



**CARIBBEAN
EXAMINATIONS
COUNCIL**

SOCIOLOGY

UNIT 1



**Subject Report
with
Exemplars**

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**REPORT ON CANDIDATES' WORK IN THE
CARIBBEAN ADVANCED PROFICIENCY EXAMINATION®**

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**SOCIOLOGY
UNIT 1**

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	4
Paper 01 — Multiple Choice	5
Paper 02 — Essay Questions.....	6
Module 1 Question 1 — Sociological Concepts, Perspectives and Methods	7
Module 2 Question 2 — Social Institutions: Family, Religion and Education	9
Module 3 Question 3 — Social Stratification.....	11
Paper 03 — School-Based Assessment (SBA)	12
Section One.....	12
Introduction/ Background and Definition of Research Problem	12
Aims and Objectives.....	12
The Literature Review	13
Section Two.....	13
Research Design.....	13
Sociological Perspective.....	14
Selection of Sample.....	14
Data Collection Tool.....	14
Section Three	15
Presentation of Data	15
Analysis of Data.....	15
Section Four	15
Discussion of Findings and Conclusion	15
Bibliography	16
Summary Observations and Recommendations	16

INTRODUCTION

Sociology Unit 1, entitled The Sociological Perspective, is subdivided into three modules. Assessment is based on three papers — Paper 01 (30 per cent), Paper 02 (50 per cent), and Paper 03 (20 per cent). All three modules are tested in each paper.

Paper 01 consisted of 45 compulsory multiple-choice items based on each of the three modules in the respective units. Each item was worth two marks, for a maximum of 90 marks.

Paper 02 consisted of three sections/modules, with two essay questions each. Candidates were required to answer three questions, one from each section/module. The maximum mark awarded for each question was 25.

The overall quality standards by which candidate responses were assessed for the Paper 02 essay questions were as follows.

Response Level	Assessment	Marks Earned
Level 1	Outstanding or exemplary	25
Level 2	Excellent	22–24
Level 3	Very good	19–21
Level 4	Good	16–18
Level 5	Satisfactory	13–15
Level 6	Limited	10–12
Level 7	Unsatisfactory	00–09

In Paper 03, the School-Based Assessment (SBA), students were required to undertake a research project. Students were allowed to carry forward their SBA marks from Unit 1 to Unit 2 and vice versa. The SBA reports were marked by the subject teacher and samples forwarded to CXC for moderation at the marking site.

Paper 01 — Multiple Choice

This paper consisted of 45 multiple-choice items — 15 items each on Module 1, Module 2 and Module 3 — which is then weighted to 90. Performance on Paper 01 was generally satisfactory. Approximately 89 per cent of candidates scored at least 50 per cent of the available marks on this paper. The mean score on the overall paper was 64.33 or 71.48 per cent of the total marks. The average score was 69.2 per cent for Module 1, 76 per cent for Module 2 and 69.19 per cent for Module 3. The range of the scores was 8 to 44, with standard deviation 6.83.

Paper 02 — Essay Questions

The paper consisted of three compulsory essay questions, one from each module. Candidates had to complete the questions in two and a half hours. The questions were designed to test candidates' knowledge and comprehension, their ability to apply and analyse as well as to synthesize and evaluate their views from a sociological perspective.

Approximately 63 per cent of candidates scored at least 50 per cent of the available marks on this paper. The mean score on the overall paper was 81.40 or 54.27 per cent of the total marks. The average score was 58.19 per cent for Module 1, 48.88 per cent for Module 2 and 55.73 per cent for Module 3. The range of the scores was 0 to 69, with standard deviation 12.10.

Module 1 Question 1 — Sociological Concepts, Perspectives and Methods

There are three main approaches to understanding society: functionalism, conflict theory and interactionism. Compare and contrast any two of these sociological perspectives and discuss how they evolved over time. Also, state which one of these perspectives is more relevant to Caribbean societies today.

Specific Objectives 1 ,2, 3

Content 1(b), 2, 3(a), (b,) (c)

This question proved to be somewhat challenging. It was divided into three parts and candidates did not adequately address all parts. In some instances, candidates only attempted the first two parts. The response level ranged between Levels 2 and 4. Overall performance statistics indicate a mean score of 58.2 per cent. One candidate gained full marks on the question, while 41 candidates did not score any marks.

