

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

SOCIOLOGY

H580

For first teaching in 2015

H580/01 Summer 2023 series

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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 1 series overview

This was the first examination for several years following the Covid-19 pandemic that followed the consistent format of a standard examination paper with no advance notice of themes for the paper. Overall, the standard was good, with a number of candidates demonstrating excellent depth and breadth of skills across all three assessment objectives.

There was a range of responses, suggesting that the paper differentiated adequately. The vast majority of candidates attempted to respond to all questions of the paper and managed to time their responses reasonably well. There were very few rubric errors and candidates seemed reasonably well prepared knowing the assessment objectives of each question. On occasion, some candidates gave too much content for certain assessment objectives such as a number of evaluation points for Question 5, Question 8 and Question 11 when only one developed point is required. Some candidates continue to attempt the higher mark questions first instead of tackling the questions in order and this strategy is perfectly acceptable. There has been an improvement in the response to Question 2 with significantly more candidates able to access Level 3 and Level 4 for knowledge and understanding. Application to the sources also demonstrated improvement.

Key point call out: Requirements of Question 2

Candidates should be reminded that two developed pieces of knowledge and understanding and two developed pieces of application to the sources are needed to gain full marks. The best responses do this by having a three paragraph structure – one displaying the knowledge and other two relating to each source.

In Section A, candidates had a good sense of timing and seemed to be writing the right amount for the corresponding marks. Section B was also done well overall with the Families and relationships option being the most popular topic, followed closely by Youth subcultures. In contrast to previous years, there has been a tremendous upsurge in candidates undertaking the Media option, almost to the point where it is similar numbers to the candidates choosing Youth subcultures.

With every question, to achieve marks in the highest-level candidates need to include a range of sociological evidence and to discuss these with some depth. The majority of candidates did this extremely well with a good range of developed points in evidence on the extended questions. However, there is still a persistent issue in terms of candidates writing significant introductions and conclusions. It is worth noting that for all the questions, no introductions or conclusions are necessarily needed in order to gain full marks. Very often candidates will give a short summary of what they are about to write and then give a short summary regarding what they have written, adding nothing to the essay and actually will have wasted valuable time that could have been spent on other questions. In this scenario, the introduction and conclusion will be annotated as 'repetition' and will not gain any extra marks. The questions are ultimately assessing candidates' level of sociological understanding; therefore, it is perfectly acceptable to launch straight into a point without an introduction and to finish a response after a final point has been made. If candidates really feel the need to provide an introduction and/or conclusion, this should provide a new piece of evidence instead of summing up material they will be using or have used.

Key point call out: Introductions and conclusions

Candidates should be reminded that introductions and conclusions which just sum up points already made are not necessary and will not be given further marks.

In terms of assessment objectives, knowledge and understanding (AO1) remains the strongest area. The strongest performing candidates were able to offer a whole range of sociological knowledge, mainly in the form of concepts and studies, but sometimes making relevant use of sociological contemporary theory. AO2 (application), continues to improve with the majority of responses being successful in interpreting knowledge and applying it to the specific question or context. In terms of AO3 marks (analysis and evaluation), some candidates are over or under evaluating and need to be mindful of just how much evaluation is required e.g., for Question 3 and Question 5, Question 8, and Question 11. Only one fully developed evaluation point is needed. In the final 24-mark question, juxtaposition is becoming less of an issue. The majority of candidates are now referring back to the question and are producing responses which are less 'list-like' and this is to be encouraged.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • answered every question within the time limit • used sociological knowledge, studies, theory or concepts to back up their points • made fully developed points in the higher mark questions • gave the right amount of knowledge and evaluation for the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wrote the bare minimum and did not back up their points • did not evaluate on Question 3, Question 5, Question 8 or Question 11 and Question 6, Question 9 and Question 12 • only used examples and common sense for sociological knowledge.

Section A overview

This section comprised of three compulsory questions that all candidates needed to respond to, with Question 2 needing both sources to be used and referenced.

Question 1

1 Explain, using examples, the concept of global culture.

[6]

Question 1 was generally answered well with thorough definitions of global culture and some good, developed examples. The strongest responses articulated a definition around shared way of life across the globe characterised by interconnectedness. This was further developed with reference to McLuhan's notion of 'global village' or the idea of cultural homogenisation. Examples frequently made reference to McDonalds or Apple and developed these ideas around the spread of TNCs or the Americanisation/Westernisation of culture. Sometimes a theorist was used to add development to points such as Hall or Ritzer. On occasion, there was some confusion with regards to cultural hybridity. Less successful responses gave a generalisation of culture rather than global culture. Less developed examples were a few words on naming brands, or unsubstantiated points such as 'food' or 'music'.

