2012   Sociology GA 3: Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The revised *VCE Sociology Study Design* and examination structure provided greater clarity about the sociological concepts and theory being assessed by this examination. While many students' answers reflected a good understanding of these key elements of the study, additional evidence and further discussion was often required in examination responses.

Students who paid close attention to the meanings of key instructional terms, and who used ample evidence to support their answers, tended to generate better responses than students who did not.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

This report provides sample answers or an indication of what the answers may have included. Unless otherwise stated, these are not intended to be exemplary or complete responses.

Section A
Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	25	33	41	1.2

This question required students to explain the meaning of 'sociological imagination'. Strong responses noted that it provides a framework to guide objective analysis and critical thinking when examining social groups and issues.

Some students misunderstood the meaning of this concept and instead described the process of cultural relativism. It is important to be aware that, while they have an interrelationship, they are unique concepts.

The following is an example of a good response.

A term coined by C.W. Mills to describe the sociological approach to analysing issues. We see the world through a sociological imagination, or think sociologically, when we make a link between personal troubles and public issues.

Question 2a.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	5	8	19	30	38	2.9

This question was well answered by many students. It required students to explain the two major components of culture: material and non-material. In order to thoroughly address the question students needed to
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture (for example, the entire way of life of a group or society)
- explain the meaning of each component of culture, specifically
  - material culture, which encompasses the physical or tangible objects of a group (for example, missions and stations, implements, tools and clothing)
  - non-material culture, which involves the intangible symbols (for example, activities depicted on the cloak), language, values and norms (for example, the importance of family, community, traditions and land) of a group
- use evidence from the representation and other material studied throughout the year to support their explanation.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

There are two major components of culture, non-material and material. Material culture includes the physical objects of a group, which are transmitted across generations, such as, values, mores, social norms, knowledge and folkways. An example of non-material culture ... is the Dreamtime beliefs; including the belief that an eagle named Bunjil created all of the sacred lands, and these beliefs influence Aboriginal lore.

Material culture refers to the physical aspects of culture passed onto subsequent generations, such as, buildings, artefacts or spaces. An example from the article is the possum skin cloaks made by Indigenous people.

Question 2b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	5	20	51	22	**2.9**

This question required students to explore whether culture can change. In doing this they needed to make links to the 'Possum Skin Cloaks: tradition, continuity and change' representation. In order to address this question thoroughly students needed to

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of culture (for example, the entire way of life of a group or society)
- have an identifiable position and agree or disagree (or both) with the statement
- use evidence from the representation that clearly supported their position
- provide an explanation of how or in what way culture has changed or resisted change.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

Culture has the ability to evolve over time. As seen in the article, Indigenous people have been able to find new techniques 'when old ways could not be replicated'. This suggests that traditions such as marking possum skin cloaks have not changed, rather they have adjusted to compensate for methods that were lost over time. Projects such as the Koorie Heritage Trust have been put in place to preserve cultural artefacts.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	7	13	15	16	13	12	8	5	2	1	**3.9**

This question required students to examine how one past government policy was used to suppress Australian Indigenous culture. Many students appeared to have difficulty addressing this question. Some responses attempted to address each policy rather than just one. Few answers fully examined how (in what way) cultural suppression had occurred. For example, the removal of children onto missions led to the loss of language, family and connection to land.

To achieve a high score, students needed to

- demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of culture and suppression of culture
- provide an overview of the policy examined (for example, the time period, purpose and aim of the policy). Policies could have included
  - Protection and segregation – policies that resulted in the separation of Australian Indigenous people into missions and reserves based on the belief that Indigenous people were a dying race and would not survive alone in non-Indigenous society (1800s to early 1900s)
  - Assimilation – A former Australian Government policy that said the Indigenous peoples 'not of full blood' should be absorbed into the wider population. The aim of the policy was to make the 'Aboriginal problem' gradually disappear so that Indigenous Australians would lose their cultural identity (1951)
  - Integration – A short-lived policy implemented in 1965. The policy was based on the premise that Australian Indigenous people had their own culture, languages, customs and traditions that needed to be 'westernised'
- provide examples of the suppression of Australian Indigenous culture
- explain how each example led to the suppression of culture.

