

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

SOCIOLOGY

H580

For first teaching in 2015

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Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate answers is also provided. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

Where overall performance on a question/question part was considered good, with no particular areas to highlight, these questions have not been included in the report.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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Paper 3 series overview

Paper 3 comprises of two sections. Section A, which is compulsory, with two sources and three questions, and Section B which contains three options with three questions in each.

Candidates who performed well in the compulsory Section A on Globalisation and the Digital Social World used a range of sociological studies and contemporary examples to support their points and maintained good focus on the questions. The majority of candidates were able to engage with the sources in Question 1 and Question 2, although some candidates merely recycled parts of the sources, and were unable to select relevant parts to apply to the specific questions. Candidates who did less well often lacked focus on the precise question asked. In some cases it appeared that they had not read the question carefully or understood its requirements. Candidates are advised to read Question 1 and Question 2 before starting their responses, since the sources contain points which are relevant to both, and some seemed distracted by parts of the sources which were not really relevant to the question they were tackling, which led to confusion. It was common to see candidates using general theoretical and empirical evidence, which was not relevant to, or effectively applied to, developments in digital communication. This seemed more of an issue this year, with some candidates not really distinguishing between digital sources of communication and more traditional media. This was particularly noticeable in Question 3 and is highlighted in more detail, below.

In Section B, the three options provided differing challenges for candidates. In all Section B questions, a range of developed points was needed, and there is an expectation that detailed and accurate knowledge and understanding of sociological evidence will be demonstrated. In the 20 and 40 mark questions, an extended response is expected with explicit and direct evaluation of the main view which goes beyond the juxtaposition of alternative views. Candidates who did well were able to clearly select and present relevant and accurate sociological knowledge in a way which demonstrated full understanding.

General issues across the whole paper were the precision and accuracy of the evidence used and the depth of understanding shown. Brief descriptions or list-like responses, especially for higher tariff questions, do not gain the highest marks, and at this level, fuller understanding is expected. It was also common to see candidates providing overly long introductions, especially in the higher tariff questions, but sometimes in the shorter questions. Introductions which merely define basic terms such as crime or gender, or those which simply list all the ideas which the candidate then goes on to discuss in detail attract no credit and waste valuable time. In longer essays, a brief introduction which identifies the view in the question and the debate surrounding it can provide useful focus, but in general, introductions gain no marks. Similarly, summative conclusions which repeat all the views already discussed add little if anything to the overall marks. A fully critical conclusion which makes a judgement, can be creditable in the higher tariff essays, but only gains full marks if it introduces a new idea or angle on the debate. Introductions and conclusions are generally not helpful in Section A questions, and especially in questions which require no debate.

Another notable differentiator was the breadth and depth of evaluation. However, fewer candidates presented very brief and undeveloped evaluative points, and most who used alternative theories or views to challenge the view in the question were able to make these evaluative, by showing how they differed to the view in the question. This is essential to gain marks for evaluation, and candidates who merely present several, juxtaposed alternative views with no evaluative link to the view in the question gain fewer marks.

Assessment for learning



Practice evaluation with students by giving them several opposing views in separate paragraphs and getting them to turn them into evaluation. For example, by adding evaluative linking phrases at the beginning, by focusing back on the view in the question to highlight differences throughout, and by adding a final sentence which links back to the view in the question, showing why this view differs.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • structured their responses clearly, using appropriate technique for each question • selected and applied relevant sociological theories and studies, demonstrating their sociological understanding • included well developed and focused evaluation points where relevant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrated a lack of knowledge or confusion relating to the questions set and the knowledge required • lacked focus on the question set, instead presenting generalised responses or irrelevant material • failed to include evaluation where required, or merely juxtaposed alternative views.

Section A overview

Many contemporary examples and relevant sociological studies and theoretical views were effectively applied, although there were also candidates whose responses went very little beyond common sense or just paraphrasing from the sources. However, at times there can be a tendency in all questions, for some candidates to misunderstand the requirements of the question and present irrelevant material, and the expected focus on digital forms of communication was not always understood.

Question 1*

- 1* With reference to the source(s) and your wider sociological knowledge, explain how developments in digital forms of communication have created a digital class divide.

[9]

Two distinct ideas were required for this question, with each point linking to something in one of the sources and supported by a contemporary example or sociological evidence. Successful candidates showed a clear understanding of the term 'digital class divide' and many candidates selected economic factors and differences in skills/ knowledge as their two ideas. Candidates were able to select appropriate parts of the sources to support these points and then link to wider evidence, including studies such as Mertens and D'Haenens, Castells, Helsper and ideas from Marxism/neo-Marxism such as cultural and social capital and ideological control. Some successfully used examples such as access to digital resources during the Covid-19 pandemic.