Exemplar 1

1	<p>Global culture is ^{the process} a entire culture where the world is becoming much more interconnected. This is done through globalisation and the development of T.C.T. Big brands are becoming easily recognisable around the world such as Nike, Apple and Netflix. McLuhan argues we live in a global village and thus are becoming much more interconnected.</p> <p>Global culture also means that countries are losing their distinctiveness and are becoming one homogenous global culture. Ritzer is critical of this and argues ^{calls} it is ^{is} McDonaldisation, where western culture is dominating, spreading capitalism and democracy, wiping out distinctive cultures.</p>
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Exemplar 1 demonstrates a full mark response. The candidate gives a clear definition and develops it with the idea of globalisation and ICT. They then go on to provide two different examples and high level of development with both McLuhan and Ritzer used as evidence as well as the use of key concepts.

Question 2*

2* Using sources A and B and your wider sociological knowledge, explain how education can be used as an agent of social control. [12]

Responses were better than in previous years with attention to knowledge and understanding being given a higher profile. Good knowledge was often developed using Marxist approaches, with the majority of candidates linking to writers such as Althusser or Bowles and Gintis and using concepts such as Ideological State Apparatus and Repressive State Apparatus, or ideas on the hidden curriculum. Candidates should be reminded that two developed points of knowledge are required to get the full knowledge and understanding marks. Most candidates were able to apply both sources in an underdeveloped way and were able to expand on the notion of a zero-tolerance culture and the use of rewards as forms of social control. Almost all candidates explicitly referred to each source in turn which was pleasing. However, on occasion, some candidates quoted straight from the sources which would be classed as a Level 1 response.

Exemplar 2

2	<p>One way education can be so used as an agent of ^{social} socialisation is by enforcing discipline. Source A says in this new school behavior policy that "a detention system that punishes pupil to role ^{role} their eyes! Education acts as an agent of ^{social control} socialisation by punishing students who deviate from the schools norms and values. This can be done through sending letters home and by punishing students through</p>
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dition. Functionalist would argue that the education system is a good agent of social control as it ensures that individuals adhere to the value consensus. Durkheim argued that it is ~~is~~ functional for society as it ensures social, social order and security.

Another way that education can be used as an agent of social control ~~as it is~~ is that it ideologically controls the masses. Marxist would argue that the education system is a way for the ruling capitalist owners to control the working class by accepting their insubordinate place in society. Althusser would argue education is a tool of the ideological state apparatus, to control the working class. Source B shows this by a teacher using positive sanctions and praise children for their good behaviour, this will then carry on into their adulthood and ~~the~~ make workers not rise up to their owners. Bowls and Gintis would on and argue that there is a hidden ~~curriculum~~ curriculum that teaches students to obey their teacher and take their insubordinate position in society, creating a false class consciousness.

A key feature of this series has been the improvement in quality of responses for Question 2 with candidates responding to both the knowledge and the source elements of the question. Exemplar 2 demonstrates a full mark response with the candidate referring to each source in a developed way and then providing developed knowledge (Durkheim and Althusser) over two paragraphs.

Question 3*

3* Outline and briefly evaluate the view that disability is viewed as a negative identity.

[20]

This question was done extremely well with the majority of candidates achieving full marks. A large majority of candidates used studies by Shakespeare, Zola, Becker, Goffman, Ridley, Gill and Barnes and supported with concepts such as the social model, the medical model, labelling and learned helplessness. The level of development was high with many candidates able to gain full marks for knowledge and understanding by providing three developed points. Evaluation often centred around how disability could be viewed as a positive identity featuring the work of Murigami or using examples such as the Paralympics. A few candidates' responses were made up of examples (such as references to disability representations in the media) or had significant confusion e.g., getting the social model and medical model mixed up.

Exemplar 3

3		<p>Paragraph</p> <p>One way disability is viewed as a negative identity is through language. Often disabled people are described as inferior or deplorable bodied people in society. The language used to describe them encourages this leading to low self-esteem and a negative identity. Zola argued that the language used by per society for disabled people creates a negative identity. Words such as diseased is dis-abled and abnormal make disabled people feel in-valid. This becomes a master status where disabled people ignore all aspects of their identity and view themselves as their impairment. This shows that disability is viewed a negative identity through language.</p>
		<p>Another way disability is viewed as a negative identity is the social model of disability. This is when society creates barriers for disabled people, making harder to access buildings and use transport as it is mainly and built to protected able bodied people. Shakespeare argued that the social social</p>

Model of disability creates a "learned helplessness" making disabled people have a victim blaming mentality and view themselves and in general. This shows that disability is viewed as a negative identity as society has created barriers physical barriers for disabled people in society as they find it harder to access buildings and transport which is mainly built to prioritise able bodied people.

