

Examiners' report

A LEVEL

SOCIOLOGY

OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in Sociology

H580

For first teaching in 2015

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Introduction

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

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. A selection of candidate responses 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 [Teach Cambridge](#).

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Paper 1 series overview

This year the standard was very 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 very good with several candidates demonstrating excellent depth and breadth of skills across all three assessment objectives. The resurgence of the media option continues and while still not equal to the numbers opting for the family or youth, it is has certainly gained in popularity over the last few years.

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 was required. Some candidates continue to attempt the higher mark questions first instead of tackling the questions in order and this strategy is perfectly fine. In keeping with last year's trend, Question 2 still remains problematic, particularly in terms of AO1 with hardly any candidates achieving Level 3 or 4. Candidates commonly linked studies to the sources but did not separately address the knowledge aspect of the question and should be reminded of the simple three-paragraph formula (detailed below) that would aid them in this skill area.

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 highlighting the knowledge and the other two relating to each source. Clear signposting also helps, e.g. 'In Source A we can see X...' or 'Linking to wider knowledge is the work of Y....'

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 and then Media.

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.

Pleasingly this year there was a lot less 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. Many candidates used the technique of using the words of the question in each paragraph or better still, engaging with the question during an evaluation point to minimise the possibility of juxtaposition, e.g. for Question 6, some candidates wrote: 'Whereas postmodernists would view the nuclear family as 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 Cohen saw the media as responsible for deviance because of moral panics, other sociologists thought that the main cause of youth deviance was...'

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) is equally as good 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:
- 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.	- 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

Source A

Interview with an employee after their first day at work

Research was conducted with a range of employees regarding socialisation in the workplace. The researchers were interested in how the workplace changed individuals and how their norms and values adapted. One person spoke about their experience of the first day at their new job:

'I was glad I got up early and arrived on time as I did not know how important time-keeping was in this role. At my last job I could come and go as I pleased, but now I have to sign in and out when I arrive or leave. I wore my best suit but then was told I had to wear the company uniform of a blue jacket and black trousers – I thought it looked horrible. I have now got to attend training sessions to learn about the different departments in the company. Thankfully they have teamed me up with a workplace colleague they call a 'buddy' – this is someone who will help train me and is someone I can go to if I need help. It's all been a big shock but in the end I think I am going to like this job.'

Source B

Supermarket employee serving a customer at the checkout



1 Explain, using examples, the concept of subculture.

[6]

Responses were generally answered well although very few candidates achieved full marks where a significant number did not develop the core definition of subculture and only gained 1 mark out of a possible 2 for AO1. Typically, candidates articulated a definition around a culture within a culture. The minority that did develop the definition, did so using ideas focused on how subcultures have distinct norms and values that differed from wider society. AO2 was done extremely well with many examples naming specific subcultures such as punks or goths. Sometimes these examples were not fully developed, and candidates should be reminded that in order to gain full marks for AO2, there needs to be two fully developed examples.

Exemplar 1

1	Subcultures can be referred to as a culture within a culture. It is a minority group of people who share distinct norms & values different from the majority of society. Subcultures can be within a culture or its own distinct one.
	One example is hippies who value peace, love and harmony more than the rest of society and have a separate fashion consisting of colourful clothing.
	Another example is roadmen. They have their own fashion, norms & values such as wearing tracksuits, vaping & not caring about education.

In this example, the candidate accurately highlights the core definition of what a subculture is in terms of being a culture within a culture but also further develops this through discussing norms and values. The two examples of hippies and roadmen are well identified with just enough explanation and development to gain full marks. This is a succinct and to the point response and good example of the minimum required to gain the maximum marks available.

Question 2*

2* Using **sources A** and **B** and your wider sociological knowledge, explain how the workplace is an agent of socialisation. [12]

Consistent with last year there was a dip in performance 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 Skeggs or Waddington to fully illustrate their point. Similarly, answers using Source B were also well developed and usually linked to ideas of learning new norms and values or resocialisation. The best candidates 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	Workplace is an agent of socialisation as it resocialises people into new norms and values. One way it does not resocialises is through informal socialisation. In source A, the employee is paired up with a 'buddy' to help train and support them in their new job. However, this person will also play a role in the informal socialisation of the person by teaching them the norms & values of the colleagues and how they should behave to fit in. This is a canteen culture where a person's norms and value change to suit the people around them. It is often seen in police forces with
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		racism where many police officers ignore it because it is the norm in the workplace.
		Another way the workplace acts as a ^{agent} form of socialisation is through formal socialisation. This can include things like company policy, code of conduct, uniforms and instructions ^{rule} on how to interact with car customers. This is seen in source B where the employee is wearing a uniform and is smiling while interacting with the customer. This can could show how the workplace supermarket values being looking presentable and being friendly. If the employee didn't conform to this they could be given a warning to ensure they follow this in the future. This shows the importance of the workplace in resocialisation through formal processes.