The following are excerpts from good responses.

Cultural suppression is when one culture dominates over another because it believes it is superior and may have economic or technological advantage. This occurred when ... the Australian Government introduced the policy of Protection ... The policy aimed 'to civilise, Christianise and above all train Aborigines on stations established for the purpose; ... to remove as many Aboriginal children from their bad environment and parental influence'.

Cultural suppression therefore occurred as the Europeans dominated the Indigenous peoples by controlling their lifestyle. As traditional languages (e.g. brabralung, meaning man belonging to language) and practices (e.g. dances, ceremonies) were not permitted, this negatively impacted Indigenous culture.

Section B

Question 4a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	1	5	94	**2**

Most students responded very well to this question. They were required to describe, using the representation, two challenges faced by Sudanese refugees.

Appropriate examples included
- they struggled to understand Australian language and culture
- reports of depression and/or feelings of worthlessness
- problems with family or ethnic violence.

Question 4b.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	6	16	37	28	13	**2.3**

This question asked students to describe one social, political or economic impact of immigration. Students were required to
- demonstrate an understanding of the meaning of immigration (for example, the movement of people from one country to another)
- explore a social, political or economic impact of immigration
- use evidence from the representation and material studied throughout the year to support their discussion.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

> *Immigration refers to the movement of people from one country to another. One social impact of immigration is the creation of a moral panic. This is the reaction of certain ethnic groups by the media who are believed to have a negative impact on social values. One example of this is the fear of 'boat people' taking Australian jobs ... An example of a moral panic is also evident in the article as Ms Nyaret states that refugees 'will put pressure on jobs'.*

Question 4c.

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	13	20	22	25	20	**2.2**

This question required students to describe Australia's diversity. To successfully address the question students needed to
- demonstrate an understanding of ethnic diversity (for example, a nation containing a range of cultural groups)
- provide specific examples of Australia's ethnic diversity from the representation or other material studied throughout the year. For example
  - from the representation: 'Rebecca Nyaret, a refugee from Sudan', 'influx of boat people'
  - external examples: the number of citizens born overseas or who have a parent born overseas, the number of languages other than English spoken at home and the range of religions practised within Australian society
- elaborate on how the examples reflect Australia's diversity.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	22	10	11	14	15	13	7	4	2	1	0	**3**

Students were required to explain how a social institution engaged with and responded to the needs of a specific ethnic group. This question was problematic for many students, who struggled with the meaning of social institution. Social institution refers to groups, beliefs or patterns of behaviour within society that are involved in the socialisation of individuals and groups. Many students did not include enough detail about the specific features unique to the ethnic group selected.

It is important to note that, for the purpose of this study, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are not considered an ethnic group. Additionally, categories such as Africans are too broad a grouping for analysis.

To adequately address the question it was necessary to
- identify and describe a specific ethnic group
- identify and describe a social institution
- outline, using specific examples, the area of concern the social institution was attempting to address
- describe, using specific examples, the ways in which the social institution engaged and responded to the ethnic group.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

The Shepparton City Council has engaged with the Sudanese in a culturally relative as they recognise their culture as unique, and the importance of cultural expression. Using the principles of the Federal Government Multiculturalism policy, they wish to celebrate benefits of cultural diversity, create a socially inclusive society, welcome economic benefits and increase and promote understanding. The Greater Shepparton Council has therefore responded to the Sudanese people in particular by implementing community strategies. As education is a common challenge faced by the refugees, libraries in Shepparton have introduced books and literature in many languages other than English (such as Arabic).

