

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

SOCIOLOGY

H580

For first teaching in 2015

H580/01 Summer 2024 series

Contents

Introduction	3
Paper 1 series overview	4
Section A overview	6
Question 1	6
Question 2*	7
Question 3*	9
Section B overview	10
Option 1 overview	10
Question 4*	10
Question 5*	10
Question 6*	12
Option 2 overview	12
Question 7*	12
Question 8*	13
Question 9*	13
Option 3 overview	14
Question 10*	14
Question 11*	14
Question 12*	15

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 year the standard was high with candidates able to access the full range of marks. There were very little rubric errors, or no responses and it was clear that candidates had been prepared well for this examination. Overall, the standard was good with several 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. Most candidates attempted to answer all questions on the paper and managed to time their responses reasonably well. On occasion, some candidates gave too much content for certain assessment objectives such as several evaluation points for Questions 5, 8 and 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 fine. This year saw a dip in the performance on Question 2 particularly in terms of knowledge (AO1). Candidates commonly linked studies to the sources but did not separately address the knowledge aspect of the question.

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 answers do this by having a three-paragraph structure – one showcasing the knowledge and the 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 keeping with last year, more candidates are 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 mark band, candidates need to include a range of sociological evidence and to discuss these with some depth. Overall, this was done extremely well with a good range of developed points in evidence on the extended questions. Question 3 for example was particularly well done. Pleasingly there seemed to be less candidates writing significant introductions and conclusions as this cuts down on time that could have been spent answering other questions. As mentioned in previous years, 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 an answer after a final point has been made. If candidates feel the need to provide an introduction and/or conclusion then they should provide a new piece of evidence instead of summing up material they will be using or have used. Unfortunately, there was a resurgence this year in the use of juxtaposition in the extended essay questions. An answer is marked as juxtaposed when the essay starts to become 'list-like' and fails to address the question. This was most prominent in Question 6 when alternative viewpoints were offered on the nuclear family such as 'Functionalists argue X...' with no reference to the question or the Marxist position. A good technique is to use the words of the question in each paragraph or better still, engage with the question during an evaluation point, e.g. 'Whereas Marxists would argue X, Functionalists in contrast would argue Y...'. It is worth noting that when juxtaposition is recognised it is annotated as such and is the equivalent of an undeveloped point, making it difficult to go beyond Level 2 at best (see key point call out underneath).

Key point call out: Juxtaposition

Candidates should be reminded to evaluate properly so that their evaluation points are not classed as juxtaposition. This is defined as when evaluation becomes 'list-like' and does not answer the question, e.g. 'Functionalists argue X.... Feminists argue Y....'

A useful technique is to use the words of the question in each evaluation paragraph and engage with the question to maintain the focus of the evaluation. For example, an opening sentence for an evaluation paragraph for Question 9 might be: 'Whereas Marxist views of why young people get involved in subcultures often revolve around resistance, postmodern writers offer an alternative viewpoint...'

In using the words of the question and engaging with it, the answer is kept fully on track and therefore the related study and explanation that follows will not be juxtaposed and will be fully creditworthy.

In terms of assessment objectives, knowledge and understanding (AO1) remains the strongest area; successful 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 many 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 Questions 3, 5, 8 and 11, where only one fully developed evaluation point is needed.

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 Questions 3, 5, 8, 11 and 6, 9, 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 answer, with Question 2 needing both sources to be used and referenced.

Question 1

1 Explain, using examples, the concept of cultural hybridity.

[6]

Responses were generally answered well although very few candidates achieved full marks where the majority did not develop the core definition of cultural hybridity and only gained 1 mark out of a possible 2 for AO1. Typically, candidates articulated a definition around the merging of two cultures. The minority that did develop the definition, did so using ideas focused on how globalisation had contributed to cultural hybridity. AO2 was done extremely well with most examples focused on white wannabes and Brasian culture and the work of Nayak, Johal or Back. Occasionally there was some confusion with definitions or examples straying into cultural diversity or multiculturalism and these were not rewarded. Some common examples were food (e.g. chicken tikka masala) without any explanation as to how it was linked to cultural hybridity.

Exemplar 1

1		cultural hybridity refers to the crossing or merging of two or more cultures to create a new culture. This can be seen in the UK in second-generation Asian immigrants, or 'Brasians', who combine aspects of their ethnic culture of origin, e.g. diet, dress, religion, with aspects of British culture. Another example of cultural hybridity is white men - 'white wannabes' - who merge aspects of black hip hop culture with their white working class culture.
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In Exemplar 1, the candidate accurately highlights the core definition of the merging of two or more cultures and so receives one mark for this. They would need to develop this further, perhaps using globalisation, to get the full 2 marks for AO1. The two examples of Brasians and white wannabes are fully developed and therefore receive the full 4 marks available for AO2. A good example of concise writing.

Question 2*

2* Using sources A and B and your wider sociological knowledge, explain how the media is an agent of socialisation.

