2020 VCE Sociology examination report

General comments

In 2020 the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority produced an examination based on the *VCE Sociology Adjusted Study Design for 2020 only*.

Responses to the 2020 VCE Sociology examination paper included a range of interesting and engaging case studies and school-based examples. Students who produced stronger responses referred to both representation material and sourced external evidence as directed.

Time management appeared to be a challenge for some students. Students are encouraged to avoid overwriting during Section A of the examination paper at the expense of Section B.

Following are some important features of the VCE Sociology Study Design that were often overlooked:

- Definitions of key concepts, such as culture and ethnicity, are explained in the introduction to each area of study.
- A religion (e.g. Christianity, Judaism, Islam) is not considered to be an ethnicity.
- Australian Indigenous cultural groups cannot be studied as an ethnic group case study.
- Social movements examined for individual case studies need to be explored in their current context.
- Government policies (e.g. the Sex Discrimination Act) are not considered to be a social movement.

Specific information

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

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	2	5	16	42	35	3.0

This question required students to define 'culture' and to identify its associated components. In doing so, students needed to make a connection to the cultural expression of language.

This question was answered well by many students. Those who made explicit links to the representation material to support their answer produced higher scoring responses.

For full marks, students were required to:

- define the concept of culture (i.e. the entire way of life and/or shared experiences of a group or society, including ideas, values, knowledge, rules and customs shared by members of a collective)
- identify material (i.e. physical) and non-material (i.e. symbols, values, norms) culture as the components of culture
- make the connection between language and non-material culture
- make links to the representation (e.g. 'more than 250 languages', '120 still being spoken', '18 learned').

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	3	3	12	24	28	20	10	3.7

This question required students to explain the public misconception that Australian Indigenous people share one culture. Students needed to refer to Representation 1 and material studied throughout the year.

Many students answered this question well. Stronger responses explained why the misconception had evolved. Weaker responses did not support their response with external evidence.

For full marks, students needed to:

- explain the nature of the misconception (i.e. that Australian Indigenous culture is homogenous)
- explain that the misconception is false
- suggest why there might be a misconception
- support their response with evidence from the representation (e.g. 'Most people didn't know that there was more than one language')
- support their response with evidence studied this year (e.g. Australian Bureau of Statistics data relating to the number of Australian Indigenous nations or languages).

The following are excerpts from high-scoring responses:

This misconception is indeed false as Australian Indigenous culture is in fact multicultural not monocultural. This can be seen in Representation 1 where it states that before colonisation 'there were more than 250 Indigenous languages'.

In her book 'Welcome to Country' – Marcia Langton refutes the past perception that Indigenous Australians are monocultural highlighting that before European arrival there were more than '600' languages.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	3	9	20	33	35	2.9

This question required students to explain why sociologists prefer to focus on the concept of ethnicity rather than race.

Many responses provided sound explanations of the meaning of the social categories. Fewer responses examined why the concept of ethnicity was preferred.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of ethnicity (i.e. a social group categorised by a distinctive way of life with set customary values such as language, history, customs, religion, ancestry, dress and food)
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of race (i.e. a social category of people who share biologically transmitted traits that society deems important such as skin colour or facial features)
- explain why 'ethnicity' as a concept is preferred over 'race'. For example:
  - Race assumes that groups are culturally homogenous, while ethnicity recognises distinct differences between individuals.

- Race is based on outdated social Darwinist theories of biological differences.
- Race can promote ethnocentrism, whereas ethnicity encourages a more culturally relative approach to the study of cultural groups.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	9	18	25	19	16	8	5	2.6

This question required students to explain the theory of ethnic hybridity. In doing so, links to the 'experience of ethnicity' were needed.

Many students confused the notion of ethnic hybridity with the concept of multiculturalism. Stronger responses made explicit links to how ethnic hybridity connected to the experience of ethnicity.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the theory of ethnic hybridity according to Stuart Hall (i.e. a process where individuals develop connections across cultural groups. People identify with, and chose elements of, more than one culture that then forms a blended ethnic identity)
- provide two examples of ethnic hybridity
- link the examples to the experience of ethnicity.

