

AS LEVEL

Examiners' report

SOCIOLOGY

H180

For first teaching in 2015

H180/02 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.

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

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Paper 2 series overview

Overall, candidates were able to access most questions. There were some non-responses to questions, but these varied between the questions in the exam paper rather than focused on one specific question. Most candidates were able to show at least some clear knowledge and understanding of the specifics of the questions with many applying accurate sociological evidence. The structure of responses varied, many were able to clearly signpost AO1 and AO3 arguments while some, embedded them into a paragraph in many instances creating undeveloped knowledge points.

Candidates have again appeared to spend far longer on Section A, leaving little time to be able to meet the requirements of Section B. This often resulted in Question 6 responses having only one or two knowledge points with little depth of explanation. This approach can have a dramatic effect on overall marks due to the importance of Question 6.

Handwriting has been an issue again this series for a minority of candidates. Illegible handwriting can limit the examiners' ability to ascertain accurate sociological evidence and their ability to understand the candidate's analysis. Teachers should consider whether the student would need access arrangements within their centre pre-exam, if a student's writing is particularly illegible.

General Points

Use clear paragraphs for each knowledge point, use signposting such as 'another way' or 'in contrast' 'to support the view in the question'. This explicitly demonstrates to the examiner that the candidate is presenting a new idea.

To demonstrate understanding, sociological evidence should be explained rather than just 'dropped in'. For example, if a method is high in reliability, explain how the method is high in reliability and support this by using the relevant source.

Assessment for learning



For plenary tasks, ask students to bullet point ideas for a question on the exam paper (refer to the mark scheme for an approximate number of ideas required for each question). Then, use a round robin, pass it to the next person to add an explanation. A third, will then select evidence from the source if appropriate or relate it back to the question, demonstrating the how or why this is relevant to the question stem.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use sociological and methodological evidence • clearly structure answers • focused on the specifics of the question. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • used their time ineffectively, more frequently impacting on Section B • displayed inaccurate or no use of sociological evidence • misinterpreted the question or didn't read the specifics of the question (see Question 5 comments) • lifted material from the source rather than used it to demonstrate how or why it supported the knowledge point.

Section A overview

This section contains four compulsory questions which will refer to either Source A or B. In Questions 3 and 4, to reach the higher mark Levels, candidates are expected to use methodological evidence and/or theories such as interpretivism and validity.

Some candidates continue to refer to alternative methodologies or sociological research, there is no requirement to do this. In addition, some candidates are still confusing validity and reliability or end a paragraph by stating 'therefore this is high in reliability and validity' which demonstrates little understanding of the concepts.

Question 1

1 Using data from **Source A**, describe **two** conclusions about patterns of social mobility in the UK.

[4]

Question 1 was able to demonstrate clear differentiation with the full range of marks being applied. Many candidates were able to accurately compare data from the bar graph and reach a clear conclusion.

Some candidates were unable to interpret the source accurately referring to upper class rather than professional/managerial background. Similarly, with the 'not working' group, many referred to this as unemployed which would be inaccurate as this would be an assumption.

Signposting is useful here, such as 'one conclusion is' or 'to illustrate this'.

Candidates do not need to write large chunks of information for this question, nor do they need to present explanations as to why the patterns and trends may be occurring.

Assessment for learning



Using a range of quantitative and/or qualitative data extracts, create a quick-fire quiz. These could be on the board and students could be given 1- 2 minutes to identify a pattern/trend.

Common Misconception

Candidates do not need to write large chunks of information for this question, nor do they need to present explanations as to why the patterns and trends may be occurring.

Question 2*

- 2* With reference to **Source B**, explain why sociologists have to consider ethical issues when doing sociological research. [9]

Candidates are expected to provide two developed reasons or three underdeveloped reasons with methodological evidence for the top of Level 4. Candidates could have referred to a range of ethical issues, the most frequent being informed consent, deception and protection from harm.

This question generated a mixed response. Some candidates demonstrated a lack of understanding of ethics and instead focused on validity and rapport with no link to the ethical guidelines that sociologists and professionals follow to maintain integrity in their research.

A few candidates did not use Source B to support their ideas. Many candidates are re-writing the title of the research or chunks of the introductory paragraph within their answers. This does not support their knowledge point or creditable within the mark scheme. To gain marks on AO2, evidence should be taken from the source to support their knowledge point for example, if discussing informed consent, many candidates chose to reflect on how the employers were not informed by the researcher and thus had no knowledge of their taking part, the role and aims of the researcher. Many developed this further by stating that this therefore failed to give them the right to withdraw.

Assessment for learning



As a plenary, ask students to write down on a sticky note an ethical issue with a piece of research you have discussed that lesson and stick it on the board. Divide into small groups, each select a sticky note at random, take a few minutes as a small group to create an explanation and present it to the class.