[12]

There was a dip in performance compared with previous years especially in terms of knowledge and understanding (AO1). Many candidates linked sociological studies to the sources and there was very little standalone knowledge that answered the question. Typically, answers using source A were well developed and used studies by Bandura or Mulvey to fully illustrate their point. Similarly, answers using source B were also well developed and usually linked to Young's concept of a 'bulimic society' or ideas around Marxism and consumer culture. Occasionally, a candidate would receive full marks and often utilised the three separate paragraph approach, with one paragraph focused solely on knowledge and the other two on the sources. Less successful candidates simply quoted straight from the sources and did not score highly.

Exemplar 2

②	In source A, it discusses the link between playing violent videogames and aggression. A study found there to be a link. It states that "controversial games make players less kind + sensitive", this links to Postman who stated childhood is disappearing and and violent video games is part of this as it's making children grow up too quickly. This suggests that the media is beginning to have a larger influence on children as a method of socialisation, as it's teaching children aggression + violence which is leading to a lack of sensitivity + kindness to be a new norm for this generation of gamers.
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② cont'	<p>In Source B, the advertising billboards represent, promote + reinforce consumerism. The Billboards show passers-by the newest 'hottest' new items. This happens everywhere (line on social media, newspaper ads, etc...). With this continuous reinforcement from the media that we need these products, we have ended up with consumerism as the norm. Lury states that shopping is now a leisure pursuit and be accessed online too in order to make this more accessible. This shows the media again as a source^{agent} of socialisation as its reinforcing the norm to people worldwide + of all ages that consuming products is 'good + normal'.</p>
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In Exemplar 2, the candidate shows one of the common themes of this year in linking sociological studies entirely to the sources and therefore unable to get any knowledge marks (AO1). Here they begin with Source A and develop it well using the work of Postman. They then go onto using source B and use the work of Lury to make a developed point. The candidate received full marks for AO2 for this. However, had they then added another paragraph of knowledge they then could have scored higher.

Question 3*

3* Outline and briefly evaluate the view that traditional masculinity has declined as a type of identity. **[20]**

Overall, this was well answered with many candidates receiving full marks. Candidates had a clear understanding of masculinity and the decline of this with the most common knowledge from Connell, Mort, Mac an Ghaill and some sophisticated answers on how women are taking up male spaces and threatening masculinity. Conceptually, there was also a strong response with terms such as 'crisis of masculinity', metrosexual, subordinate masculinity and marginalised masculinity in frequent use. Evaluation tended to focus on the work of Parsons and how traditional masculinity was still commonplace or sought after or Oakley and how males are socialised from a young age through manipulation and canalisation into traditional masculine roles. Less successful candidates had the appropriate studies or concepts but were too brief in their explanation or gave very common-sense ideas of how masculinity had changed and hence could only reach Level 2.

Section B overview

Candidates had the option to select whether they did further questions on Families and relationships, Youth subcultures or the Media. Most candidates opted for the Families and relationships or Youth subcultures. It was also the case that most 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 were 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 were challenged by Question 5 and did not seem to have the specific sociological studies to hand.

Question 4*

OPTION 1

Families and relationships

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

[12]

This question was generally answered well with good knowledge demonstrated on the increase in lone parent families. Common reasons included increase in divorce, increasing choice and the changing position of women with studies by Sharpe, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Giddens being particularly common. At times, some candidates gave responses that were less well supported relying on inaccurate statistics or inaccurate Acts of Parliament and so were not fully rewarded. Some candidates also did not link their point back to why their choice of research had led to lone parent families and often these were marked as Level 3.

Question 5*

5* Explain and briefly evaluate the view that family life differs according to social class.

[16]

Overall, this question produced a mixed response between candidates. The more successful candidates used studies by Bourdieu, Gillies, Crompton or Murray and there was some link to Weber and Life Chances and how these differ according to social class. Those who didn't answer the question as well often gave examples but did not include sociologists. In addition, most candidates were able to offer two distinct points. Evaluation was also mixed. More successful candidates used the work of postmodernism or Pakulski and Waters to illustrate how social class was no longer important for family, although some candidates gave a less developed critique or none.

Exemplar 3

5		<p>One way in which family life can differ through social class could be through the activities in which they do. This is because if there is an upper middle class family, they may choose to go abroad however a working class family may not have the option to go on a holiday as such. Therefore this shows that family life can differ because of social class.</p> <p>Another way in which it can differ could potentially be the family type. In a working class family there is a higher chance that they are a lone parent family, this then results in difficulty in moving out of that social class. However within an upper middle class the family arrangement may be different. They may be arranged as a nuclear family where both parents are together and receive are working. Therefore showing another way in which family life may differentiate through the social classes.</p>
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This exemplar illustrates a weaker example. The candidate correctly answers two ways in which family life might differ according to social class, however it is lacking key concepts and studies to make it sociological. The first paragraph identifies how class can affect life in terms of activities but can only provide the common-sense example of going on holiday. This could be significantly elevated with the work of Bourdieu, and how higher classes often provide more cultural capital. Similarly, the second paragraph discusses the notion of single parent families – this would have scored significantly higher if referenced to the work of Murray and the underclass. In addition, there is no evaluation whatsoever. Therefore, this answer scored 3,2,0 (AO1,2,3) but could have scored much higher had key concepts, studies and evaluation been present.