Lastly, another way disability can be viewed as a negative identity is through a lack of positive role models. Often in the media there is a lack of positive role models of disabled people. They are often depicted as helpless or played as the sidekick or used as a comedic relief. This links to Becker labelling theory. In the media disabled people are labelled as helpless this then leads to a self-fulfilling prophecy where they internalise this label and act on leading to a victim blaming mentality and a learned helplessness. Shakespeare also argues that a lack of positive role models for disabled people creates a negative identity and low self esteem. This shows that disability is viewed as a negative identity as there is

		is a lack of positive role models
		However, some may incorrectly argue that disability is no longer viewed as a negative identity. Post-modernist would argue that disabled people can now create a new identity which is more positive, as we now defy define ourselves on common interest rather than traditional social characteristics. Murrain argues that disabled people can now create a positive identity where they can view their impairment as a part of themselves not their master status, their most prominent identity. ultimately, disability is still viewed as
		Although society may be more accepting of disabled people it still remains viewed as a negative identity

Exemplar 3 demonstrates a response given full marks and the perfect template for a 20-mark question. The candidate uses three paragraphs of knowledge and one paragraph of evaluation. Each paragraph is fully developed with concepts and a study. Note how there is no introduction or conclusion as that is not necessary.

Section B overview

Candidates had the option to select whether they did further questions on Families and relationships, Youth subcultures or the Media. The majority of candidates opted for the Families and relationships option, although Youth subcultures and the Media were a very close joint second. It was noticeable that the majority of candidates completed Section A first before moving on to Section B and completed the questions sequentially in the order that they came.

Option 1 overview

Families and relationships was the most popular option and it was clear that candidates were well prepared particularly in terms of theory and studies that they were able to recall. Some candidates struggled with Question 4 and did not fully respond to the whole question, while Question 5 seemed very well answered with the majority of candidates attaining full marks.

Question 4*

OPTION 1

Families and relationships

4* Outline **two** reasons for the increase in reconstituted families. Illustrate your answer with examples.

[12]

This question provided a mixed response, with some candidates missing the question out entirely, or more commonly not fully addressing the question, when making a point including a reason on how it had led to an increase in reconstituted families. The strongest responses identified reasons such as an increase in divorce, confluent love and individualisation and this was reinforced by studies by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Giddens.

Some candidates took a different approach and used the theoretical perspective of Feminism to illustrate how women were empowered to break free from unhappy relationships and develop new ones. On occasion, some candidates did evaluate, and they are reminded that only two developed paragraphs of knowledge and understanding are needed to attain full marks on this question, and no evaluation is necessary or given marks.

Question 5*

5* Explain and briefly evaluate the view that roles between partners are changing.

[16]

On the whole this question was answered very well, with a number of candidates using the work of Wilmott and Young, Sharpe, Allen and Crowe and Hakim, as well as concepts such as individualism, symmetrical family and genderquake to construct excellent responses surrounding how roles between partners had changed. This was often very well countered with evaluation on how roles hadn't changed using the work of Parsons, Oakley and Denscombe and Marsden, with concepts such as the dual burden and the triple shift. Some candidates provided a detailed introduction on what gender roles were which was not needed and did not add anything to their response. A small handful of candidates could only provide examples of how roles had changed in an anecdotal sense and therefore only achieved Level 1.

Question 6*

6* Assess the view that ethnicity has the greatest influence on family diversity.

[24]

This question had a mixed response with some candidates struggling to locate the exact sociological evidence to fully respond to the question. Candidates who gave the best responses were able to discuss how South Asian families were larger, more extended, strong emphasis on marriage (often arranged), sense of duty and honour (Izzat) and had traditional gender roles or used examples of matrifocal arrangements in Afro-Caribbean families. This was supported by developed studies using the work of Modood, Ballard, Bhatti, Rappoport and Driver. Evaluation was consistently better and often contrasted how class or sexuality has a bigger influence on diversity and was supported by studies such as Bourdieu, Weeks and Calhoun. Juxtaposition seemed to be occurring less (where candidates do not refer to the question and simply offer up alternative explanations) and this was pleasing. However, candidates are still writing introductions or conclusions that simply repeat what they are about to state or have stated and they should be reminded that this is marked as repetition and gains no extra marks.

