were some candidates inaccurately linking status frustration to material gain.

Examiner tip:
1   Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format "One reason is…This means working class boys commit more crime because…".
2   Ensure candidates consider the reasons for all strata and patterns of criminal activity i.e. social class, gender, age and ethnicity.

Q20

Whilst most candidates did seem prepared for this debate some good responses could not score highly due to not using sociological evidence within their debate. Best responses considered validity, representativeness and the many reasons why official statistics have a dark figure of crime. Some candidates lost marks due to poor essay structure i.e. listing evaluative comments and not developing them e.g. unrecorded crime includes rape, domestic violence, crimes not noticed; without explaining why or ensuring the use of sociological evidence. There remains much confusion and misuse of the term reliable. Furthermore some candidates did not discuss sociological ideas such as self-report studies and victim surveys.

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

Section F - Youth

Q21

Candidates largely interpreted the data/source accurately. Some candidates repeated their answers for 21b from 21a ignoring the instructions *not included in the source.*

Q22

Largely candidates successfully matched their concepts to the right statements. However there was some confusion on scapegoating and status frustration.

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

There were many perfect responses to this question with candidates focusing on the ways the peer group can influence a person's behaviour. However some candidates were unable to clearly identify two different ways and remember to ensure they used sociological evidence, merely giving asociological examples. Best responses focused on peer group pressure and role models.

Examiner tip:
Ensure candidates practise for the 8 mark question. They need a clear ability to separately identify and explain. Show candidates a clear format "One way is…
This is when….".

Q24

Considering that youth as a social construction is clearly in the specification there were a disappointing amount of candidates who could not score highly by misunderstanding the term socially constructed, focusing on socialisation or worse socialising. Best responses evaluated the many arguments such as the influence of media, historical changes, the law and cultural examples e.g. rites of passage vs biological construction of age. Some wonderful essays referred to studies such as Mead and Postman and used contemporary examples of rites of passage showing good cross cultural knowledge.

Candidates need to be prepared for **all** parts of the syllabus. They could be given a note version of the syllabus content and concepts to use a tick list for revision to ensure there are no gaps.

Overall tip:
The format will not change and thus it is important for candidates to gain lots of practice especially timed. To improve centres need to ensure they have sociological evidence to improve their work. Some need to work on developing ideas using examples and showing how their evidence answers the question. Overall some great responses were evident with lots of sociological evidence learnt.

B673 Applying Sociological Research Techniques

Introduction

As part of a modular structure, this paper will contribute 25% of the overall GCSE qualification, awarded for the second time in 2012. As in the previous two years, there were some Year 10 candidates who were entered for this unit but most candidates were Year 11.

This 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 made available in January of the year of the examination. Candidates are expected to have studied the pre-release material prior to the examination and to have gained a sound knowledge of it. A copy of the pre-release is made available to them for reference during the exam.

As the J696 specification does not have tiered assessment papers, the B673 examination has questions structured to test the ability range from A* to G grade candidates. It is therefore anticipated that some candidates will find particular questions eg. Q13, to be challenging. Conversely, all candidates should find some parts of the examination paper to be accessible.

Q1(a)

The overwhelming majority of candidates achieved the mark for this question. Most identified the first aim. It required that the aim would be copied exactly from the investigation. Candidates who re-phrased the aim significantly did not score marks.

Q1(b)

Most candidates answered correctly.

Q2(a)

Most candidates demonstrated the ability to select statistical information from prose and answered correctly.

Q2(b)

Many candidates demonstrated the ability to select information from a graph and answered correctly but a substantial proportion wrote 12,000. Some were inaccurate in using the graph and wrote 11.

Q2(c)
Most answered correctly.

Q2(d)

Most answered correctly but those not credited mostly identified Hindu. Those who wrote Islamic rather than Muslim were credited.

Q3(a)

Most answered correctly but most of those not credited wrote every 5 years.

Q3(b)

It was clear that candidates had been prepared well for this question and most candidates identified 'Government' in their answer.

Q4(a)(b)

Most candidates only scored one mark on this question as they were able to state a generic advantage/ disadvantage but didn't make a developed reference to the family. A number made a simple reference by repeating part of the question title. The best answers gave a good example such as 'you don't know the reasons why a couple may be divorcing' as a disadvantage.

Q5(a)

Only a minority of candidates gained both marks. Most responses credited received only one mark for identifying that it relates to a whole population. Part of the problem was getting past merely repeating the wording of the question. Responses often lacked clear understanding of a sample containing a variety / different types of people or being proportional to the population being studied. The best answers listed the different factors that should be taken into consideration. A number of candidates did this and gained the two marks in this way.