Exemplar 1

2-	<p>One reason ^{why} sociologists very need to consider ethical issues is he needs to so they can protect participants from harm. Source is says that avoided in structured interviews with immigrant workers as "he was concerned they wouldn't be able to give him fully & informed consent". Informed consent is when participants are made completely aware of the aims of the research and consent to participating. However, if they cannot do properly consent, they may not fully understand any risks or dangers of participating in the research, thus causing harm to ^{the} participant. For example, they may risk losing their job at the restaurant for discussing details such as contacts, the interviewing process and trading procedures". Therefore it is important that sociologists gain fully informed & consent.</p>
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In Exemplar 1, the candidate has identified protecting the participant through informed consent. They then use Source B to state how workers could not give informed consent and why this would be important. This is developed by showing the impact it could have on the interviewee.

The candidate has clearly identified an ethical issue and then fully engaged with the source to demonstrate their understanding.

This is a clearly developed knowledge point.

Question 3*

3* Using **Source A** and your wider sociological knowledge, explain why positivist sociologists use quantitative data to study patterns of social mobility. [12]

To achieve full marks on this question, candidates need to fully develop three reasons why positivist sociologists use quantitative data. Each reason should demonstrate accurate use of methodological concepts and/or theory which have not been used in the question for example reliability. Candidates should explain how and why this is preferred by positivists and reinforce this with evidence from Source A.

Overall, the question was answered well with most candidates able to identify at least two reasons. A small minority of candidates were confused between quantitative and qualitative data and reliability and validity. For validity and reliability these were often dropped in together with no understanding demonstrated. When reliability was used to discuss the ability to replicate, many candidates were under the misconception that this would also mean that researchers would get the 'exact same results' if they repeated the research later. In many instances, rather than developing knowledge points, candidates simply repeated the same point once or twice which resulted in the idea being underdeveloped.

For AO2, some made no attempt to reference the source beyond re-writing the title of the Source and so gained no marks. Others were able to lift information but not use it to support their ideas, resulting in 'lip service' only. Those that used the Source effectively, were able to discuss patterns and trends and explained how this demonstrated objectivity, or how official statistics often reflect the entirety of the population and linking this to representativeness.

Common Misconception

There is no requirement to evaluate in this question. Many candidates were evaluating using interpretivism and stating why qualitative methods maybe preferable. AO3 is not creditable in this question.

It is worth noting, that it is acceptable to say why quantitative methods are preferred in comparison to qualitative methods.

Assessment for learning



Create a concept sheet, add a column for definition, one for how or why it is used in research and a final column for why it would be beneficial for example to interpretivists.

Exemplar 2

3		<p>Positivist sociologists prefer quantitative data for research as they believe humans can be studied as objects, similar to science variables. One reason why sociologists use quantitative data is because it's easy to analyse patterns and trends over time. Source A demonstrates that a woman from a professional background is almost 2 times likely to work in a professional job than a working class woman. This demonstrates that quantitative data can easily be graphed to be compared. As a result, this saves the researchers time as if it was qualitative data they would have to search for answers within written work. Therefore, positivists prefer quantitative data as you can easily identify patterns and trends between different groups of people.</p>
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In Exemplar 2, the candidate has identified the viewpoint of positivists preference to scientific methods as the knowledge point. This is then explained through patterns and trends which is supported with information explicit from the source. This is further explained by demonstrating why it is preferred in comparison to qualitative data.

This is a clearly developed knowledge point.

Question 4*

- 4* Using **Source B** and your wider sociological knowledge, explain and evaluate the use of covert ethnographic research to study workers in the restaurant industry. [20]

For top of Level 4 in this question, AO1 requires three developed strengths and/or weaknesses, fully developed with the use of methodological concepts and theory. There should be clear and explicit application of the source material in four knowledge points or more. For AO3, there should be two developed strengths and two developed weaknesses.

There were very few non-responses to this question. Those who answered this well were able to present two strengths and two weaknesses of covert ethnographic research. A range of methodological evidence was included such as rapport, verstehen, interpretivism and validity. Those achieving Level 4 often used connectives, signposting the examiner to a strength or weakness and supported their ideas with explicit evidence from the source.

Candidates who achieved the lower end of the mark Levels, often interchanged between a strength and a weakness often going back and forth between two or even more ideas, making development difficult to ascertain. As with Question 3, there was some confusion between validity and reliability and on many occasions, these were simply dropped in, with little or no relevance to the previous discussion.

Some candidates did not focus on the specifics of the question, 'cover ethnographic research' and spent several paragraphs discussing unstructured interviews which was at odds with the question and therefore not creditable unless discussed in relation to covert observation. For example, the researcher-built rapport and trust in the covert observation before conducting unstructured interviews or as part of triangulation where the researcher was able to check the validity of their conclusions by discussing the issues during the unstructured interviews.