In weaker responses, there was a tendency to merely summarise the ideas in the sources and add no wider knowledge to support this. Some candidates misunderstood the term 'digital class divide' perhaps just reading it as 'digital divide' and wrote at length about the generational or gender divides, which did not gain marks. Other candidates seemed distracted by the sources, and either presented both positive *and* negative impacts of digital communication (following Source A), or focused on protest movements, (following Source B), which was more relevant to Question 2.

In this question, even more so than Question 2, there was also a tendency for candidates to throw in quotes from the sources without really considering whether they were the most appropriate parts of the sources to use to support the point they were making and the wider evidence they were using. For example, when discussing lack of money and the idea of the digital underclass, using Helsper, some candidates used Source A, referring to the privileged having more skills. However, in their second point about differences in skills and access, using Mertens and D'Haenens on different usage between the classes, candidates would sometimes use the Source B quote about lack of economic resources, suggesting that they were not really thinking about how the points they were making applied to the ideas in the sources.

Question 2

- 2 With reference to the source(s) and your wider sociological knowledge, evaluate the view that developments in digital forms of communication have benefitted the social protest movements of the disadvantaged. **[10]**

There were fewer candidates who did not include any evaluation of the view in the question this year, although it was still a common issue. There were also candidates who did not provide enough different points (two supporting the view and two challenging it). The question was quite long, and some candidates seemed to struggle to understand its focus. Some candidates wrote about how the disadvantaged benefit from digital media, not picking up on the focus on social protest movements. For example, candidates used evidence about the benefit of social media to help people, such as responding to emergencies, which was not relevant to this question. The majority of candidates understood the idea of social protest movements spreading via social media and used contemporary examples such as Black Lives Matter or Blue for Sudan, or other examples which had been studied such as the impact of digital communications on the Arab Spring uprising or the MeToo movement. Candidates often used supporting studies included Kirkpatrick, Castells, Jurgenson and Ghonim. Weaker responses merely recycled parts of Source B, using no supporting evidence. In evaluation, some candidates focused on the failure of these movements. Other candidates focused on the ability of the privileged to use their power to shut protests down, increase surveillance on potential protestors or spread certain ideas or misinformation. Campaigns which may negatively impact on the disadvantaged were also used, as were ideas about 'armchair activism' making people less engaged and the digital class divide denying access to the most disadvantaged.

The majority of candidates used the sources effectively and frequently in this question, although only one relevant reference was required to gain both available AO2 marks. It is important that examples used are focused on digital communications, and candidates must link any older examples to a digital context. For example, the majority of candidates wrote about Rupert Murdoch owning lots of newspapers as an evaluation point about control of information. This point needed to be linked to online news websites, digital companies and networks to be fully relevant to gain marks.

Exemplar 1

one way that digital media has benefitted social protest movements is by providing those who are disadvantaged ways to express their frustration and views. Castells argues that those with 'muted voices' now have a way to be heard through social digital platforms. For instance, the Arab

spring 2011 was a social movement by the working class to challenge the governments in the middle east for injustice.

Source B states that "disadvantaged groups have been able to spread information and promote their cause, mobilise people and organise protests." therefore showing that digital media provides those who are less powerful with a way to challenge their oppressors. However neo marxists would argue that digital media actually prevents those who are less powerful to have a voice.

~~Barclay~~ argues that digital media is owned by conglomerates who own multiple social media sites that the government can use their power to censor content that challenges them which was seen in Egypt during the protests as their government shut down their internet access to stop spreading the news.

therefore showing that those at the top have more benefits and power.

Another way digital media has benefited social protest movements of the disadvantages is by allowing them to spread their message and views to everyone through the internet. Kimpatrik uses the concept 'Facebook effect' to explain that digital media platforms allow us to spread awareness on issues such as the Black Lives Matter movement through hashtags #blm to bring more attention to the issue. Some B states "~~dispro~~ yet across the world there has been a growth in social protest movements" showing that digital media platforms such as TikTok and Twitter allow us to go viral to be spread to millions of people in a short period of time.

However others have argued that the impact of social protest movements have not been as useful. Tilly argues that there

is a 'armchair activism' and 'slacktivism' where people use #blm and change their profile picture to black but are not actually ^{actively} doing anything but think they are.

