

Examiners' report

AS LEVEL

SOCIOLOGY

**OCR Level 3 Advanced Subsidiary GCE
in Sociology**

H180

For first teaching in 2015

H180/01 Summer 2025 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 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 mixed with some candidates able to access the full range of marks, while others displaying a 'common-sense' approach to sociological content with little sociological material. Pleasingly, there were very little rubric errors or No Responses.

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 a good technique. In an upturn from last year, both sources were used to a much higher degree for Questions 2 and 3. Candidates frequently referred to the sources in their answers and it was clear that they had been taught to explicitly refer to them.

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 need four fully developed points to gain full marks in this area.

Key point: How much to write?

There is no one way of writing - some candidates can write very accurately and concisely, others can be more free-flowing and drawn out. Here are some general 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 5/9/13: One short paragraph of core definition and one/two development points
- Questions 6/10/14: Two developed paragraphs showing and explaining the two ways
- Questions 7/11/15: Three developed paragraphs of knowledge
- Questions 8/12/16: Three developed paragraphs of knowledge and four developed paragraphs of evaluation

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 point and therefore dropped marks.

As previously mentioned, the sources were mostly well used and well referred to for Questions 2 and 3. On occasion some candidates lacked the specific sociological studies needed for Question 3 and instead described the source in more detail which impacted their marks. 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). For example, 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 the peer group as a form of socialisation and two developed paragraphs on other forms of socialisation.

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. A number of 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 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, for Question 4, the best candidates may have discussed the work of Lees, Sewell or Skelton and Francis 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, and sometimes making relevant use of contemporary examples and theory. 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. 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 a different form of socialisation such as the family, or it can be directly criticising a point of knowledge.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally:
• 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.	• 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



A Scottish football fan at a football game

Source B



Participants at a Gay Pride Parade. 'Pride' is the global movement fighting for equal rights for LGBTQ+

1 Define the concept of high 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 cultural practices that are associated with the powerful and wealthy upper classes. Development was mostly consistent with the best candidates referring to how high culture was seen as superior or socially closed and giving an example such as opera or Shakespearian plays. On occasion, some candidates lacked specific examples or were too vague to gain full marks.

Exemplar 1

1		High culture refers to the activities and leisure associated with those who have high status. They are seen as as societies achievements enjoyed by those of the higher class. There is a strict criteria/demand to experience high culture: You must be superior in the social hierarchy (bourgeoisie/upper class). An example of an activity associated with high culture is watching ballet and/or opera in a theatre/auditorium. Investment in high culture benefits individuals someone long-term.
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This is a very detailed answer that shows full core meaning and development. The candidate successfully identifies high culture as being related to social status and social class and goes beyond in linking this to a sense of superiority. It is then further developed with excellent examples of ballet and opera and how this can benefit the individual long term. A very well thought out and well-constructed answer which gains full marks.

Question 2

2 With reference to **Source A**, identify and briefly explain **two** characteristics of national identity. [6]

Candidates were required to use Source A to identify and explain two characteristics of national class identity. Overall, this was done very well with a significant number of candidates gaining maximum marks. Many candidates referred to identification through style of dress such as the kilt and how this shows support for your country e.g. through football. They were then able to successfully use the source to illustrate the identification. On the odd occasion some candidates gave answers that were not related to the source and only gained credit for AO1 marks for this.

Question 3

- 3 Using **Source B** and your wider sociological knowledge, explain how sexuality can affect an individual's identity.

[8]

This question was answered relatively well in terms of good use of source B, however there was a mixed response in terms of specific subject knowledge of sexuality.

The highest performing candidates used the source as a platform to discuss sexuality and identity with the work of Plummer, Weeks and McIntosh being prominent. Some candidates also referenced major laws such as the Gay Marriage Act which was excellent knowledge. However, at times, some candidates did not have the specific sociological knowledge available to them and so instead chose to describe what was happening in the source which often led to undeveloped knowledge being credited.

Exemplar 2

3	Sexuality can have significant impacts on people's identities, and how they present themselves. The source shows this, as it shows a pride march. 'Pride' encourages openness and sexual expression all over the world. In Weeks' study, they explore how, often, being homosexual is an important aspect of someone's identity, whereas being heterosexual is not not. This links to the source, which shows an encouragement of sexual expression for homosexual people, suggesting that, as a result of the 'Pride' movement, Weeks' study may have be true. This shows how important homosexuality can be to people's identities. However, some people suppress their own sexualities, & it may have very minimal impact on their identities. Rich explored the oppression of female sexuality, & how there is often a large stigma around being lesbian — larger than the stigma around being gay. The man in source B is holding a sign to promote inclusion. This could be in an attempt to prevent the oppression of women's sexuality explored by Rich — if lesbians are included more, they may express themselves & their sexuality identity more.
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Exemplar 2 is a rare full mark answer that cleverly weaves in sociological studies while still linking to the source. The first paragraph identifies the Pride element of the source and uses that to discuss the work of Weeks in relation to identity. The second paragraph focuses on inclusion in the source and uses the work of Rich to elaborate their point. A very to-the-point and well-constructed answer that gained full marks.