Candidates were able to provide very good explanation of the tenets of the sociological perspectives and addressed the first part of the question, comparing and contrasting the perspectives. Most candidates had a good understanding of the functionalist perspective, conflict theory and interactionism. Most candidates chose to discuss functionalism and conflict theory and were able to adequately explain the theories and examine how they have evolved.

In instances where candidates discussed the interactionist perspective, this was poorly done. These candidates were not able to effectively state the relevance of the theory to Caribbean society. Candidates could have improved their responses by discussing the contributions of notable interactionists such as Max Weber, George Herbert Mead, and Charles Cooley, among others, in a comparative way.

In answering the last part of the question which required candidates to state which of the perspectives is more relevant to the Caribbean, candidates needed to have an analytical approach. Candidates needed to include examples that are current and relevant to Caribbean society when explaining the two theories selected.

Generally, candidates were able to provide a good evaluation of the selected theories and make comparisons between them. However, candidates were unable to adequately apply the theories to Caribbean societies. Some of the better candidates mentioned that the mainstream perspectives evolved based on political, social and economic activities in Europe and North America, but that there are some aspects that are applicable to the Caribbean. In a few cases, deliberations on the topic as purported by Carl Stone, M.G. Smith and George Beckford were mentioned. It must be noted that several responses were very 'textbook' in nature and did not relate to current events. The knowledge was evident, but application and analysis were lacking.

Candidates' responses emphasized the classical theories, providing evidence of key concepts and an understanding of the main tenets of the theories. In a general sense, there was discussion on the pros and cons of applying these theories to the Caribbean reality. However, little was mentioned of the Caribbean theorists in the discussion. Where Caribbean islands were mentioned, the reference was limited to Haiti, Jamaica, and Trinidad.

It is recommended that teachers pay greater attention to training students in decoding questions to achieve much better results. More practice in essay writing would also be beneficial to the process.

Module 2 Question 2 — Social Institutions: Family, Religion and Education

Using the discourse on family in the Caribbean, discuss the reasons for the high incidence of matrifocal or female-headed families in contemporary Caribbean societies.

Specific Objectives 1, 2, 3 Content 1(a), (b), (c)

For this question candidates were required to give a general overview of reasons for the high incidence of matrifocal or female-headed families in contemporary Caribbean societies. The main theorists and literature on matrifocality were to be discussed in historical context in relation to any Caribbean society.

Candidates were expected to define the major concepts within the stimulus statement (matrifocal or female-headed families). Matrifocality is reflected in various households within Caribbean societies and the candidates were supposed to explore reasons for the high incidence and persistence of matrifocality. Additionally, Candidates were also expected to show awareness of the impact of the colonial experience such as the plantation system and the impact on contemporary Caribbean societies.

Responses ranged from unsatisfactory to outstanding. The bulk of responses were in the Level 4 to Level 7 range (0-18 marks). A few responses fell within the Level 1 to Level 3 range (19 -25 marks). Overall performance statistics indicate a mean score of 48.92 per cent. One candidate gained full marks on the question, while 25 candidates did not score any marks.

Most candidates displayed a basic understanding of the concepts and defined the family (George Peter Murdock's definition) and the matrifocal family. Many candidates were able to identify the functionalist perspective, briefly alluding to Oscar Lewis (the culture of poverty), Edith Clarke, Herskovitz and Nancy Gonzales. However, theories were supported mainly with anecdotal evidence. A few candidates were able to incorporate relevant statistics related to the Caribbean matrifocal family.

Those candidates with more than a basic understanding of the family and the matrifocal family demonstrated their knowledge of the literature of Caribbean theorists and their application in explaining the matrifocal family in contemporary Caribbean society. Candidates also adopted a gendered approach by discussing the feminist perspectives and male marginalization along with other factors. In contrast, some candidates displayed superficial knowledge of Caribbean family forms and briefly mentioned socio-economic issues that lead to the formation of matrifocal families such as abandonment, death, divorce, and migration.