Section C
Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	10	4	9	15	16	15	14	9	6	2	0	4.2

This question required students to discuss two social, political or environmental changes that have affected the experience of a community. Students were required to
- demonstrate an understanding of community
- describe the key features of a specific community
- explain the meaning of 'experience of community'
- explain, using appropriate examples, how and in what way the experience of community has been changed.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

The Bendigo Forever Young Choir (FYC) is a choir for senior citizens … who would like to 'step out of their comfort zone' to sing 'rock' music. The experience of community refers to the feeling of belonging in a community … The FYC has managed to challenge socially well-established stereotypes such as the belief that 'old people' should retire at a certain age to do nothing, they are a nuisance and they cannot have fun … By challenging these stereotypes Laura Dusseljee makes the members feel 'inspired' and for some, they now have 'something to get out of bed for'.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	6	11	14	13	15	12	11	6	2	1	4.2

This question required students to examine the factors that help to maintain, weaken and strengthen a sense of community. It was necessary for students to refer to the theories of Ferdinand Tonnies and Manuel Castells in their responses.

In order to successfully address this question, students needed to
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of community and sense of community
- provide a brief outline of Tonnies's and Castells's theories, for example
  - Ferdinand Tonnies – late 19th century German sociologist studied how life in the new industrial cities differed from life in rural villages. Tonnies introduced two concepts that reflected the contrast between very different social experiences. Gemeinschaft (community) was used to describe a social group in which people are closely tied by kinship and tradition. Tonnies used the word Gesellschaft (society) to describe the informal and impersonal relationships that occurred within cities
  - Castells's theory of network society (2002) explores how the use of ICT in industrialised cities has improved social networks and connections between people. The internet reinforces and intensifies existing social patterns rather than poses a threat to community. The internet has the potential to provide a much broader range of social contacts and opportunities for discussion. Castells did acknowledge the potential threats and challenges of online communities; however, the research indicates that overall, ICT enhances the experience of community
- describe factors that maintain, strengthen and weaken a sense of community
- support their discussion with examples of material studied throughout the year.

The following is an excerpt from a good response.

> *Yackandandah Football and Netball club in North East Victoria has many factors that influence a sense of community. Members feel secure and that they belong to this community is maintained the Club's vision (e.g. winning the season premiership) and strong leadership (e.g. appropriate financial management) ...*
>
> *Technology is used to strengthen a sense of community. In line with Castell's theory of network society, the use of ICT (equipment used to transmit information such as computers, phones) strengthens existing relations. Emails and Facebook pages are used by the Yackandandah Football and Netball club for immediate and convenient contact.*

Section D

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	8	2	5	5	9	8	7	8	9	5	6	5	6	4	4	4	3	2	1	1	0	7.6

Many students answered this section of the examination poorly. It is important that students use ample evidence to support their discussion and avoid prepared responses that do not fully address the question being asked. In addition, it is important for students to understand and address key instructional terms, such as 'explain' (to present a careful appraisal, emphasising advantages and disadvantages and determining their importance), in order to ensure that they have fully addressed the question being posed.

Question 8
In order to answer this question fully students needed to
- demonstrate an understanding of environmental movement and social change
- provide a detailed description of the chosen environmental movement, including an overview of its establishment, activities and objectives
- show an understanding of the nature and degree of 'influence' and degree of 'social change'
- use detailed evidence studied throughout the year to support their discussion.

Relevant examples included
- the 'Sea Shepherd Conservation Society' and Operation Kimberly Miinimbi in February 2012
- 'Animals Australia' and the banning of live exports
- the 'Lock the Gate Alliance' protests about inappropriate mining.

Question 9
In order to answer this question fully students needed to
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of social movement
- provide an outline of a specific social movement and its opposition
- explain the meaning of power according to Max Weber (the ability to achieve desired ends despite resistance from others)
- discuss, using examples, the methods used by the social movement to achieve power
- discuss, using examples, the methods used by the opposition to exercise power.

Relevant examples included
- the 'Sea Shepherd Conservation Society' and the 'Yushin Maru No. 2' whaling vessel
- the Australian Indigenous Rights movement
- the Women's Rights movement.