This example is very typical showing how many candidates only wrote two paragraphs relating to the sources and could have really benefitted from an additional paragraph on specific knowledge and understanding. The candidate begins with a brief undeveloped overview of the workplace gaining one mark for AO1. The paragraph then relates to Source A and the candidate correctly makes the link to canteen culture in a developed way. The second paragraph links to Source B where the candidate makes the connection to resocialisation in a developed way. Both these paragraphs are excellent and so gained full marks for AO2, but this answer would have really benefitted from more development in terms of wider knowledge. Overall, this gained 1 mark for AO1 and 8 marks for AO2.

Question 3*

3* Outline and briefly evaluate the view that traditional ethnic identities remain important. **[20]**

Overall, this was very well answered with many candidates receiving full marks. Candidates had a clear understanding of traditional ethnic identities and used sociological studies from Ghuman, Modood, Cashmore and Troyna, Sewell and Gilroy. Conceptually, there was also a strong response with terms such as 'cultural comfort zones' and 'turning inwards.' Evaluation tended to focus on references to hybridity, neighbourhood nationalism or code switching using the work of Johal, Back or Nayak. Less successful candidates misunderstood the question and drifted into ideas surrounding inequality without any reference as to why ethnic identities remained important.

Exemplar 3

3	One view that traditional ethnic identities remain important is through Bhatti's research on South Asian girls, where she found that family honour, or izzat, was seen ^{important} highly considered amongst the girls as their families taught them about it. Bhatti found that there was a great import significance on family honour ^{in South Asian families} which impacted/ influenced the girls' decisions in life as their decisions/ life choices would affect represent and affect their family. Therefore, traditional ethnic identities still remain important in society as the way that an South Asian individual has been brought up in terms of their normal ethnic culture which is considered the norm that for them can impact have a strong impact on their choice life choices. On the other hand, the sociologist ^{traditional} Johnal would argue that ethnic identities are no longer important and are instead a changing. He found that 'Asian boys create a 'white mask' the which acts as a front/ mask that allows them to freely chat and socialise and engage with white boys in their school, whilst having their 'Asian' identity only at home and with the family. Therefore, traditional ethnic identities are changing ^{no longer} no longer important as people can hide and reveal choose to reveal whatever they want of their ethnic identity. Another view that traditional ethnic identities remain important is through Basit's research, who looked at Muslim ^{Saharasi} girls' views views of their religion and their teachers' views of their religion. She found that whilst the teachers thought that the girls' religious beliefs were oppressive ^{not their life choices} as they were born into it and could not choose their beliefs due to their family, the girls themselves did not agree with the teacher and found that their religious beliefs were a part of their
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		ethnic identity and that they did not feel that it was oppressive at all, but was rather empowering to them. Therefore, traditional ethnic identities are still important as they are even a large aspect of your overall identity which can in fact represent where you are from.
		However, Nayak would argue that traditional ethnic identities are changing as white boys British boys are acting as 'white wannabes' and have been influenced by black or hip hop culture, including rap, and want to be act like them. One example of this is Multicultural London English or Jafaican, which has been is a new dialect of London influenced by south London young slang word usage. Therefore traditional ethnic identities are no longer important as ^{is intermixing} merging of multiple different people's cultures and identities has made it true , blurring the old line of traditional identities.
		One final view that the traditional ethnic identities one remain important is through Sewell's idea concept of cultural comfort zones, where he found that boys of the same ethnicity tended to stay near in together in the same peer groups and interacted less with other ethnic groups outside of theirs. He argued that this, for black boys majority, led to them becoming more increasingly engaged in gangs and crime. Therefore, traditional ethnic identities remain important as they can affect who you interact with throughout throughout your life. an

This is an excellent example of a full mark response. The candidate begins with a developed paragraph using the work of Bhatti before evaluating using Johal. The candidate then uses the work of Basit before evaluating using Nayak. Note only one developed paragraph of evaluation is needed on Question 3 so already this candidate has done too much evaluation. The candidate then finishes with a developed knowledge paragraph using the work of Sewell. All paragraphs are developed using accurate studies and concepts and so this gained full marks of 8,8,4.

Section B overview

Candidates had the option to select whether they did further questions on Families and relationships, Youth subcultures or the Media. More candidates opted for the Families and relationships or Youth subcultures than Media. 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 was the joint most popular choice and it was clear that candidates were well prepared particularly in terms of theory and studies that they were able to recall.

Question 4*

OPTION 1

Families and relationships

4* Outline **two** reasons for the declining birth-rate in the UK.