Higher-order responses to this question were demonstrated, as some candidates illustrated excellent comprehension of the relevant concepts. These candidates showed how the matrifocal family persists today because of our colonial experiences. These candidates spoke to Herskovitz, R.T. Smith, M.G. Smith,

Edith Clarke, the plantation society, and the impact of African retention. Further, in more than one instance, Caribbean theorists were used to provide greater insight into the matrifocal family in Caribbean society. In these cases, the application of knowledge was generally very good to outstanding.

It is recommended that teachers give students more guidance and practice in sociological essay writing and place more emphasis on Caribbean theorists and studies since generally, students could not relate the knowledge they had to the contemporary Caribbean matrifocal experience. For example, very few students mentioned the impact of education and globalization on the changing role of women in society.

It is also recommended that students focus on the quality of their handwriting and the use of language.

Module 3 Question 3 — Social Stratification

“Every society needs to have some fair mechanism for role allocation. Social stratification is a device whereby societies ensure that the most important positions are filled by the most competent and qualified persons” (Davis and Moore, 1945). Critically assess this functionalist view of social stratification.

This question required candidates to evaluate the relevance of the functionalist theory of stratification. Davis and Moore argue that the most difficult jobs in any society are the most necessary and require the highest rewards and compensation to sufficiently motivate individuals to fill them. Once the roles are filled, the division of labour functions properly, based on the notion of organic solidarity. Functionalism assumes that the system of social stratification is fair and rational.

Social inequality among different strata in the amounts of scarce and desired goods and the amounts of prestige and esteem they receive is both positively functional and inevitable in any society. At face value, Davis and Moore’s theory of stratification appears a simple, clear, and valid explanation of inequality and social stratification in societies. But this view is flawed in some instances. Davis and Moore do not clearly indicate why some positions should be worth more than others, other than the fact that they are remunerated more. For example, teachers are equally, if not more, functionally necessary than athletes and movie stars, yet they receive significantly lower incomes.

It is also not the case that those who get the best qualifications go on to get the highest incomes. Some people can access high salaries without proper qualifications (family connections). While at the same time, there are high levels of graduate unemployment and underemployment. Education is a little more work oriented today, with increasing amounts of vocational courses.

Most responses ranged from satisfactory to good and there were some very good essays. Above average candidates showed evidence of reading widely and managed their time wisely in the examination room. These candidates gave proper examples and used facts and sociological data/references effectively. In contrast, there were candidates who had limited empirical data and used basic information on social stratification to support the question.

Candidates demonstrated knowledge of the mainstream theories as they explained the understanding of the quotation used in the question. Generally, in support of the responses given, there was good use of knowledge, research and sociological terms; sound interpretation and application of data (analysis/evaluation); and effective use of local data/examples from the Caribbean.

Candidates are encouraged to read widely as well as practise examination questions. Obtain recent studies and local regional data reports and statistics and relevant topics to the Caribbean. Proper references such as the author and year would be helpful. Teachers should give guidance to all students and help them learn to manage their time wisely.

Paper 03 — School-Based Assessment (SBA)

The topics for the CAPE Sociology SBA remain broad and diverse. Most of the topics chosen for the projects in Unit 1 were appropriate but there were a few instances where they were more suitable for Unit 2. Examples of this were topics such as juvenile delinquency and social groups. Appropriate Unit 1 topics includes issues focusing on the family, education, religion, social media and social groups. An example of a broad topic in Unit 1 one was “the impact of increasing violence in schools”.

As is customary, the quality of projects this year ranged from poor to excellent.

Detailed comments on CAPE Sociology SBA projects submitted this year are presented as a cohesive report and therefore this summary applies to both Units 1 and 2.

Section One

Introduction/ Background and Definition of Research Problem

This section was done quite well across both units. Introductions for which students were not awarded full marks lacked clear scope and rationale and/or did not clearly explain the stated problem in the Caribbean context or in the context of the territory where the study was being conducted. Students must be encouraged to narrow the scope of their studies and give some background to the scope, and not just the issue.

Aims and Objectives

This area was one of the most inconsistent across projects. In some SBAs, the objectives were clearly stated. In other instances, the objectives were presented as questions. In addition, some aims and objectives were not separated and as such were not discernible. This issue was very common this year. Also, students needed to write one aim and three objectives; however, many students either wrote two aims and two objectives or three aims and one objective.