Exemplar 1 demonstrates good focus on the question – i.e. social protest movements of the disadvantaged which was often missing from responses to this question. The candidate has used some relevant contemporary examples, as well as sociologists' ideas. The structure is clear, with two points supporting the view and two points challenging it, and the sources are used. Only one good source reference is necessary for this question.

Question 3

- 3 Evaluate the feminist view that the digital revolution has created new opportunities to oppress women. [16]

The responses to this question were done well. However, some candidates seemed to slightly misinterpret the question, possibly due to the word 'opportunities'. Although the question was focused on opportunities to oppress women, candidates framed their debate instead to consider what opportunities women gained due to the digital revolution. Sometimes, material used could be given marks as evaluation, but it is important that candidates are encouraged to read the question very carefully so that they are focused on the right issues. The link to oppression was also often very tenuous, with the majority of candidates focusing on more general points about inequality.

Evaluation of the view in the question was done well, with lots of supporting evidence. The majority of candidates used similar examples to those they had used in Question 2, identifying online protest movements promoting women's inequality issues, to provide evaluation. These included using Nakamura, Cochrane, Laura Bates' Everyday Sexism project and examples of hashtag feminism such as #MeToo, #Askhermore or #Thisgirlcan. Haraway's ideas on cyborgs was also used, usually as evaluation, although some candidates clearly struggled to understand and effectively apply her arguments. Evaluation saying that the digital revolution has not led to the oppression of women, but instead to the oppression of the working class or older people did not gain marks. Candidates must stay focused on the central point in the question when they evaluate, in this case, women.

The majority of candidates were less successful in terms of knowledge to support the view in the question. Some candidates used Arlaccki and/or Hughes and wrote about trafficking and sexual exploitation, although fewer candidates were able to fully explain how this linked to the digital revolution. There were candidates who effectively used research by Amnesty International and Demos into online abuse of women, and Jane's ideas on gendered cyberhate. Other examples, such as revenge porn, upskirting, and trolling, were also commonly seen, as was reference to recent online misogyny, including incels and Andrew Tate.

It was common for feminist evidence on media portrayal of women to be used, which could be used to gain marks if applied to the internet/ social media. However, frequently this was not the case. This was seen with Mulvey in particular, but there were also references to Wolf, Walter, McRobbie and even Ferguson as applied to women's representation in magazines. Such material only gains marks if it is directly applied to digital media, such as websites and social media. General references to media, often focusing on TV, films and magazines, gained little or no marks. Similarly, references to pornography or gaming were sometimes well linked to their developments online to gain full marks, but this was not always the case.

Key point call out: Focusing on developments in digital communications and online media.

The whole of Section A is about the digital world, and how developments in digital technology and communications have impacted on social life, including inequalities. As 'digital natives', students might find it difficult to distinguish 'new' media from 'traditional' media. It is important to help them with that focus, and to look at both newer examples based on websites and social media, as well as how older sociological material can be applied and updated.

For example, ideas such as those of Bourdieu on social and cultural capital, or Mulvey on the 'male gaze' can be used and given marks in relevant questions but *must* be applied using examples of digital media and communication, such as digital networks or online portrayals.

Assessment for learning

Technique is important to score well on this section, so it is a good idea for centres to practise planning question with their candidates:

- Question 1 needs **two** developed knowledge points, each directly referencing one of the sources
- Question 2 needs **two** points supporting the view and **two** points challenging the view, which can be brief but need to use evidence. At least **one** reference to the source is needed
- Question 3 needs **two** developed points supporting the view and **three** developed evaluation points
- Centres should use past papers to help candidates practice these structures
- Focus on command word to help candidates know whether they need to evaluate i.e if the term 'evaluate' is in the question, this indicates to candidates that a debate needs to be created, with points on both sides.

Section B overview

The majority of candidates started with this section, perhaps reflecting the higher tariff questions and desire to complete these first. There were few, if any, rubric errors and the vast majority of candidates appeared to select and stick to the option for which they had been prepared. Most candidates seemed to understand the requirement for evaluation in the 20 and 40 mark essays, although some also included evaluation in the 10 mark question, suggesting that they were not clear on the appropriate question technique. Juxtaposition, instead of developed evaluation, was sometimes a problem, and was particularly seen in Question 8.

Crime and deviance was the most popular option, with Education second. The numbers of candidates completing the Religion, belief and faith option was similar in comparison to previous years.

A general concern across all three options is candidates' ability to decode the question, select relevant sociological material and focus their responses appropriately. This was most commonly seen in the questions in Option 3, but also particularly in Question 6, Option 1 and Question 7 Option 2.

