

# 2015 VCE Sociology examination report

## General comments

Overall, student responses to the 2015 Sociology examination reflected detailed knowledge about many interesting ethnic groups, communities and social movements. This knowledge was often used effectively to generate well-written extended responses and essays. High-scoring answers were appropriately structured and used rich examples to support the discussion of key ideas.

## Specific information

**Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.**

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

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding resulting in a total more or less than 100 per cent.

## Section A

Many students defined Australian Indigenous culture in each Section A response. This was not necessary unless a question specifically asked for an explanation of what is meant by Australian Indigenous culture.

### Question 1a.

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	31	61	1.6

This question required students to identify two ways that one representation builds awareness of Australian Indigenous culture. It was answered well by most students.

Students were required to:

- provide two specific examples from the representation
- demonstrate an understanding of how awareness of Australian Indigenous culture is built.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response. The response effectively uses specific evidence from the representation and explores how the representation may help to build awareness about Australian Indigenous culture.

*The representation 'Cartoonist Danny Eastwood evens score' builds awareness about Australian Indigenous culture by allowing the public to learn of how Indigenous Australians have been misrepresented as a 'backwards race'. It also builds awareness by allowing readers to learn that Indigenous Australians 'are modern and achieve in all walks of life'.*

**Question 1b.**

Marks	0	1	2	3	Average
%	11	19	35	35	2

This question required students to propose a likely impact that the representation chosen in part a. could have on the perception of Australian Indigenous culture.

Students who referred to a different representation were unable to receive full marks for their response. High-scoring responses made reference to the following:

- the connection between the notion of perception and the representation
- how the representation was **likely** to impact upon the perception of Australian Indigenous culture.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response. This response provides specific examples about how the perception of Australian Indigenous culture may change after reading the representation.

*Perception is the way a culture is viewed or regarded. It is interrelated with awareness, as the more awareness you have of something, the more positively you will perceive it. Allowing the public to know of how Indigenous Australians are misrepresented in cartoons, allows the public to understand that Indigenous Australians are not this way, hence encouraging the public to empathise with the Indigenous Australians who were unfairly represented. It also allows the public to view Indigenous Australians as equals.*

**Question 2**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	4	5	14	22	32	14	8	3.5

This question required students to discuss how a single representation could be interpreted as ethnocentric and/or culturally relativistic. They were required to refer to one of the representations in their response.

To receive full marks for this question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism
- acknowledge that a representation can have multiple interpretations
- explore how a representation can be both ethnocentric and culturally relativistic
- use evidence from one of the representations to support their response.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response. This response accurately identifies that an individual's cultural background should be considered when interpreting a representation. In addition, the student has correctly noted that the representation has both ethnocentric and culturally relative features.

*Ethnocentrism refers to the practice of judging another culture by the standards of one's own culture. Ethnocentrism often promotes an uninformed and stereotypical perception of a culture. However, cultural relativism refers to the practice of judging a culture by its own standards. This promotes a more objective analysis of a culture and also promotes understanding. 'Parade audience gets protest message' could be interpreted both as ethnocentric and culturally relativistic, as it shuns what Australia Day means to non-Indigenous Australians, but also informs of what Australia Day (Invasion Day) means to Indigenous Australians. The way in which this representation is interpreted depends on the cultural background of an individual, and how objectively ... they analyse it.*

**Question 3**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Average
%	6	6	9	13	17	13	13	11	8	4	4.5

This question required students to discuss how Australian Indigenous peoples responded to one government policy that suppressed their culture. In doing so, they were also required to use evidence from material that they had studied this year.

In order to answer this question fully, students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of culture and cultural suppression
- identify and outline the key features of a government policy that had suppressed Australian Indigenous culture
  - Protection and segregation
  - Integration
  - Assimilation
  - Northern Territory Intervention
- outline how the policy had suppressed culture
- discuss the Australian Indigenous response to the policy
- use evidence from material studied throughout the year to support their discussion.

Many responses did not fully explore the meaning of culture, and many students needed to provide more detailed explanations of the ways in which Australian Indigenous peoples responded to attempts at cultural suppression.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

*Assimilation is a former Australian Government policy, which said that Indigenous peoples “not of full blood” should be absorbed into the wider population. The aim of this policy was to make the “Aboriginal problem” gradually disappear so that Indigenous Australians would lose their cultural identity ... Australian Indigenous peoples responded to the 1951 Assimilation policy in a number of ways ... for example, the Wiradjuri tribe, who continued to build mia – mia (shelters), and tell the Dreaming story of Billadurang.*

**Section B**

Some responses referred to religions such as Muslim or Sikh as ethnic groups. Religions are not ethnic groups. Schools should be mindful of the groups that students select as case studies prior to engaging in research.

**Question 4a.**

Marks	0	1	2	Average
%	7	66	27	1.2

This question required students to provide a definition of ethnic hybridity. In order to receive full marks for this question it was necessary to note that the concept was introduced by Stuart Hall.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*Ethnic hybridity, as defined by Stuart Hall, is the formation of new cultural forms which result from a process of individuals making connections across, and choosing elements of different cultures.*

**Question 4b.**

Marks	0	1	Average
%	14	86	<b>0.9</b>

This question required students to provide a specific example of ethnic hybridity from the representation, 'From bikini to "burqini"'.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

*An example of ethnic hybridity in the representation is the 'burqini', which allows Lebanese-Australians like Mecca to embrace her love for swimming while respecting her traditions as a Lebanese-Muslim.*

**Question 5**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	13	8	14	21	20	16	8	<b>3.1</b>

This question required students to explain how a social institution from the representation responded to the needs of an ethnic group. High-scoring responses referred to a social institution rather than a group. The 'Islamic Sport & Swimwear shop', for example, is a group rather than a social institution.