In some projects, the aims were not broadly stated but had specificity which is more appropriate for objectives. Students should be guided by the syllabus which states that the aim identifies the general aspects of the issue being studied, whereas the objectives are to be specific and measurable. Students should also be guided and advised to use action verbs when writing their aims and objectives. Teachers should expose students to verbs which are best suited for expressing aims and those best suited for expressing objectives. Aside from these issues, some students presented aims and objectives that were well done.

The Literature Review

The literature reviews in this year's SBAs were generally well written. Most reviews were comprehensive, referred to the key theorists, and presented current and relevant studies on the topic under investigation but some lacked critical elements expected in this section. One area where students had challenges was the omission of studies or theories relevant to the Caribbean context. It must be noted that Caribbean experiences assist with clarifying the purpose of the SBAs.

In some instances, arguments were presented in the literature review without references, or the recommended referencing format was not followed. In addition, conciseness was evident in most SBAs, but some students included multiple definitions of terms. Also, in some projects, the literature review was not structured around the objectives of the study and as such, students were unable to refer to their literature in the discussion of findings. There were cases too where students presented annotated bibliographies as literature reviews. The literature review should really be a synthesis of the theories, perspectives, and empirical works on the topic under investigation. Moreover, arguments presented in the literature review should be supported by sociological evidence and prior works done by established authors.

Section Two

Research Design

Like previous years, most students presented comprehensive research designs and related the method being undertaken for their research to the appropriate technique (Quantitative to Questionnaires). However, students must be encouraged to make sure that the research design (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) and techniques are adequately explained (definition, advantages, disadvantages, how it will be/was used) and that they are accompanied by a detailed rationale.

The instruments selected for most designs were appropriate, but in some cases, students did not describe an instrument that was compatible with the research design. In some cases, students did not describe their data collection tool, analysis techniques, and the steps used to conduct both. Teachers and students are reminded that a brief discussion of the sampling technique should be included in this section.

The research design should also be a section that describes the entire process used to arrive at conclusions. Students must note that quantitative techniques attract objective instruments and probability sampling techniques. Qualitative studies are more subjective and attract non-probability sampling techniques. Students in most centres were not clear about this difference.

Sociological Perspective

This area showed noticeable improvement this year. Most students understood and presented clear explanations of the theories and perspectives underlying their research. The theoretical approach to justify their data collection technique was also evident in most SBAs.

The greatest drawback in this section was the students' inability to adequately apply the sociological perspective to their research plan. Students should be encouraged to write the sociological perspective so that it speaks to whether the study is conducted from an interpretivist or a positivist perspective. It should also be applied to the context of the study and reflect the intended outcome. It is also expected that students would use this section to mention relevant sociological theories and adequately explain them in the context of the project.

Selection of Sample

Some students were able to identify their sampling technique and justify why it was selected. Many students excluded the steps used to select their sample. In addition, some students failed to even identify the population from which the sample was drawn. Teachers should encourage students to make sure that the sampling technique selected supports the research design. It must be noted that non-probability samples, except convenience sampling, are not typical of quantitative studies. Quantitative methods usually attract probability techniques. Students should make sure that both the sampling method and the technique chosen are adequately explained (definition, advantages, disadvantages, how it will be used) along with a detailed rationale.

Data Collection Tool

The data collection tools presented were commendable for the most part. Like last year, many of the instruments were comprehensively written and appropriately sequenced, showing a variety of techniques such as Likert scales. The shortcomings of this section were that some instruments had too many yes/no questions. Other instruments had an average of between 9 and 10 questions. The variables in most studies were evident in the instruments; however, in some studies, some variables were excluded from the instrument.

Teachers should encourage students to make sure that their instruments and research methods are compatible and that their sampling and research methods are also compatible, so that their instruments are appropriate. Students should also ensure that their quantitative instruments are not predominantly composed of qualitative items. It must be noted that quantitative instruments with categorizations/groupings must have mutually exclusive groups, for example, 11–14 then 15–19. Also, students should present a cover letter with the instrument.