For AO2, candidates were able to draw a range of supporting evidence from the source such as ethical issues with not gaining informed consent, gaining information on contracts and training to support depth of information, gaining employment in four restaurants to support lack of representativeness and subjectivity regarding prior experience of the restaurant industry.

Structure

Structure can be key to success in this question.

Create blank plans for students to practice writing their answers in. Use four boxes (two strengths and two weaknesses), each box could have a sentence starter such as 'one strength is' followed by 'this is a strength because' 'the source supports this'. Therefore, this research is 'due to'.

Section B overview

Both Question 5 and 6 were able to illustrate differentiation of ability. However, many candidates struggled to leave ample time to answer these questions in enough depth.

To achieve Level 3 and above in these questions, candidates must use sociological evidence: sociological students, concepts, theories, accurate statistics and/or legislation and explain them. To award to Level 4 in Question 6, examiners are looking at how well-developed each knowledge point and its supporting evidence are.

Structure

As with previous questions, connectives and paragraphing are important when writing extended answers.

Use a new paragraph for each knowledge or evaluation point.

Question 5*

5* Outline **two** ways in which women in the UK are **advantaged** compared to men.

[10]

This question presented some difficulty for several candidates. To achieve Level 4, candidates need to identify two ways and then for each way, they need to develop two knowledge points supported by sociological evidence. Many candidates either only presented two knowledge points overall or identified a range of knowledge points but did not go beyond identification.

At the lower end, candidates often used inaccurate data or listed evidence. Alternatively, answers were generalised and showed little sociological understanding.

A small minority of candidate's mis-read the question and focused on how women are disadvantaged in society. In addition, some are still evaluating in this question, there are no marks available here for AO3.

At the higher end, many were able to develop at least three pieces of sociological evidence or to offer a wider range of underdeveloped sociological evidence. Common themes were feminisation of the labour market, GCSE results, school exclusions, prison statistics, mental health and suicide rates and greater pressure placed on males to be 'superdads' and provider.

Common Misconception

There is no requirement to evaluate in this question

Assessment for learning



This type of question can be useful for checking understanding at the end of a mini topic or lesson and can be asked as a full 10-mark question or broken down with students being asked for one way for half of the marks.

This will not only check understanding and prepare students for this question but will also support them when writing developed paragraphs for Question 6.

Question 6*

6* Assess radical feminist explanations of gender inequalities in UK society.

[20]

To achieve the top of Level 3 in this question, candidates need to write three fully developed paragraphs supporting the statement and three evaluating the statement. It was clear that many candidates did not leave ample time to answer this question which often resulted in only one or two paragraphs and in some cases only a few lines.

There was a very mixed response to this question. It was clear, that several candidates were confused as to which sociologists could be associated with radical feminism, with some labelling Oakley as a radical feminist and writing nearly a full side describing her views on socialisation.

Some candidates were able to outline radical feminist's beliefs, and then explicitly use sociological evidence to support their ideas such as vertical and horizontal segregation. A number were able to discuss Millett, Johnson and Firestone in some depth.

For evaluation, there was a tendency towards juxtaposition with several responses simply describing a range of explanations of gender inequality rather than evaluating and analysing radical feminist explanations of gender inequality.

Few responses were able to fully develop the required 3 AO1 and 3 AO3 ideas to achieve full marks on this question.

Exemplar 3

6		Radical feminists believe that
		there are deep inequalities
		rooted in society today that
		reinforce patriarchal values.
		Miller looked at how from
		primary socialisation, men
		are taught that they have
		a biological upper hand
		and therefore are superior
		to their female counterparts
		through this 'biological
		dominance' men assert control
		over women both within and

outside of the home. This means that patriarchy is prevalent in the home and causes women to be controlled as men have the biological upper hand. This therefore suggests radical feminists see gender inequality as deep rooted in the values of society and that the only way women will gain control is through abolishing the patriarchy.

Opposingly, a direct criticism of feminism outlines women choose to be subversive in society. Hakim looked at preference theory and how women choose to favour family life over their career and therefore do not progress for that reason. 60% of women were outlined by Hakim and home centered and she argued this is why they can not be socially mobile as they do not focus enough on their career and too much on their family.

		this means there are no
		inequalities in society as
		a result of patriarchy as
		women choose to be mothers
		and choose to put their
		family over their career.
		Therefore, there are no gender
		inequalities in the UK as a
		result of patriarchy as women
		should just focus more on
		their career.

In Exemplar 3, the candidate has identified patriarchal values as the knowledge point and then proceeds to use Millet to explain how society can be patriarchal. Note the end of the paragraph links back to the specifics of the question.

The candidate then uses a clear connective to demonstrate evaluation and is explicit in their evaluation of the previous point. They then use Hakim and throughout the paragraph consistently demonstrate why it is a criticism of patriarchy and gender inequality.

Both are fully developed ideas with supporting sociological evidence.

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