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

For participant 2, the experiences were less positive as an immigrant from Malta in the 1960s. He was encouraged to adapt and rid himself of the characteristics that made him Maltese, for example 'he was expected to understand and speak English' which made schooling troubling and 'severely affected his general wellbeing'.

Question 5

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	7	11	28	29	25	2.1

This question was answered well by many students. They were required to use the material from Representations 2 and 3 to explain how the creation of a new playground affected the experience of community.

For full marks, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of what is meant by 'experience of community'
- provide an example of how the playground may have had two or more impacts on the Ridgetoun community (e.g. 'more flexible and welcoming space', 'boost community connectedness').

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

The Ridgetoun playground may have a social impact on the experience of community as it may allow individuals to build close bonds with one another. This recreational area will allow young children to frequently interact … by providing them with a 'happy play area' that will 'boost community connectedness'. Thus individuals will have a positive experience of community as their sense of belonging will increase.

Question 6

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	6	4	8	16	27	20	18	3.9

This question asked students to identify factors from Representations 2 and 3 that could influence feelings of inclusion and exclusion.

Stronger responses drew on evidence from both representations and outlined how the factor could lead to inclusion and/or exclusion.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of inclusion (i.e. belonging and connectedness, sense of security, identity, belonging and support)
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of exclusion (i.e. experiences of isolation, alienation, anger or resentment)
- identify a factor from each representation that could influence feelings of inclusion and/or belonging (e.g. age of the community members)
- explain how each factor may lead to feelings of inclusion or exclusion.

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

The experience of community refers to what it is like to belong and participate in a community. This has been impacted by social changes, being the adjustments to views, values and patterns of interactions within the Ridgetoun community. It has allowed for social connectedness through the increase in the availability of relationships for 'junior students' primarily the14.9% of the community who are able to have more interactions … as prior there would have been little means or reason to interact.

Question 7

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	Average
%	20	10	16	22	32	2.4

This question required students to outline two social movement emergence theories, supported by examples of specific social movements.

Stronger responses provided key features of each theory and linked this to a specific social movement. Lower scoring responses included examples that did not accurately link with the emergence theory.

Students were required to:

- identify and provide an outline of deprivation theory
- provide an example of a social movement whose emergence could be explained by deprivation theory (e.g. the Australian Suffragettes, Australian Marriage Equality and Black Lives Matter)
- identify and provide an outline of new social movements theory
- provide an example of a social movement whose emergence could be explained by new social movements theory (e.g. Greenpeace, the Schools Strike 4 Climate and the Hong Kong pro-democracy movement).

Question 8

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	Average
%	12	8	12	17	23	16	10	3.2

This question required students to compare the purpose of alternative and revolutionary social movements.

Many students appeared to find this question challenging and did not compare the types of movements. To compare, students needed to ensure that they had examined both similarities and differences between the movements. Outlining each theory with a conjunction (e.g. whereas, however, alternatively) is not sufficient.

To successfully address the question, students needed to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics of alternative social movements (i.e. social movements that seek limited societal change, which target a small group of people and a specific behaviour of individuals)
- provide an appropriate example of an alternative social movement (e.g. People Against Distracted Driving)
- demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics of revolutionary social movements (i.e. social movements that try to effect complete and radical change for the whole of society)
- provide an appropriate example of a revolutionary social movement (e.g. the French or American revolution)
- compare characteristics.

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

Alternative movements operate at the individual level and advocate for specific and minor changes to individuals. For example, 'Mum's Against Drunk Driving (MADD) aims to encourage individuals to change specific behaviour, drink driving. In contrast the purpose of a revolutionary movement is to completely overturn existing societal structures. For example, the French Revolution, which targeted all members of society … Revolutionary movements are the most extreme in terms of their purpose, while alternative is the least extreme.