Question 4*

OPTION 1

Crime and deviance

4* In what ways do left-wing policies attempt to reduce crime?

[10]

This question was well done. The majority of candidates clearly understood left wing policies and were able to explain them effectively, using supporting concepts, studies and examples. The best candidates identified three separate policies and explained them in detail. Commonly seen policies were rehabilitation, reintegrative shaming and restorative justice, although there was a tendency to muddle these or to discuss them as if they were interchangeable. Candidates could also gain marks by referring to policies that tackle structural inequalities, including those focused on improving education (with many referencing the Perry pre-school project), housing, employment opportunities and increasing welfare benefits. Some candidates also successfully explained policies related to consensus policing and multi-agency working. Although it was not necessary, if the policies themselves were well explained, many candidates supported the policies with names such as Young and Braithwaite.

In weaker responses, there was often a lack of depth in explanations of appropriate policies, showing a lack of understanding of why and how these would reduce crime. Some candidates spent a lot of time explaining left realist explanations for crime, without much link to solutions. There were candidates who were confused between left and right wing policies, and referred to zero tolerance policing, increased surveillance and harsher punishments, clearly believing that these were left wing rather than right wing. It was also common to see candidates evaluating the policies they had explained, which did not gain marks.

Question 5*

5* Assess the view that the police-recorded crime figures are accurate.

[20]

This seemed to be a difficult question to respond to as many candidates struggled to identify evidence which they could use to support the view that police figures are accurate. For this reason, the approach to marking was very broad, accepting points about the usefulness of police figures as well as their accuracy. A methodological approach was common. Candidates were given marks for points about the representativeness and reliability of the police figures, the ability to identify patterns and trends and linking to quantitative data and positivism. Some candidates also took a more theoretical approach, focusing on which sociologists agreed with and used the police figures as a basis for their theories, including functionalists, New Right and subcultural theorists.

Weaker responses did not focus effectively on police-recorded figures, interpreting this instead as the Official Crime Statistics, or indeed any measures of crime, and so including irrelevant content about the accuracy of the CSEW for example. However, alternative measures of crime were successfully used by candidates in evaluation. Some candidates also focused entirely on evaluating the view, offering little to support the idea that the police-recorded figures could be seen as accurate.

Evaluation of the view in this question was more confident and often very effective. Common approaches included discussions of the dark figure of crime, often with well explained examples of crimes likely to be in the dark figure with reasons, including domestic violence and sexual offences. White collar crime and Marxist critiques of the police figures were also often used, as were interactionist criticisms, including the ideas of Cicourel. Some candidates focused on ethnicity and gender as concerns, referring to institutional racism and the chivalry thesis, and it was also common to see arguments about police discretion and practices, including coughing, cuffing and skewing.

Misconception



Many candidates did not understand that police recorded crime figures are only those which come directly from the police. Some thought that the CSEW was part of the police-recorded figures, and a few candidates even tried to include other victim surveys and self-report studies as well. It is important that the distinction between the Official Crime statistics and their separate components is made in teaching, and that comparison is also made to other, non-official measures of crime.

Exemplar 2

Police - recorded crime figures are collected by the Home Office and published by the ONS, including all crime reported to and recorded by UK police forces.

To a large extent, functionalists would argue that police recorded figures are accurate as they see official statistics as 'social facts', as demonstrated by Durkheim's study of suicide statistics. They argue that the police maintain social order by enforcing value consensus, meaning that there is support of the police by the public and that their motives are not questioned. Therefore, police recorded figures should accurately represent levels of crime across different social groups, such as men ~~being~~ making up 85% of all arrests and 95% of all UK prisoners according to the Home Ministry of Justice (2020).

However, police recorded figures ignore the dark figure of crime in terms of both offending and victimisation. For example, Campbell (1981) conducted self-report studies with men and women and found that crime rates were extremely similar across the two genders. This shows a weakness in police recorded figures which show a much lower rate of offending for females - highlighting how crime statistics are socially constructed by the police as decisions whether to arrest someone may be impacted by the chivalry factor identified by Pollack (1950) whereby male police officers see women as vulnerable & in need of protection so treat them with leniency. This distorts official police figures as ~~the same~~ ^{men and women} are not treated equally so recorded figures do not show the reality of crime rates.