Question 4

- 4 Outline and briefly evaluate the view that the peer group is the most important agent of socialisation.

[12]

Many candidates answered this question well. Most commonly used were examples using the work of Lees, Skelton and Francis, Willis or Sewell. In evaluation, the work of Parsons was commonly used to support the alternative view of the family as the most important agent of socialisation.

Often only one paragraph was given for evaluation, and candidates should be reminded that a typical full mark answer would have two developed points of knowledge and two developed points of evaluation.

Exemplar 3

4	Peer Group socialisation is how people are influenced, all through their lives, by the people they spend time with. This can be friends, colleagues, and fellow pupils at school. It has significant impacts on people. It is also a type of secondary socialisation. One way that Peer Groups are a very important agent of socialisation is to do with the Tony Sewell's study on 'cultural comports zones'. Sewell said that, often, from a young age, people make friends with, and spend time with, people culturally similar to them (for example young African themselves or Caribbean boys). This means they learn from each other, & their culture stays rigid and unchanging. Therefore, it has significant impacts on on them, throughout their lives. Peer Groups are important in socialising children in all aspects of life. Skelton & Francis looked at gendered play in schools. For example, the boys play football with each other, and the girls play with sit, chat, and plait each-others' hair—not as active. This gendered play will set stereotypes in the kids' heads that they won't lose, & so
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It has significant impacts on their views & lives.

The effect of peer group socialisation is even felt outside of childhood, and by colleagues at work. Waddington looks at 'canteen culture', & how people take influence from the behaviours and interactions of their colleagues. A key example of this is the spread of racism in the Metropolitan Police. This shows the long term effect of peer groups as an agent of socialisation; long into people's adult lives.

However, ~~some would argue~~ Primary, family socialisation could be more important than peer group. Oakley explores gender role socialisation in the family, from a young age. She ~~put~~ puts forward 4 things that influence kids, due to what their parents do: manipulation, canalisation, verbal appraisal, & different activities. Using these, boys & girls are taught what to play with (boys; cars, girls; dolls), what to be like ('little soldiers', 'little princesses'), & more. It sets stereotypes in their minds, and so has massive influences on their future behaviours. It's therefore a crucial aspect of their socialisation.

Overall, peer group is the most important

		agent of socialisation, because of how it can
		set stereotypes for life, and expand
		or limit cultural diversity in people
		and groups.

Exemplar 3 is a good example of a candidate writing too much knowledge and not enough evaluation.

The candidate developed AO1 paragraphs using the work of Sewell, Skelton and Francis and Waddington but only wrote one developed AO3 paragraph using Oakley. Candidates only need two developed points to gain full marks for knowledge or evaluation so they would have been better served stopping their AO1 points after Skelton and Francis and changing the Waddington paragraph for some evaluative paragraph instead. Therefore, this candidate had three paragraphs of knowledge and one of evaluation and so gained 4,4,3 overall in terms of the assessment objectives.

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 still just about the most popular option, and it was clear that candidates were on the whole, well prepared.

Question 5

OPTION 1

Families and relationships

5 Define and briefly explain the concept of the domestic division of labour.

[5]

The response to this question was somewhat mixed with some candidates misunderstanding the concept. The best candidates discussed how tasks are allocated within the family or home, referring to examples such as domestic tasks, housework, childcare or caring for other members of the family. This was often reinforced by studies from Oakley or Wilmott and Young. Common concepts used were dual burden or triple shift. However, some candidates did not fully grasp the 'domestic' element of the concept and began discussing changes in the workplace which was not rewarded.

Question 6*

6* Identify and briefly explain **two** ways families have become more diverse, apart from the rise in lone parent families.

[8]

Overall, this question was answered very well with many candidates able to achieve Level 3 and Level 4. Many candidates did not mention lone parent families, although one or two did and were not rewarded as per the wording of the question. The strongest responses used reasons such as diversity in terms of sexuality using sociologists such as Weeks or diversity in terms of changing roles using examples such as the genderquake by Wilkinson or women working more (Sharpe). Weaker responses gave common sense examples and did not back up their answers with sociological studies or concepts.

Question 7*

7* Explain why there are more lone parent families within society.

[12]

On the whole this question was answered very well with a large majority of candidates able to offer a range of sociological studies and concepts. The best responses included themes such as changing attitudes, increase in divorce, increased diversity and choice or changes in the position of women. Common studies used were by Giddens, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Sharpe. Some candidates evaluated where they did not need to and were not rewarded for this. Candidates should be reminded that three developed points with evidence is enough to get full marks.