Option 2 overview

The Youth subcultures section was the joint second most popular option, and it was generally done well with good use of theory and studies.

Question 7*

OPTION 2

Youth subcultures

7* Outline **two** examples of delinquent subcultures. Illustrate your answer with examples. **[12]**

The question was generally answered reasonably well. At times, some candidates did not fully articulate how certain subcultures were delinquent and instead were purely descriptive about two subcultures. The best responses built their responses around particular themes such as gangs or being anti-school, and reinforced their points using studies by Cohen, Hebdige, Hall and Jefferson, Jackson and Willis. The majority of candidates were able to provide some discussion about what these subcultures believed/dressed like/behaved and the ways in which they were deviant. Weaker responses could not explicitly name what these subcultures were and gave broad accounts of criminal groups. Candidates should also be reminded that only two fully developed paragraphs are needed to gain full marks for this question and no evaluation is needed.

Question 8*

8* Explain and briefly evaluate the view that youth culture is a bridge between childhood and adulthood. **[16]**

Overall, there was a good response to this question with the majority of candidates able to locate the Functionalist views. The strongest responses used studies by Parsons and Eisenstadt and were able to describe how youth culture was a rite of passage and how youth was a period to let off steam, so creating a bridge between childhood and adulthood. For some candidates, the level of detail and explanation of these points was lacking and so these would be classed as underdeveloped and typically a characteristic of a Level 3 response. Evaluation, where present, most often took the form of neo-Marxist views, and how youth culture was a period of resistance, not a bridge.

Candidates should be reminded that only one developed point is required for evaluation for this question as at times, more than one point was made which was unnecessary and ultimately wasting the candidates' time.

Question 9*

9* Assess the view that all subcultures are now hybrid.

[24]

This question was answered very well in terms of knowledge with most candidates able to use theories and studies to relate subcultures with hybridity. The best candidates used studies by Nayak, Johal, Back, Maffisoli, Polemus and Thornton alongside concepts such as white-wannabes, code switching and neo-tribes. Evaluation remained mostly good, firmly rooted in studies emphasising how class or ethnicity dictated how certain subcultures were not open to hybridity such as studies by Cohen, Nightingale, Bourgois and Sewell. Many candidates still felt the need to write a detailed introduction or conclusion and where this was not adding any new information, this did not add any marks.

Option 3 overview

As stated previously, there was a significant increase in candidates responding to questions on the media. Question 10 proved to be the hardest with candidates often unable to access the specific sociology regarding examples of the two-step flow model.

Question 10*

OPTION 3

Media

10* Outline **two** examples of the two step flow model. Illustrate your answer with examples.

[12]

This question provided a mixed response with some candidates having difficulty accessing the specific knowledge required and either guessing or missing the question out entirely. The strongest responses for this question used Katz and Lazarsfeld and were able to articulate the role of opinion leaders and the two steps required for messages to reach the audience. Good examples often centred around political messaging and how the audience became aware of political themes or voting intentions.

Candidates should be reminded that only two developed paragraphs are needed and there is not a requirement for an introduction to be given.

Question 11*

11* Explain and briefly evaluate the view that the media gives what the audience wants.

[16]

This question was very well done with most candidates able to locate the pluralist theoretical standpoint. Most common were points made with regards to diversity and choice, supply and demand, journalist integrity or the fourth estate and this was reinforced with studies by Whale, uses and gratifications model or post-modernist theory. Evaluation was good with studies using Marxism or neo-Marxism being very common – these were strong and well developed. As with other 16-mark questions, candidates are reminded that only two developed points are needed for knowledge and one developed point for evaluation.

Question 12*

12* Assess the view that representations of ethnicity within the media are increasingly positive. [24]

Candidates were able to write in some depth for this question and gave a balanced approach. Candidates mainly used studies by Malik, Barker and Hall to discuss in detail how the representations of ethnicity were increasingly positive. Evaluation was equally good with studies by Van Dijk, Barker, Malik and Hall being most common. On occasion, some candidates did not have specific studies to hand and instead used contemporary examples to illustrate their point such as how the film Black Panther is a positive representation of ethnicity. While a valid point, examples that are unsubstantiated by sociological theory or studies can only be marked as undeveloped and would therefore have difficulty going beyond a Level 2 mark.

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