Another way in which police recorded figures are accurate is that they are highly representative, as a full count of all crime is gathered by the 43 territorial police forces in England & Wales alongside the British Transport Police. This means that all social groups are ~~not~~ proportionately

represented (which is not guaranteed with alternative methods such as victim surveys and self-report studies which rely on a sample). Due to this, accuracy of these figures is high as which allows generalisations to be made about offending and victimisation rates for different social groups. Both left and right realists argue that police figures are important as they reflect real crimes committed so provide criminologists with a 'base' for their theories.

However, police figures may be manipulated by members of the police force which decreases the extent to which they can be considered accurate. James Patrick was a whistleblower, who in his time working in the London Met discovered that manipulation of crime statistics is an institutional practice. He noted that cutting was common, whereby crimes are down-graded or removed from the system at a lower date - such as the no-criming of sexual offences and downgrading of burglaries noted by Patrick. Coasting is another manipulation tactic involving encouraging offenders to admit to more crimes than they have committed / been arrested for in order to meet targets and improve personal arrest

records. Finally, skewing also impacts the accuracy of police recorded figures as when resources are targeted towards certain crime types, their prevalence on records increases despite the number of crimes committed remaining consistent.

Exemplar 2 demonstrates how theoretical and methodological knowledge could be used to create developed points supporting the view in this question. Many candidates struggled with this question, but this candidate shows how using functionalist ideas, knowledge of methodological terms such as representativeness as well as accurate knowledge and understanding of the police recorded figures themselves, could be utilised to effectively address this question. Only two of the three knowledge points are reproduced here, alongside two evaluation points, which were also well developed and supported. The candidate continued with another point on each side of the debate and achieved full marks.

Question 6*

6* Evaluate the view that the main cause of crime is poor socialisation.

[40]

The view in this question was potentially quite wide, and candidates interpreted it in many different ways. The majority of candidates focused on the New Right as the main approach to support the view in the question. Some were able to break this down into several separate and creditable points, including Murray's ideas on single parents (often linked to Sewell), ideas about the underclass and dependency culture (often linked to Marsland) and more general concerns about the decline of the nuclear family and standards in society (often linked to Denis and Erdos).

Beyond these ideas, many other sociological approaches to understanding crime were variously applied as either supporting or refuting the view that socialisation is the main cause of crime. For example, many candidates used ideas from functionalist-type approaches (including Merton and Hirschi), and subcultural theorists (such as Cohen, Cloward and Ohlin and Miller) to support the view in the question. However, there were candidates who used these ideas to evaluate the view, arguing that socialisation is not the main issue for these explanations, it is more about blocked opportunities or a lack of status or social bonds. Such arguments were given marks appropriately provided they were explained and applied clearly. Feminist views about gender socialisation were sometimes successfully used to support the view, often focusing on aggressive norms and values associated with hegemonic masculinity, and often supported with sex-role theory and/or studies of masculinity such as Messerschmidt and Mac and Ghail. Due to the nature of the question, this was accepted as 'poor' socialisation, if the point was made and applied clearly.

There were responses which tried to argue that labelling is an example of poor socialisation – this was creditable as evaluation, but not seen as an acceptable argument to support the view in the question. Other responses commonly used in evaluation included Marxist views on the impact of capitalism and inequality, postmodern/cultural views on excitement and emotion and neo-Marxist views on relative deprivation and marginalisation. To be given marks as developed evaluation, such arguments needed to engage with why their explanations for crime are more convincing than poor socialisation. Other views which were often applied as evaluation included biological explanations like Lombroso, which were not credited.

Weaker responses wrote very vaguely about socialisation, referring to the importance of the family, education and religion, but lacking any supporting sociological evidence or credible link to criminality.

Question 7*

OPTION 2

Education

7* In what ways are females denied the same opportunities as males in global education? [10]

The majority of candidates did not effectively engage with the requirements of this question – i.e. a focus on global educational gender inequalities. The majority of candidates wrote about gender inequalities in the UK system, focusing on subject choice and teacher expectations. Such responses occasionally included the word 'global' but were clearly not focused on the right material. The topic of global differences in education, and specific references to gender disparity and the gender apartheid in education are clearly identified in the specification and covered in related textbooks and resources. There were some candidates who did focus fully on the question, producing some excellent responses. Therefore, in the interest of fairness, those who did not were limited to Level 1 in terms of marks (limited relevance to the question). It is important that centres cover the entire specification, even those newer or 'niche' aspects which some may assume would not be assessed. Everything on the specification may be assessed. It is unclear whether centres had not taught or focused on this area or whether candidates just did not revise or recall the relevant content or interpret the question correctly.