[12]

This question was generally answered well with good knowledge demonstrated for reasons for the declining birthrate. The most popular response was the changing priorities of women with Sue Sharpe as evidence. Individualisation/reflexivity/confluent love was also a common theme linked to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Giddens. Some links were also referred to increased child-centredness and economic liability. Some candidates wrote unfocused knowledge linked to divorce or gave answers that were less well supported only gaining a Level 2. Other candidates gave statistics on the declining birthrate but did not give reasons and so were not rewarded.

Question 5*

5* Explain and briefly evaluate the view that an ageing population negatively affects family life. [16]

Overall, this question produced a mixed response between candidates. The more successful candidates used studies by Henrietta and Grundy (sandwich generation) or Brannen (pivot generation) and wrote very developed paragraphs. There were a few instances of candidates linking the question to women having children at a later age, but this was often unfocused. Most students were able to discuss evaluation linking to the positive role of grandparents in terms of helping with childcare but very often these were undeveloped paragraphs and lacked theoretical evidence.

Question 6*

6* Assess postmodern views of the nuclear family.

[24]

This question was answered well in terms of knowledge and understanding with a large proportion of candidates able to explain, with some detail, the work of Giddens, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Stacey. The level of development was generally good with sufficient use of evidence. Evaluation often took the form of alternative views of the nuclear family with Functionalism (Parsons, Murdock and Durkheim) and Marxism (Marx, Engels and Zaretsky) being the most common. Occasionally some candidates strayed into juxtaposition but on the whole, they used the words of the question and kept a sufficient level of engagement.

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 spectacular youth subcultures.

[12]

The question was answered very well with most candidates able to confidently provide two examples of a spectacular subculture. Typically, the most common answers were punks, skinheads, teddy boys and hippie's using the work of Hebdige, Clarke, Hall and Jefferson and Young to develop their points. There was also good use of conceptual detail such as 'magic solutions' and 'bricolage'. On occasion there was some confusion as to what a spectacular subculture was with the odd candidate choosing examples that were not consistent with the research by the CCCS such as goths and this was not rewarded.

Question 8*

8* Explain and briefly evaluate the view that female subcultures are often invisible.

[16]

This question was answered extremely well with most candidates able to grasp the specific studies required to attain a Level 3 or 4 response. Typically, candidates used studies by McRobbie and Garber, Thornton or Heidensohn to illustrate how female subcultures were invisible. Evaluation took the form of how female subcultures were visible with common studies used being Jackson's study of the Ladettes, Blackman's New Wave Girls or Reddington's work on the punks. Some candidates also wrote 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 the view that the media is the main cause of youth deviance.

[24]

This question was answered reasonably well with the majority of candidates using the work of Cohen, Becker, Fawbert or Young. Depth of response was particularly good with some candidates able to articulate in considerable detail how the media was a key feature in the construction of a moral panic. Evaluation was often well done with candidates offering a range of alternative viewpoints as to what was the main cause of youth deviance such as poor socialisation, poor socio-economic position and links to capitalism. There was also some explicit criticism such as using the work of Goode and Ben-Yehuda to directly criticise Cohen's conception of a moral panic. Weaker responses were able to locate how the media was the main cause of youth deviance but did so without evidence and gave general examples such as copycat violence in the media.

Option 3 overview

As stated previously, more candidates are now answering questions on the Media with a significant number of candidates doing extremely well.

Question 10*

OPTION 3

Media

10* Outline **two** sociological examples of the direct effect theories of the media. **[12]**

This question was generally answered very well with the majority of candidate able to access the specific knowledge required. Typically, candidates used the work of Packard and the Hypodermic Syringe Model, Anderson and the use of song lyrics or Bandura's Bobo Doll experiment. Responses to this question were very good and a substantial number gained full marks. On occasion, some candidates did not fully grasp which were the direct effect studies and guessed using indirect effect studies such as the two-step flow model and were not rewarded.

Question 11*

11* Explain and briefly evaluate the view that media representations of ethnicity are changing. **[16]**

This question was very well done with most candidates able to clearly articulate how media representations of ethnicity were changing. Good responses were able to discuss Barker and his study of Eastenders and the great diversity of characters and representation and used the work of Malik, to discuss changes in reality TV. A few candidates attempted to link to cultural hybridity but often this was a little unfocused. Evaluation for this question was usually very successful with Van Dijk's study being the most popular or Malik's work on tokenism. Weaker candidates just focused on examples without any reference to sociological studies.

Question 12*

12* Assess the feminist view that the media is patriarchal. **[24]**

Candidates, overall, were able to write in some depth for this question and gave a detailed response on the feminist position. Typically, the work of Mulvey, Wolf, McRobbie and Ferguson were used with concepts such as the male gaze, beauty myth, and cult of femininity. Evaluation took two forms by either directly addressing how the media was becoming less patriarchal such as the work of Gauntlet or Glascock or offering an alternative theoretical perspective such as Marxism or postmodernism. On occasion some candidates ran out of time, meaning there was less evaluation than the three developed paragraphs required for full marks for AO3.

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