

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

SOCIOLOGY

H180

For first teaching in 2015

H180/01 Summer 2024 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.

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Paper 1 series overview

This year the standard was pleasingly 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.

There was a range of responses, suggesting that the paper differentiated adequately. The majority of candidates attempted to answer all questions on the paper and managed to time their responses well. On occasion, some candidates attempted the higher mark questions first instead of tackling the questions in order. This strategy is perfectly acceptable and for those candidates that may struggle with time keeping, this is good technique. The Source questions continue to pose a challenge for some candidates where they are not matching to the demands of the question. For example, some candidates did not refer to Source A for both characteristics to Question 2 and instead only gave one response relating to the source and another from their own knowledge. Similarly, on Question 3, some candidates did not make any reference to Source B which limits them to Level 2 for application. Candidates need to be reminded of the importance of reading the command words of every question and understanding what the question is asking them to do. This can be also seen in Questions 7, 11 and 15 where occasionally some candidates still provide a paragraph of evaluation when there are no Evaluation and Analysis marks available thus losing valuable time that could have been spent on another question. Pleasingly this year, some candidates were providing enough Evaluation and Analysis for Questions 8, 12 and 16 which, at 10 marks, typically needs four fully developed points to gain full marks in this area.

Key point call out: Using the sources

For Question 2 and Question 3, the sources must be explicitly referred to: twice in Question 2 and at least once in Question 3 to gain full marks. It is good practice to reference in your response the Source, e.g. 'In Source A we can see a person on a building site completing manual work'

In Section A, Question 1 was well answered with full marks achieved for this question with regularity. Candidates should be reminded that there are 2 marks available for the core definition and 2 marks available for development. On occasion some candidates only gave a partial core definition or a partial development and therefore dropped marks.

As previously mentioned, there were clear differences between candidates in the use of sources; some candidates made no reference to the source and so lost AO2 marks for application. Both Question 2 and Question 3 state in bold that candidates must refer to a specific source. Using the source is a skill that can be practised, and candidates should make sure that they are developing and applying their knowledge from the source instead of copying what they see (paying 'lip service' to the source), e.g. some candidates began their responses describing Source A and then went on to make two separate unrelated points – this is not an effective use of the Source. Question 4 was mostly answered well, with the best responses providing two developed points for AO1 Knowledge and Understanding and two developed points for AO3 Evaluation and Analysis. Candidates should be reminded that this typically looks like two developed paragraphs 'for' the question and two developed paragraphs 'against' the question. The best candidates therefore wrote two developed paragraphs on nurture and two developed paragraphs on nature.

Key point : How much to write?

While there is no one way of writing, some candidates can write very accurately and concisely, others can be more free-flowing and drawn out. There are some loose guidelines as to what would be typical for each question:

Question 1: One short paragraph including a core definition and a development point.

Question 2: Two short paragraphs detailing the two different ways with explanations and references to the Source.

Question 3: Two developed paragraphs of knowledge with at least one reference to the Source.

Question 4: Two developed paragraphs of knowledge and two developed paragraphs of evaluation

Questions 5, 6 and 13: One short paragraph of core definition and one/two development points.

Questions 6, 10 and 14: Two developed paragraphs showing and explaining the two ways

Questions 7, 11 and 15: Three developed paragraphs of knowledge

Questions 8, 12 and 16: Three developed paragraphs of knowledge and four developed paragraphs of evaluation

In Section B, the family still remains very popular, closely followed by youth culture with only a handful of candidates attempting the media option. With every question, in order to achieve marks in the highest mark band, candidates need to include a range of sociological evidence and to discuss these with some depth. Several responses, particularly for the 12- and 20-mark questions did not include the required range and depth of sociological evidence. 'Evidence' can include studies, theories, concepts and contemporary examples, although it should be noted that responses which rely heavily on contemporary examples will not score very highly as, on their own, contemporary examples do not evidence good sociology and would only achieve Level 2.

Overall, there was a clear difference between the high and low achieving candidates. At the top end, there was a range of sociological evidence contained in responses to all of the questions. Such responses included relevant and detailed explanations including sociological studies, concepts and theories where appropriate. The lower achieving candidates were often unable to provide sociological knowledge and understanding and their responses became very anecdotal suggesting they were relying on common sense.

Key point: Use appropriate sociological evidence

The best form of sociological evidence is using studies, theories or concepts in a developed way. For example, in Question 4, candidates may have discussed the work of Oakley or Sharpe and used examples such as the 'feral' children Genie or Oxana to gain full knowledge and application marks.