Strong responses to this question wrote about specific parts of the world where there is a gender apartheid in education, explaining reasons such as prioritisation of boys where resources are scarce, girls being tied to domestic duties and early marriage, traditional norms and values and religious views. Specific examples citing female participation in education in countries such as Afghanistan and Yemen were given marks, and some referenced Malala Yousafzai and the Taliban stance on educating girls. Statistics from the UN on gender disparity, literacy and participation rates and evidence from UNESCO on reasons for gender inequalities were also effectively used by some candidates. Supporting studies were rare, and not a requirement to gain full marks, but names such as Mayer and Russo were occasionally seen.

Misconception



The majority of candidates did not understand that 'global education' required a focus on education in other parts of the world, rather than what goes on in UK classrooms.

Question 8*

- 8*** Assess the view that in-school factors are the main cause of educational underachievement in some ethnic groups. **[20]**

There was a tendency to write fairly generic responses to this question by some candidates. For example, the majority of candidates did focus on labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy as in-school factors, but fewer were able to use relevant supporting evidence which focused on ethnicity. Instead candidates referred to Becker or Hargreaves and made a very general link to ethnicity, which could not be fully given marks. More effective responses used specific evidence to support points, including Gilborn and Youdell, Jasper, Wright and Mirza, and many linked ideas of teacher expectations and judgements to setting and streaming, exclusions and institutional racism. Another commonly used point in support of the view in the question was the ethnocentric curriculum, with many candidates linking this to Coard, and providing some good examples of its impact. Sewell was also sometimes used to support ideas about stereotypical teacher expectations but was more commonly used in reference to anti-school subcultures among Black boys. This was sometimes used as an in-school factor in support of the view in the question, but sometimes used in evaluation – either approach was creditable.

Evidence successfully used as evaluation of the view that in-school factors are the main cause tended to focus on alternative explanations, including material and cultural factors, and language issues. As mentioned, Sewell's ideas on anti-school subcultures were also often seen. Other useful material included ideas about differences in parental expectations and support between ethnic groups, referring to studies such as Driver and Ballard, Archer and Francis, and Strand. However, there were candidates who tended to treat ethnic minorities as one homogenous group and did not show an awareness of differences between ethnic groups. Juxtaposition was very commonly seen in this question rather than direct evaluation. Weaker responses alternated paragraphs on in-school and out of school factors with no evaluative links between them, thus gaining few marks for AO3. More successful evaluation was seen from candidates who used evaluative links, and applied the out of school evidence back to suggest why it might be more likely to cause underachievement than in-school factors. It is important that centres practice this with candidates, making clear that simply presenting and asserting alternative views is not going to gain marks as a relevant evaluation of the view in the question.

As in other questions, the focus must be on the group mentioned in the question, in this case ethnic groups. Candidates who attempted to evaluate by mentioning how in school factors had more of an influence in terms of gender or social class, for example, received no marks for these points.

Exemplar 3

One view is that in-school factors are the main cause of educational underachievement in some ethnic groups. Gilborn discusses how certain groups such as black Caribbean pupils are put at a disadvantage in schools. For example, they studied detention books and uncovered that black Caribbean pupils were the group out of all other ethnic groups most likely to be getting detentions, as they received more detentions than others. Ethnic groups seem to be at a disadvantage in schools, and ~~the black Caribbean pupils were~~ 34% of black Caribbean pupils were achieving a grade 4 or above in maths ~~compared to~~ and English compared to 79% of Chinese pupils. The in-school factors highlight how the education system does not support ethnic groups as they are the ones underachieving the most and seemingly getting into the most trouble. However, it can be argued that material factors are the main cause of educational underachievement in

Some ethnic groups. For example, Smith and Noble argue about material deprivation. Ethnic minorities are the group most likely to live in poverty, which means that they will be on lower incomes. This means that certain ethnic groups may not be able to afford laptops or resources needed to support their education, which results in them underachieving. Whilst in-school factors highlight the problems in school that cause educational underachievement in some ethnic groups, material factors are another explanation.

Another example that in-school factors are the main cause of educational underachievement in some ethnic groups is that the schools are institutionally racist. This is when the school system neglects the needs of certain ethnic groups which results in them underachieving. For example, black Caribbean pupils are 3x more likely than any other ethnic group to be permanently excluded from schools. Some sociologists would argue that this is evidence of institutional racism and how the school system automatically jumps to assuming black students are the cause of the problem, hence them being expelled. This demonstrates how the education system treats ethnic groups differently, and these in-school factors cause underachievement. However, it could be argued that cultural factors are the

Reason there is educational underachievement in some ethnic groups. For example, Sewell discusses how black Caribbean pupils are more likely to culturally turn to gang culture. ~~These pupils~~ 50% of black Caribbeans grow up in a single parent household, and Sewell says the lack of a father figure results in vulnerability and peer pressure, resulting in gang culture. This then leads to less focus in schools, resulting in underachievement. Therefore, this shows how cultural factors can lead to the educational underachievement in some ethnic groups.