Q5(b)

Most candidates answered correctly. Of those who were not credited, some identified a different sampling technique but most identified a method.

Q5(c)

Many identified a suitable alternative and most of these were able to provide a simple description. However, candidates failed to refer back to the investigation or show a clear understanding of how a type of sampling can be applied to select a wider sample from Asian community therefore most were limited to two marks. Some candidates mixed up answers e.g. gave a named sampling type yet described a different sampling type. Some candidates were describing methods and not sampling used for example, 'She should have used semi-structured interviews'. Few candidates gained all four marks by giving a developed application to Investigation 1.

A number of candidates identified a 'selective sample'. This is a term usually connected to research in the natural sciences, is not in the specification and is a vague term. It was not credited.

Q6(a)(b)

These questions were generally answered quite well. Candidates found identifying similarities in the sources more difficult than identifying the differences. Therefore 6 (b) was generally answered better than 6 (a) as candidates were able to see the contradiction between the 'strong bonds' and 'spending a lot of time with friends'. Some candidates got a little confused on 6a, sometimes giving contradictory statements and sometimes picking out parts of the BBC article which did not show a similar idea to the quote. A quite common mistake was misreading the quote as if it was talking about White families rather than Asian families and then basing the answer on this.

Q7(a)

This question was generally well answered and most candidates achieved two marks. However, a significant minority identified an aim or a question.

Q7(b)

Almost all candidates answered this question correctly. A few summed up an idea from the case-study and therefore didn't gain the mark.

Q8(a)

Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.

Q8(b)

Almost all candidates answered this question correctly.

Q9(a)(b)

Many candidates did not seem to understand that the question was about the method of content analysis and gave a more general answer about the media, often focusing on the content of the media. Either this was because they misinterpreted the question, or lacked understanding of content analysis. Where candidates did gain one mark for these questions, many did not link it clearly to the investigation, TV guide or family.

Many identified an advantage of content analysis as a method easy to carry out. Those who said it was easy to watch programmes on TV were not credited.

Q10(a)

Many candidates answered this question correctly.

Q10(b)

Many candidates gained one mark for writing about the results or conclusion of research representing the research population. Few candidates expressed the idea that it is patterns/ trends from research that can be applied to most people and wrote statements along the lines of

'when everyone is the same..'. Many candidates stated that a generalisation was related to stereotypes. This was credited if the answer indicated a general rather than an individual view.

Q11

Most candidates were able to achieve two marks on this question for identifying conclusions. The most frequent reason for not achieving four marks was because a figure from the table was not included to back up the conclusion. Many expanded on the conclusion instead ie what it implied in a broader sense. A number of candidates used a quantifiable word such as 'equal' or 'half' to back up their conclusion and were able to score both marks for their conclusion in this way. A number of candidates misread the table, especially the nuclear family statistics, and some candidates gave generic conclusions which were not formed from data within the table and therefore missed these marks. Some candidates commented on the useless column 'there were many useless answers' but most candidates did not include the useless answers in the calculations for their conclusions.

Some candidates misinterpreted the question and identified and explained criticisms of the research rather than conclusions.

Q12

A very high number of candidates failed to reference Investigation 2 or the topic of family when answering this question. Many candidates achieved top Level 2; four marks for very good generic answers about the usefulness of interviews, making three or four well developed points. Most answers just focused on the advantages of interviews, some also included disadvantages. Answers which did achieve Level 3 often made good points about the advantages/ disadvantages of the internet survey and were able to suggest improvements. Others who gained application marks referred to the documentaries as the characters featured were interviewed. Level 1 answers frequently only made simple points with no development or one developed point. Sociological language was used extremely well in general, candidates frequently using five or more sociological concepts. Even lower scoring answers often contained a sociological term such as qualitative, and understanding was demonstrated through simple explanation such as 'you get more detail'.

Q13

This question is designed to be a discriminator and proved to be a challenge to candidates at the lower end. However, there were very few candidates who did not attempt the question.

Most could attempt some evaluation of the primary methods / sources but a few candidates responded with a generic answer unrelated to the investigation. More common was the candidate who simply described the primary methods / sources in the pre-release. Both of these types of responses remained in the lower band level.