In terms of assessment objectives, Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) remains the strongest area. Candidates who performed well were able to offer a whole range of sociological knowledge, in the form of concepts and studies, but sometimes making relevant use of contemporary examples and theory. AO2 (application) still has room for improvement with some candidates only referring to the source once for Question 2 when it should be twice. AO3 skills of Analysis and Evaluation were moderately successful. It is worth noting that only Question 4 and Questions 8, 12 and 16 require evaluation. In particular, evaluation can take the form of direct criticism against a previous point of knowledge or could be in the form of a counterpoint to the question. It is a good technique to use the words of the question to show how an evaluative paragraph fits into a response otherwise, if the candidate just lists an alternative viewpoint, there is a danger that it will be marked as juxtaposition as it is not fully addressing the question.

What is good evaluation?

Evaluation can take various forms but in this paper, it is only needed for Question 4 and Questions 8, 12 or 16. Specific evaluation can either be taking the other side of the question, e.g. in Question 4 this would be showing that nature is more influential than nurture, or it can be directly criticising a point of knowledge, e.g. in Question 4, if a point has been written on Oakley's study of manipulation and canalisation being an example of nurture, it could be directly criticised that parents are more conscious now of gender stereotyping and this can be seen in the huge uptake in girl's participation in football,

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> used the sources appropriately and the right amount for Questions 2 and 3 used sociological knowledge, studies, theory or concepts to back up their points provided knowledge and evaluation for Question 4 and Questions 8, 12 and 16 answered every question within the time limit. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wrote the bare minimum and did not back up their points did not refer to the sources when asked did not evaluate on Questions 4 and Questions 8, 12 and 16 only used examples and common sense for sociological knowledge.

Section A overview

This section comprised of four compulsory questions which all candidates needed to answer. Two questions needed the source to be used and referenced.

Question 1

Source A



Worker on a building site

Source B



Judge sentencing an offender

1 Define the concept of consumer culture.

[4]

This response required a full core meaning and full development to gain the maximum marks. Most candidates answered the core meaning well, referring to the increasing emphasis on the consumption of goods or services. Development was a little inconsistent with the best candidates referring to shopping as a leisure pursuit or the notion of consumption providing status and identity. Some candidates lacked specific examples to gain full marks.

Exemplar 1

1	consumer culture refers to a culture in which the consumption of materialistic goods is valued and given status. Lury identifies ^{a few} the aspects of consumer culture that have been integrated in today's society: the packaging and promotion of goods being a large scale business, ^{being} different forms of shopping ^{and status} being available, that ^{being} a social norm, shopping ^{being} seen as a leisure pursuit. Consumerism is based on both social and economic factors as society gives status to those who can afford materialistic things. As An example of consumerism is the over-purchasing of clothes we don't need.
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In this Exemplar, the candidate successfully answered the question and could still have got full marks with less discussion. Of particular significance is the use of concepts such as status or materialistic goods and their use of sociological ideas such as shopping as a leisure pursuit. The fact that they have also accurately attributed this to Lury makes this a more successful response.

Question 2

- 2 With reference to **Source A**, identify and briefly explain **two** characteristics of working class identity.

[6]

Candidates were required to use Source A to identify and explain two characteristics of working-class identity. There was a mixed response to this question with a significant number of candidates only referring to the source once and therefore unable to gain full marks. The majority of candidates referred to blue collar work or notions of masculine work as their characteristics. Others focused on the manual nature of work or how there was a particular dress code. Some candidates mistakenly referred to Source B.

Exemplar 2

2	<p>One characteristic of the working class identity is that they engage in manual work/labour. In the source it states "worker on a building site" Typically the traditional working class come from manual worker backgrounds, engaging in hard manual labour such as construction. The working class are hugely based on tight knit communities and collectivism and therefore they have strong sense of loyalty to their occupational peers.</p> <p>Another characteristic of working class identity is that they engage in traditional gender stereotypes. The working class often assert their masculinity through a breadwinner role and taking part in manual work. In the source, I can see a man breaking buildings for reconstruction. In working class families, men take the pre-dominant role in bringing income to the family - the extended family was important as it acted as a mutual support system. WC identity is shaped by instant gratification, engaging in popular culture activities such as going to the pub, to watch football matches.</p>
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This is a 'textbook' answer with excellent structure and format. The candidate signposts the two characteristics clearly, illustrates their point in the source and then develops the point they are making. They identify manual work and traditional gender stereotypes as the characteristics, these are linked to the source with full development and good use of sociology receiving full marks.