Question 6*

6* Assess Marxist views of the nuclear family.

[24]

This question was answered very well in terms of knowledge and understanding with a large proportion of candidates able to explain, with some detail, the work of Engels, Zaretsky, Benston and Ansley. The level of development was quite sophisticated with good use of evidence. However, there was a significant number of candidates who did not provide a full evaluation and drifted into juxtaposition. As explained earlier, this can be defined as a list like appearance that does not answer question, with many candidates not making any reference to the question or the Marxist position and simply offering different views of the family such as the functionalist position. Candidates should be reminded that when this does solely occur, answers can never go beyond Level 2. Those candidates that did engage with the question for evaluation were able to give specific critique to the Marxist position and scored well.

Option 2 overview

The Youth subcultures section was the 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 a folk devil. Illustrate your answer with examples.

[12]

The question was answered very well with most candidates able to confidently provide two examples of a folk devil. Typically, the most common folk devils were Mods and Rockers, Hoodies or Black Muggers with the associated sociological studies by Cohen, Fawbert or Hall to back up their points. More successful candidates were able to go into considerable detail regarding the folk devil and were able to give articulate sociological evidence. On occasion there was some confusion as to what a folk devil was or an over emphasis on the surrounding moral panic or socio-political environment and not on the folk devil identified. Candidates should 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 subcultures are formed only by males.

[16]

There was a mixed approach to this question. Those candidates that answered well either centred their answers around male focused subcultures, typically using the work of Albert Cohen or some of the CCCS studies or highlighted Heidensohn's study of sociology being malestream. Evaluation was typically very good with most candidates using the work of McRobbie and Garber and the bedroom culture or Blackman and the New Wave girls, to highlight the existence of female subcultures. Less successful candidates misunderstood the question and provided explanations of subcultures (e.g. anti-school) without specific reference to gender. In addition, there was a significant number of candidates writing too much. Candidates should be reminded that only two developed points for knowledge and one developed point of evaluation is required to gain full marks.

Question 9*

9* Assess Marxist views of why young people participate in deviant subcultures.

[24]

This question was answered reasonably well although there was a marked difference between candidates that knew which sociological studies could be identified as Marxist and which could not. More successful candidates used CCCS studies by sociologists such as Brake, Cohen, Hall and Jefferson, Frith and Clarke to highlight how concepts such as resistance and magical solutions had been pivotal to subcultures such as punks, teddy boys or skinheads. Some candidates also used the work of Lea and Young or Hall which was rewarded. However, some candidates got confused as to the Marxist approach and used status frustration, strain theory, Albert Cohen or Cloward and Ohlin and this was not rewarded. Evaluation was also mixed with more successful candidates using the work of Functionalist or Feminist writers to offer differing perspectives and critiques on the Marxist position. On occasion some candidates did drift into juxtaposition, veering away from the question and writing 'list like' responses without any reference to the question and therefore could only receive a maximum of Level 2 for their evaluation.

Option 3 overview

As stated previously, more candidates are now answering questions on the media. Question 10 proved to be the most challenging with some candidates unable to access the specific sociology regarding the pluralist position.

Question 10*

OPTION 3

Media

10* Outline **two** features of the pluralist view of the role of the media. 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. More successful candidates for this question tended to focus their answer on diversity and choice or The Fourth Estate, often using Whale or Williams in support. Those who didn't score as well tended to give examples without fully outlining the stance taking by pluralists. On occasion some candidates were confused with Postmodernism and were not rewarded. 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 plays an important role in creating moral panics. **[16]**

This question was very well done with most candidates able to clearly articulate how the media contributed to moral panics with studies by Fawbert, Cohen, Young, Hall and Wilkins in common use. A significant number of answers featured specific examples with mods and rockers, black muggers and hoodies being the most prominent. Evaluation for this question provided either no evaluation or undeveloped examples. More successful candidates for evaluation articulated how other factors could be at play in the creation of a moral panic such as the perception by the public or the role of the police. 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 the working class are negatively represented in the media.

[24]

Candidates, overall, were able to write in some depth for this question and gave a detailed response in how social class representations were negative. Typically, the work of Price, Jones and Dodd and Dodd was used with some candidates reinforcing their points with Marxist theory. Examples were also good with candidate using The Jeremy Kyle Show, Shameless or Benefits Street to clarify certain sociological positions. Evaluation was lacking in some answers or candidates did not really evaluate the question and instead offered juxtaposed alternatives. More successful candidates were able to use the work of Dodd and Dodd, Postmodernism or examples such as The Royle Family for evaluation, showing how representations had changed.

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