Many candidates scored the low to middle of Level 2 on this question. Often this was due to a lack of detail and depth when analysing the sources/ methods. Candidates tended to be brief, only looking at one or two points and often these points could be repetitive, for example 'out of date' as a disadvantage. Often candidates only looked at one side of the debate, and this was frequently the disadvantages. Some candidates discussed generic methods and the advantages and disadvantages with less developed references to one of the investigations.

Some candidates wrote excellent in depth answers covering all of the sources/ methods, however they only looked at disadvantages and so could score a maximum of eight. Candidates in general were not very strong at writing a balanced debate. Even very good answers that were scoring within Level 3 were still unbalanced with candidates finding it difficult to pull out the advantages. Top answers gaining eleven and twelve marks often showed much better balance and had no problem looking at the advantages and disadvantages within and between sources/ methods.

The primary method in Investigation 1 (International Family Centre) was generally well analysed with both advantages and disadvantages. For many candidates this was the method which enabled them to get into Level 3. Candidates looked at this method in depth with often three or four points made. Graphs A and B were often looked at quite narrowly with 'trustworthy' as the advantage and 'out of date' as the disadvantage. Similarly with the BBC source candidates would quote 'trustworthy' as the advantage and 'bias' for the disadvantage. Within Investigation 2, content analysis seemed to be the method in which candidates made the most developed points. The TV documentaries were generally looked at less effectively with some candidates spending a lot of time making only one or two points and then repeating exactly the same points again for the other documentary.

Candidates who remained in Level 1 often only looked at one or two primary methods / sources with little depth and almost always a limited number of disadvantages. Candidates in general were not making developed points, for example stating that 'midnight is not a good time to carry out a survey' as a disadvantage, without going on to explain why. Another quite common reason for lower scoring answers would be a debate focused on the appropriateness of the methods in meeting the aims of the investigations rather than the inherent advantages/ disadvantages.

Most candidates demonstrated a good understanding of validity. Sociological language was generally used well, even lower scoring answers would often contain one or two terms such as 'bias' or 'official statistics'. The best answers included a large number of sociological concepts used in context, showing very good knowledge and understanding.

A very small number of candidates focused on both investigations. Both parts of the answer were marked and credit was given to the part with the highest marks.
This question was successful as a discriminator and the top level candidates were able to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding and evaluation skills. At the same time it was possible for lower end candidates to achieve some marks.

Overall Comments

Most candidates were familiar with the two pre-release investigations. It was apparent that some candidates had carried out their own research, emulating the methods used in the pre-release eg conducting a content analysis. This is commendable and to be encouraged.
As in previous years, the main reason for candidate not scoring marks was through not making explicit links to the pre-release investigations or the topic of the investigations.

Most candidates were able to respond to questions effectively, demonstrating some sound sociological examples and concepts to support their answers.
In general, candidates are able to identify and interpret issues in sociological research with some proficiency. Most candidates knew the strengths and weaknesses of primary research methods and secondary sources. In particular, there was good knowledge of issues around the use of official statistics.

Overall candidates performed well, showing a good understanding of research techniques. Some difficult concepts such as hypothesis, reliability and representation are being used effectively to assess the investigations.

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

Most candidates were able to plan their time well and complete all the questions. Many candidates used additional sheets to complete question 13 and particularly at the top end, some candidates produced very extensive answers to question 13.

Guidance

Candidates must be familiar with all aspects of the pre-release and in particular any concepts used within it.

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

Candidates should be encouraged to practice the drawing of conclusions from sources of data and using information from the source to support them. They should also be encouraged to analyse critically the results of research and how they may support or refute results from other sources or hypotheses.

Centre staff must ensure that any concepts used specifically in the investigations are understood fully by the candidates. In addition to understanding, candidates must be able to explain difficult concepts precisely eg. generalisation and representative sample. They should also be encouraged to provide an example to support their answer as this could enable a weak explanation to gain two marks.

Candidates must be very clear about the difference between primary and secondary research. In the pre-release, primary research is usually identified as *methods* and secondary research as *sources.*

Candidates must avoid losing marks on the more accessible questions by re-wording information which should be taken directly from the pre-release.

OCR (Oxford Cambridge and RSA Examinations)
1 Hills Road
Cambridge
CB1 2EU

OCR Customer Contact Centre

Education and Learning
Telephone: 01223 553998
Facsimile: 01223 552627
Email: general.qualifications@ocr.org.uk

www.ocr.org.uk

For staff training purposes and as part of our quality assurance
programme your call may be recorded or monitored

PART OF THE
CAMBRIDGE ASSESSMENT
GROUP

UKAS
MANAGEMENT
SYSTEMS

001