Question 3

- 3 Using **Source B** and your wider sociological knowledge, explain how individuals are controlled through formal agencies of social control. [8]

This question was answered well with good use of source B demonstrated and links made with the Justice system as a mechanism of formal social control. Some candidates then used key concepts such as sanctions or Repressive State Apparatus to develop their answers. The ability to separate between different aspects from the Source (i.e. law and police) was a challenge for some candidates.

For the second paragraph, the majority of candidates referred to education and the workplace as forms of formal social control, drawing on concepts such as sanctions or reward systems. On occasion some answers lapsed into informal social control (such as eye-rolling by colleagues) and this was not rewarded.

Exemplar 3

3	A	<p>Individuals are controlled through formal social control. This is identified by Keddie who argued education reinforces social class inequality. This is by placing students into ability sets based upon their social class. This meant higher the class you were, higher the set you'd be put into. Due to this, the lower working class would be put into lower sets and have higher grade knowledge withheld from them. This would make it even more difficult to be socially mobile. The middle class were seen as 'ideal pupil'. Therefore, individuals are controlled by ^{the} formal social control, education. Individuals were placed into sets based on the social class they were socialised into by their family.</p> <p>However, it is difficult to measure which agency has the most influence over identity as they are all interlinked</p>
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		Individuals are controlled through formal agencies of social control. This is identified by Woodhead. Woodhead argues religion provides rules and guidelines which can then become part of a collective identity. She argues for most Muslim women, the veil is seen as an important part of their identity. She argues it is seen as Muslim chic with a slight nod to hearing the veil for religious reasons. Feminists believe the veil is liberating as it makes the focus from how a person looks to what they say. Therefore, individuals are controlled by the formal agency of socialisation, religion.
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This answer is typical of one of the errors that occurred in the form of not referring to Source B. The candidate has identified links to areas of formal social control – education and religion – and provided excellent development with sociologists and key terms. However, they have not referred to the Source. Therefore, they received full marks for knowledge but are limited to only Level 2 for their application.

Question 4

- 4 Outline and briefly evaluate the view that nurture is more influential than nature for shaping human behaviour.

[12]

The majority of candidates answered this question well. Most used were examples of 'feral' children such as Genie or Oxana and these were rewarded as excellent sociological knowledge. Very often, these would be supported by studies such as Oakley or Sharpe. In evaluation, the work of Parsons was commonly used as was the use of twin's studies or the example of Bruce Reimer. On occasion some candidates got confused between nature and nurture or only addressed the nature aspect of the question.

Section B overview

Candidates had the option to select whether they did further questions on the Family, Youth or the Media. A significant majority of candidates opted for the Family or Youth with very few opting for Media.

Option 1 overview

The family is the most popular option, and it was clear that candidates were well prepared. On occasion some candidates felt challenged with Question 7 which required specific application of knowledge to score higher marks.

Question 5

OPTION 1

Families and relationships

5 Define and briefly explain the concept of non-family households.

[5]

Most candidates could explain non-family households but there seemed to be some confusion with families with no children or with cohabitation. More successful candidates referred to a household consisting of one person living alone or two or more unrelated adults and then backed up their definition with examples such as University students and Living Alone Together (Klineberg). Some candidates also commented on the rise of single person households.

Question 6*

6* Identify and briefly explain **two** reasons for the rise in cohabitation.

[8]

This question was answered well with many candidates able to achieve Level 3 and Level 4. On occasion some candidates drifted into explanations for the rise in divorce and therefore were less successful with marks. Good answers used reasons such as individualisation (Beck and Beck Gernsheim) or transformation and intimacy and the rise of confluent love (Giddens). Less successful candidates gave common sense examples such as preparation for marriage but did not back up their answers with sociological studies or concepts.

Question 7*

7* Explain how ethnicity affects family diversity.

[12]

Overall, there was a mixed response to this question with most candidates able to offer at least one sociological study but rarer to see the three developed points required to gain full marks. Other responses referred to people of different ethnicities marrying and having children but without sociological concepts or theorists, this bordered on common sense. Good answers used studies by Ballard and how South Asians brought traditions such as large multi-generational families and traditional gender roles, or Berthoud and how South Asians were more traditional and more likely to marry and less likely to cohabit, divorce or live alone. Some also commented on matri-focal families among Afro-Caribbean communities. Some candidates evaluated where they did not need to.

Question 8*

8* Evaluate the sociological view that relationships between parents and children have changed.

[20]

This question was answered reasonably well with most candidates able to state how relationships between parents and children had changed. Typically, knowledge was better than evaluation with sociological studies by Postman, Hattie, Furedi and Palmer being the most popular. Concepts such as child centred, cotton wool kids' and toxic childhood were regularly used. Less successful candidates gave short and generic evaluations of the knowledge points that were not sociological or supported. Other candidates evaluated with Functionalist arguments by Parsons or Murdock regarding how relationships between parents and children had not changed or towards a feminist perspective on how the Dark Side of family life still persisted.