Exemplar 3 demonstrates how opposing explanations are often not fully given marks for AO3. It is common to see alternative ideas being presented, using the evaluative link, 'however', but which are then not really used to challenge the view in the question. At the very least, a link back to show that this opposes the view in the question would be required for this to be counted as a developed evaluation point. In this response, following each of the two knowledge points shown, an evaluative point relating to out of school factors is offered. In the first, on material factors, there is a link back to challenge the view in the question at the end, so this was given as developed. However, in the second evaluation point, using Sewell, because the candidate lacked such a link back, it could only be given as underdeveloped, just an assertive point on the opposing side of the debate. It is important to remember that the depth of alternative knowledge presented in an opposing view is not the issue, since this is an AO3 point. If it is not used to directly challenge the view in the question, it cannot be fully rewarded, however good the knowledge it contains may be.

Question 9*

9* Evaluate the view that educational policies since 1988 have benefitted the working class. [40]

This question saw a clear split between those candidates who knew and understood an impressive range of policies, and those who did not.

The main concern surrounded the accuracy and detail of knowledge relating to the policies used. Many potentially relevant policies, including EMA, SureStart, EAZs/ EiCs and Pupil Premium were referred to, but the majority of candidates were unable to explain the policies they selected accurately or in any depth. Policies are given in the same way as sociological studies in this type of question, but the same level of accuracy and depth is also required to credit a policy as developed.

The best responses discussed a range of policies and how they benefitted working class students in detail. An effective approach taken by some candidates was to consider the policies by administration, starting with the Conservatives from 1988 onwards, then New Labour, then the Coalition, and finally the most recent Conservative administration. This formed a framework for the main points, with two or three policies discussed for each. Candidates who took this approach often gained high marks for AO1 and AO2, since their responses were clearly structured and focused, and tended to contain more depth than those who just listed separate policies in a more random way.

Other candidates listed a very wide range of policies with no clear structure, and these were often very underdeveloped and frequently inaccurate or confused. For example, it was common to see candidates claiming that the introduction of 'free schools' made education free for everyone for the first time. Many candidates were also confused about policies surrounding university funding. Some candidates claimed that introducing loans for tuition fees, and subsequently increasing these, was positive, implying that previously students had to pay for these fees themselves.

It should be noted that policies created before 1988 were not given marks as highlighted on the specification. Some candidates, for example, wrote at length about the introduction of the tripartite system, or its replacement with comprehensive schools, neither of which were given marks. The reintroduction of grammar schools, proposed by Theresa May, was also not given marks, since this policy was never implemented, although some candidates seemed unaware of this. Other older policies frequently seen included BTECs, NVQs and the YTS scheme, all of which were introduced before 1988, although some similar policies surrounding vocationalism were introduced to replace or supplement these, so these ideas sometimes received a mark. Similarly, many candidates wrote about the introduction of free school meals as a policy benefitting the working class. Again, free school meals were introduced well before 1988, although modifications have been made, most notably the campaign to provide these during lockdown and school holidays, so some marks were given.

Some candidates had clearly prepared a response to a policies question with a different focus, such as diversity and choice, and struggled to apply their ideas to the precise question relating to benefitting the working class, although candidates did attempt to do this.

In terms of evaluation, some candidates presented quite generic Marxist criticisms of the education system and how it disadvantages working class pupils, including ideas from Bourdieu and Bowles and Gintis. These were generally not successfully applied to assess the impact of policies in order to gain full marks. Some candidates tried to evaluate the question by considering policies which impacted on gender or ethnicity instead, which did not gain marks since it lacked focus on the question.

More successful evaluation came in the form of specific challenges to the effectiveness of the policies discussed in benefitting the working class, often including using ideas from Ball and Gerwitz, to challenge parentocracy, for example, or considering the impact of tuition fees on working class students' engagement with university, using Callender and Jackson's ideas on debt aversion. Policies which did not benefit the working class also gained marks as evaluation, depending on how well they were explained and applied to the question.

Assessment for learning



There are so many policies to consider, this should be approached in a similar way to teaching sociological studies. Not all policies/studies need to be covered. Select a few which you feel are the most accessible and useful. Maybe just two or three from each administration, which can be applied in different ways.