Section Three

Presentation of Data

Like previous years, students scored well in this area. Most diagrams were well designed, labelled, and accurate. However, there were cases where inappropriate graphs such as line graphs and pictures were used. In a few instances, students used only one or two types of graphs to display their data, mostly pie charts and bar graphs. In a few other cases, students presented only pictures for their data presentation. Even though pictures can be used, they should be used along with charts and diagrams.

The CAPE Sociology syllabus stipulates that at least three different graphs be used to present data. Teachers should encourage students to use the appropriate data presentation techniques based on their research design, accurately label all charts and graphs and provide a description of what is depicted. Some students did not provide a description of their graphs and in some instances, did the data analysis under the presentation of data. The data analysis is a separate section and should be presented separately. Also, the axis of all bar graphs must be accurately labelled and students should not present raw data.

Analysis of Data

Many students presented outstanding analyses of data. In some exemplary cases, trends, patterns, and correlations were adequately described. However, some students lacked the ability to present the required explanation for their results, while some explained results that were not presented. Some students erred by including the literature in the analysis. In some cases, students focused on explaining their charts and avoided analysing the expected trends, relationships, and anomalies found in their data.

Students needed to make the necessary connections among their findings. Analysing information involves examining it in ways that reveal relationships, patterns, trends, comparisons etc. that help to better understand the overall situation.

Section Four

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

Most students did a phenomenal job in this section which included plausible conclusions and recommendations. However, in some cases students failed to relate their findings to the aims and objectives, the literature reviewed, and the sociological theories/perspectives used in the study. In a few cases, students only presented a conclusion.

Teachers should encourage students to make specific reference to content in the literature reviews when they are discussing their findings. It must be noted that only literature presented in the literature review should be used to substantiate findings in this section. Also, students should comment on whether the

results were expected for each set of findings. If appropriate, students should also note any unusual or unanticipated patterns or trends that emerged from the results and explain their meaning in relation to the research problem.

Bibliography

Like previous years, the appropriate referencing formats stipulated for the bibliography were not followed. While some SBAs had well prepared bibliographies, there were some with only URLs and bulleted references. Some references were not alphabetized, and the spacing and formatting were inaccurate. For improvement in this section, students should use the CXC/CAPE recommended referencing formats and include all references presented in the text.

Summary Observations and Recommendations

There were obvious disparities among the samples moderated and while most CAPE Sociology criteria were met, in other cases there were grave anomalies.

Additional observations and recommendations include the following.

- Students were awarded marks for areas even though they were presented under other sections. Teachers and students are reminded that all areas of the SBA must be presented as stipulated by the CAPE Sociology SBA guide.
- Students must follow the appropriate writing format. Teachers need to share this format with students before and during the preparation of the SBA. This includes font types, style, size, and spacing, all of which are critical to ensuring the readability of the SBAs.
- Teachers are encouraged to place greater emphasis on the SBA work being undertaken by students. Teachers need to review the SBA project in parts to give guidance throughout its preparation and then review again prior to the final submission for marking. Too many of the submissions for moderation appeared not to have been reviewed by the teacher. More guidance also needs to be given to students in the choosing of their topics. The variables must be measurable and within the scope of the unit.
- SBA projects should be labelled with students' names and centre numbers. Teachers should guide students as it relates to this.
- There were instances where sections of SBAs from some centres were identical, or all SBAs moderated had similar topics. It is recommended that teachers supervise the SBA writing process from beginning to end so they can guide students regarding their topics and their submissions.
- There were cases in which all the SBAs submitted were the same. Upon investigation, it was revealed that the SBAs were done as group projects, but students were advised to submit their SBAs individually. Teachers are reminded that, for group projects, they are to upload one SBA

which should identify all members of the group, that is, names and candidate numbers should be specified.

- Students should not be awarded zero or one mark for communication if the information presented is grammatically correct and legible.
- Overall, the SBAs were good. Specific areas that needed improvement are the analysis of findings, and the presentation of data. This is especially as it relates to the models used, the conversion from raw data to percentages and the proper labelling of axes.
- There was an instance where the same SBA structure was perpetuated across projects, exhibiting the same errors. Teachers are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the structure and requirements for the projects so that they can guide students appropriately.