Question 8*

8* Evaluate Marxist views of the family.

[20]

This question was answered reasonably well with most candidates able to grasp some form of Marxist arguments and contrast them with other views of the family. The best responses focused on the work of Marx and Engels and how the family ensures the passing on of private property as well as the work of Zaretsky and how family life is a refuge and unit of consumption. Many candidates also aligned Marxist Feminists with the question and used the work of Benston and Ansley. Evaluation was generally weaker with some candidates not evaluating at all. The best candidates offered alternative view of the family such as Functionalist or Post-modernist or offered specific critique of Marxist theory.

Option 2 overview

Of the candidates that did answer the Youth section, it was done very well with good use of theory and studies.

Question 9

OPTION 2

Youth subcultures

9 Define and briefly explain the concept of a moral panic.

[5]

This question was answered very well with most candidates able to define the concept as being the media over reaction to social groups which are seen as a threat to society. Examples were very strong and very sociological with common answers being detailed accounts of the Mods and Rockers (Cohen), Hoodies (Fawbert), or Hall's study of the mugging moral panic. On rare occasions less successful candidates detailed general media panics, such as the bulk buying of toilet roll during the pandemic and were not rewarded.

Question 10*

10* Identify and briefly explain **two** examples of delinquent subcultures.

[8]

Overall, this question was answered well with almost all candidates able to comprehend delinquency relating to any subcultures that demonstrated deviant or criminal behaviour. The best answers typically contained sociological evidence by Willis (the lads), Mac an Ghail (the macho lads), Hebdige (Punks), Skinheads (Clarke) or Blackman (the New Wave girls). Some candidates wrote short paragraphs and therefore were classed as underdeveloped and a Level 3 response.

Question 11*

11* Explain postmodern views on the development of subcultures.

[12]

This question was answered reasonably well although it was rare to see the full three developed points required to access the top marks. Most responses featured the work of Polemus and supermarket of style and Maffesoli (neo-tribes). The best candidates then added a third point of either club culture (Manchester Institute for Popular CulturePC/Redhead) or Thornton (sub-cultural capital). Very occasionally, some candidates felt the need to evaluate which was not necessary and was not credited.

Question 12*

12* Evaluate the view that ethnicity affects the subculture an individual joins.

[20]

This question was answered reasonably well with candidates seemingly better at knowledge than evaluation, often lacking the breadth and depth required to gain maximum AO3 marks. The vast majority were able to convey some sociological evidence from the likes of Sewell, Burdsey, Bourgois, Nightingale or Archer. Evaluation was mainly in the form of a counterpoint to the question with many utilising how subculture could be formed along class or gender lines. Candidates should be reminded that to reach full marks for AO3, typically four developed points are required.

Option 3 overview

A minority of candidates answered questions on the media but of those, there was a wide range of knowledge on display.

Question 13

OPTION 3

Media

13 Define and briefly explain media representations of the underclass.

[5]

This question demonstrated a good response with a focus on how the media portrays the underclass as negative and a threat to society's norms and values. Some candidates talked of how this group were demonised. This was then often followed up by examples such as Price and the rise of poverty porn, Jones and Chavtainment or the work of Golding and Middleton. Weaker responses focused solely on defining the underclass with the work of Charles Murray and less about the media representations surrounding the concept.

Question 14*

14* Identify and briefly explain **two** features of the pluralist view of the media.

[8]

Overall, there was a mixed response to this question with some candidates struggling to access the precise language to describe the pluralist position. The higher scoring responses were able to confidently discuss concepts such as diversity and choice, supply and demand, Media professionals and the media as the fourth estate of democracy. However, some candidates offered either general overview of the media or offered confused responses that often-reflected other theoretical positions.

Question 15*

15* Explain how the media can affect the audience in an indirect way.

[12]

Typically, responses were good, with only a handful of candidates getting confused as to what sociological material would be classed as indirect or direct. The best responses used evidence such as the Two-step flow model, Katz and Lazarsfeld and the role of opinion leader, cultural effects model or the drip-drip effect. Weaker candidates often presented unclear evidence regarding how a study was indirect or spent too much time evaluating which was not necessary and not creditworthy.

Question 16*

16* Evaluate the view that media representations of femininity are changing.

[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. The higher scoring candidates used sociological material such as Liberal feminism, Fourth Wave feminism, Gauntlett and Pluralism. This was then evaluated with the work of Mulvey, Tuchman or Wolf. Consistent with the other 20 mark questions, a common theme was that candidates did not evaluate enough, and often just gave one or two points when four developed points is what is required, to gain full marks for AO3.

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Question 2 Source B: Gay Pride Parade - Cardiff. © jax10289/iStock Photo

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