To achieve a high score, students needed to:

- make reference to a specific ethnic group (e.g. Lebanese-Australian or those of Arab heritage)
- correctly identify a social institution (i.e. Surf Life Saving Australia)
- outline a specific need of an ethnic group (e.g. a desire to participate in beach culture)
- discuss the interaction between the social institution and the ethnic group
- use material from the representation to support their discussion.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

*Social institutions are groups that use formal and informal means to maintain cohesion in society. An example of a social institution that responded to the Lebanese community's needs is Surf Life Saving Australia. In order to 'widen the racial mix' on the beach, and hence reduce the animosity between them and the dominant Australian community, Surf Life Saving Australia introduced a 10-week course, which allowed for the Lebanese community in Sydney to have interaction with others and show how they 'always have the Australian lifestyle'. This therefore allowed the Lebanese community to become less isolated.*

**Question 6**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	8	18	19	17	37	<b>2.6</b>

This question required students to explain how the concept of the 'other' relates to race and ethnicity.

In order to fully address this question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of the 'other', race and ethnicity
- outline the connection between these sociological terms.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

*The 'other' can relate to race and ethnicity as a group of people are often labeled as the other based on how they look, or their ethnic background.*

**Question 7**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Average
%	14	11	15	17	17	12	9	6	3.1

This question required students to explain why, within the context of ethnicity, an ethical methodology is important when conducting research. It was necessary for students to explain with reference to a specific ethnic group they had studied throughout the year.

In order to successfully address this question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of ethical methodology
- explain why the use of ethical methodology is important when conducting social research
- provide evidence relating to a specific ethnic group case study
- identify and explore specific ethical principles
  - voluntary participation
  - informed consent
  - privacy
  - confidentiality.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

*The ethnic group investigated was the Vietnamese Ethnic group, specific to the Brimbank region ... I obtained informed consent from my participants by requiring them to sign a consent form. This outlined the study ("This study is focused on the experiences of an ethnic group in Australia"), how it would be done (through interviews), and ensured that the participant was aware of their right to withdraw at any time. By having ... my participants, sign the forms, I ensured they were aware of their rights, and I could assure them that their information would not be misused.*

**Section C****Question 8**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	4	9	12	18	19	16	12	4	2	5.6

This question required students to discuss how a sense of community can be inclusive and exclusionary at the same time. It was necessary to refer to factors that maintain, weaken and strengthen a sense of community. Students needed to use the representation and/or material that they had studied throughout the year to support their discussion.

Students' responses needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of community and sense of community
- explore the factors that maintain, weaken and strengthen a sense of community
- discuss how a sense of community can both include and exclude individuals
- use evidence from the representation and/or material studied throughout the year to support the discussion.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

*A sense of community (examining the experiences rather than structure of a community) can be inclusive and exclusive at the same time depending on how an individual relates to a specific community. For those living in the Docklands in 'The 3000-strong vertical community, the sense of community is inclusive. This is supported by Shaun Bassett's comment, 'we've got a real community down there' ... He has been living there for 14 years, which would suggest his experience of community is strengthened. However, 'other tenants of high-rise areas continue to complain of segregation from their neighbours' ... Isolation from individuals and living in 'high-rise' areas may contribute to a sense of exclusion, weakening the sense of community.*

**Question 9**

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	3	7	9	12	12	15	12	10	5	5	5.1

This question required students to evaluate the impact of two changes on a community they had studied. Appropriate examples related to economic, social, political and environmental change that had a positive and/or negative impact upon the community.

Students' responses needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of community
- make reference to a specific community
- identify and outline two changes experienced by the community
- explore and assess the impact that the changes had on the community
- use evidence relating to the experiences of the community to support their evaluation.

The following is an excerpt from a high-scoring response.

*An example of a community is the rural country town, Marysville in Northern Victoria. This community had an environmental change, being the natural disaster of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires. Before the fires, Marysville thrived off tourism, had beautiful hiking trails and a strong sense of community and belonging. After the fires the town lost 90% of its buildings including the police station, the primary school, the kindergarten and many businesses. The community was economically destroyed and grief stricken due to the population of 300 being halved.*

**Section D**

Question chosen	none	10	11
%	4	75	21

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	Average
%	5	2	2	3	6	5	7	8	8	7	6	7	8	5	7	4	3	3	2	0	1	9.1

It is important to note that some students appear to be confusing the campaigns carried out by social movements with the actual movement. For example, the White Ribbon campaign involves a series of actions carried out by males to attempt to end male violence against women. When students are exploring a movement it is important to articulate what the movement is, for instance, the movement to prevent men's violence against women, rather than the movement being referred to as 'White Ribbon'.

**Question 10**

This question required students to explore how power was used by a social movement and its opposition in its current stage. Students were required to focus on a single social movement in their response.

In order to answer this question fully, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of social movement and power (as defined by Max Weber)
- explore the use of power by a single social movement
- explore how power was used by the social movement's opposition

- connect the use of power to the stage of a social movement (i.e. emergence, coalescence, bureaucratisation or decline)
- use detailed evidence studied throughout the year to support their response.

### **Question 11**

This question required students to analyse the different ways in which social movements come into being. Students needed to make reference to sociological theory in their response.

In order to answer this question fully, it was necessary to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of social movement
- analyse how the deprivation and new social movement theories account for how social movements come into being
- make reference to more than one social movement
- use detailed evidence studied throughout the year to support their response.