Section B

Question 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	6	8	12	18	17	16	11	7	5	2	1	4.0

This question required students to explore how either the historical suppression policies or reconciliation had shaped views of Australian Indigenous culture.

Lower scoring responses indicated an awareness of, rather than the views of, Australian Indigenous culture. Higher scoring responses explained how views were shaped (e.g. through political leaders or the media in general challenging or reinforcing stereotypes).

Those who examined the impact of the historical suppression polices were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of 'views' (i.e. opinions or perception)
- demonstrate an understanding of what it means to 'shape views' and how this might occur
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of historical suppression (i.e. the domination of one culture over another through deliberate policy)
- provide an overview of one example that suppressed Australian Indigenous culture (i.e. protection and segregation policies and/or assimilation policy)
- use relevant sourced evidence to show how Australian Indigenous culture was suppressed
- explore how the example of suppression may have shaped public views of Australian Indigenous culture.

Those who examined the impact of reconciliation were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of 'views' (i.e. opinions or perception)
- demonstrate an understanding of what it means to 'shape views' and how this might occur
- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of reconciliation (i.e. process of recognising injustice and inequity to improve the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians)
- provide an overview of one example of reconciliation (either practical or symbolic)
- use relevant sourced evidence to support the exploration of reconciliation
- explore how the example of reconciliation may have shaped public views of Australian Indigenous culture.

Question 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	13	5	11	17	18	15	10	6	3	1	1	3.7

This question required students to analyse the experience of a specific ethnic group. They needed to explore the uniqueness of the groups' material and non-material culture, and cultural activities.

Lower scoring responses did not show how the examples of culture and activities were unique to the ethnic group. Higher scoring responses supported their analysis with appropriate primary and/or secondary sources of evidence.

Students were required to:

- provide an overview of one ethnic group
- provide an overview of material culture unique to the ethnic group
- provide an overview of non-material culture unique to the ethnic group
- provide an overview of cultural activities unique to the ethnic group
- describe how and/or why the examples of culture (and activities) are unique to that ethnic group
- explore the link between the experience of the group and the examples of culture and activities
- suggest how the experiences were positive and/or negative
- use relevant evidence to support their analysis.

Question 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	9	7	12	20	18	16	9	5	3	1	1	3.7

This question required students to analyse the impact that information and communication technology has had on the traditional concept of community.

Higher scoring responses dealt with the concept of rather than the experience of community. Further, students' answers indicated an appreciation that information and communications technologies had not been invented when Tonnies theorised about community.

Students were required to:

- demonstrate an understanding of the concept of community
- provide an overview of the traditional concept of community as described by Ferdinand Tonnies in 1887
- explore the concept of *Gemeinschaft*
- explore a contention about how information and communication technology affected the traditional concept of community (e.g. that the definition of what is a community has expanded to include electronic form and activity)
- explore how the concept has changed from the traditional concept outlined by Tonnies to a more modern definition that includes both online and geographically based groups and connections
- use relevant sourced evidence to support their analysis.

Question 4

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	12	7	13	21	17	15	8	4	2	1	1	3.4

Many students wrote about interesting social movements studied within their current context, as required by the VCE Sociology Study Design. Higher scoring responses were able to show how the nature, purpose and current stage were connected. For example, if a social movement is in the decline stage of the social movement 'lifecycle', it has either achieved or failed to achieve its purpose.

Students were required to:

- provide a general overview of one social movement (i.e. Who started the movement? When did it start? Why did it form? What type of social movement is it?)
- provide a general overview of the social movement's purpose (i.e. its goals, aims and/or desired social change)
- identify the current stage of the social movement (i.e. emergence, coalescence, bureaucratisation or decline)
- explore the link between the current stage of the social movement and the ability to achieve its purpose
- use sourced evidence to examine the social movements' goals, resources, use of power and/or methods to achieve social change.