Option 2 overview

Candidates that answered the Youth section generally did this well with good use of theory and studies.

Question 9

OPTION 2 Youth subcultures

9 Define and briefly explain the concept of hybrid subcultures. [5]

This question was answered well with most candidates able to define the concept as being the mixing of different cultures to make a new subculture. Examples were strong and very sociological with common answers being BrAsian or White Wannabees with good explanations and accurate terminology. Many candidates also used the associated sociologists such as Johal or Nayak which was to be commended.

Question 10*

10* Identify and briefly explain **two** examples of anti-school subcultures. [8]

This question was answered well with most successful responses containing sociological evidence by Willis (the lads), Mac an Ghaill (the macho lads) or Blackman (the New Wave girls). Such answers successfully described in detail the subculture and what made them anti-school. Some candidates listed general deviant subcultures such as the punks or skinheads and were not rewarded. In addition, some candidates listed anti-school features (e.g. not doing homework) instead of the actual subculture and were less successful in marks awarded.

Question 11*

11* Explain the reasons why females have been ignored in the study of gangs. [12]

This question was answered well although it was rare to see the full three developed points. Most responses featured the work of McRobbie and Garber and detailed how females had been largely ignored because they were indoors and out of sight with the existence of the bedroom culture. The best candidates also highlighted works by Heidensohn and the notion of sociological research being malestream and Thornton with the idea of females lacking subcultural capital. Very occasionally, some candidates felt the need to evaluate which was not necessary.

Question 12*

12* Evaluate the view that youth culture is about resistance.

[20]

This question was answered well with candidates better at knowledge than evaluation, lacking the breadth and depth required to gain maximum AO3 marks. The vast majority featured answers rooted in the neo-Marxist tradition and explored some of the CCCS ideas such as notions of resistance displayed by skinheads, teddy boys and punks. Correspondingly, the work of Hebdige, Clarke and Hall and Jefferson featured heavily. Successful candidates also linked this to the theoretical work of Gramsci and his work on hegemony. Evaluation was mainly in the form of a counterpoint to the question with some utilising a postmodern, feminist or functionalist critique.

Option 3 overview

A minority of candidates answered questions on the media but of those, there was a wide range of knowledge on display. Candidates found Question 14 challenging, finding it difficult to apply appropriate concepts and studies to the question. Question 15 also posed some challenges for those candidates that did not know specific sociological studies.

Question 13

OPTION 3 **Media**

13 Define and briefly explain how the media affects its audience in an indirect way. **[5]**

This question demonstrated a mixed response. Those that were familiar with the idea of the media affecting the audience in an indirect way were able to accurately describe the process and refer to models such as the two step flow model or the cultural effects model, often providing detailed examples. However, other candidates remained confused, relying instead on more general understandings of media influences or using inaccurate concepts such as the (direct) hypodermic syringe model.

Question 14*

14* Identify and briefly explain **two** features of the postmodern view of the media. **[8]**

This question seemed more challenging for some students who could not access the specific knowledge required to make an impact. More successful candidates were able to confidently discuss concepts such as diversity and choice, media saturation, globalisation or the blurring of boundaries. However, some candidates offered a general postmodern overview of the world or offered confused responses that often reflected other theoretical positions.

Question 15*

15* Explain how media representations of age groups remain stereotypical. **[12]**

This question produced a mixed response with candidates. More successful candidates often began with depictions of youth, focusing on moral panics or notions of youth as trouble and using studies by Cohen, Fawbert and Ozgerby. Traditional stereotypes of old people were also referred to such as the work by Landis. Less successful candidates often presented a discussion of old age but lacked the specific terminology or key studies to get beyond Level 2.

Question 16*

16* Evaluate the view that media representations of social classes are negative.

[20]

This question was divided in terms of the quality of the answers between candidates who had the specific sociological evidence and those that drew solely from examples in the media. More successful candidates used studies by Price, Jones, Newman and Devereux and were able to use concepts such as poverty porn and Chavtainment. Strong answers also linked representations to Marxist theory and used the work of Gramsci to reinforce their point. This was then evaluated with the work of Nairn, Reiner and Hall. Less successful answers discussed specific television shows such as Eastenders and how social classes were negatively or positively portrayed.

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Question 2, Source A: Photo - Worker using hammer, © Vesnaandjic / Getty Images

Question 3, Source B: Photo - Man being sentenced, © RichLegg / Getty Images

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