Teach the selected policies in detail so that candidates understand what they involve and their impact, rather than expecting a list-like recall of many policies.

Make sure that they are clearly differentiated from each other and linked to an administration/ educational approach (in the same way that most studies would be linked to a theory).

Help candidates to consolidate their understanding and recall of these policies by doing activities in lessons, for example, putting different policies on cards and asking students to match them to different administrations or approaches to education, or selecting which policies benefitted different aims, such as increasing equality or improving diversity and choice.

Misconception



Many candidates struggled to accurately explain what different policies involved. For example, Surestart was often described as providing resources for older children, and Free schools were often described as schools which did not charge fees.

Question 10*

OPTION 3

Religion, belief and faith

10* In what ways is religious participation influenced by gender?

[10]

This question was straightforward and done well by candidates who fully engaged with the idea of participation. However, some candidates lacked focus on participation, instead presenting feminist ideas about the patriarchal nature of religion.

Three different ideas were required. The best responses tended to focus on key ideas linking to women participating in religion more, for example, due to compensators for deprivation/ socialisation (e.g. using Glock and Stark), differential socialisation (e.g. using Sullins) and greater risk aversion (e.g. using Miller and Hoffman). Some candidates also referred to NAMs and NRMs and the fact that women are more likely to participate in these. Some candidates highlighted differences in participation and practice between Muslim men and women. Another commonly seen point referred to men being in higher roles than women in most religions, with candidates referencing 'the stained glass ceiling'.

Question 11*

11* Assess the view that religious belief is still widespread in contemporary society.

[20]

This question was well answered by some candidates, with some good evidence of continuing religious commitment among older generations and that of some ethnic minority groups, for example, discussing Beckford's research on Pentecostalism. The majority of candidates also used Davie's ideas on 'believing without belonging' and/or 'vicarious religion' to show that despite the decline in church attendance, religious belief in the UK and Europe is still high. Some candidates introduced a more global perspective, considering the continuing popularity of religion in other continents, such as Africa and Asia, although few considered the continuing influence of Christianity in the US. The growth of NRMs and NAMs was often used to support the view in the question, and many candidates effectively used postmodernist ideas, such as spiritual shopping, to argue that beliefs have changed and become more individualistic, but they are still widespread.

In evaluation, the majority of candidates referred to the decline of church attendance and of religious influence in relation to life events such as marriage, often citing evidence from the ONS, the Census or polling organisations such as YouGov. Secularisation theorists, such as Bruce and Wilson were also seen, although less often than expected, since many candidates did not seem to recognise this as an essay linked to the secularisation debate.

Weaker responses appeared very confused by this question, offering some generic points about the role of religion, sometimes using theoretical views such as functionalism, Marxism and feminism, and trying to apply these, unsuccessfully to the question.

Question 12*

12* Evaluate the view that religion promotes social change.

[40]

This question was based on a classic debate within the sociology of religion, which is clearly set out in the specification. However, it caused the majority of candidates confusion and was generally done poorly.

Stronger responses took the expected approach of explaining views from Weber, Gramsci, Maduro and McGuire, linking to neo-Marxism and liberation theology. Good supporting examples were used, such as Archbishop Romero and Martin Luther King JR. Candidates also considered revolutionary change based on religious values, such as that seen in Iran. Effective evaluation came from Marxist, feminist and functionalist views of religion as a conservative force, which prevents change and reinforces the current system, as well as more specific evaluation of Weber's evidence, for example, or how significant the role of religion really was in some of these movements for change. Religious fundamentalism was also well applied as an evaluative point, suggesting that such religious beliefs were often a barrier to change, such as in Afghanistan.

However, such responses were in the minority and the majority of candidates misinterpreted the question, focusing instead on how religion has responded to social change, such as some religions allowing women to become priests or accepting same-sex marriage, or considering examples of religious practice changing, such as the move away from traditional religion to New Religious Movements. Many candidates tried to use postmodernist views here, such as Hervieu-Leger's ideas on spiritual shopping, but these were not given marks since they were not relevant to the focus of the question, i.e. religion *promoting* social change. Some candidates did not understand which side of the debate to place different views showing a fundamental misunderstanding of the material learned. For example, some candidates argued that functionalists agree that religion promotes change because it influences norms and values, and these sometimes change.

Misconception



Many candidates did not understand the focus of this debate, which was about social change being instigated or aided by religion. It is important to make sure that the use and practice of religion by individuals is distinguished from the role of religion in society as a whole when teaching this topic.

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