

Markscheme

November 2025

Social and cultural anthropology

Standard level

Paper 1

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The following interpretation of the markscheme is offered as an example of the types of responses we may expect, however it is not prescriptive or exhaustive, and other possible answers should be appropriately rewarded if relevant.

1. Define the term **status** and describe how it can be understood and applied in the context of the passage. [4]

Possible ways of defining the term status:

This question requires candidates to demonstrate conceptual knowledge and understanding of the term **status** and apply it in relation to the text. Candidates may write in terms of any of the following guidelines, but other definitions or applications will also be acceptable if made relevant to the context of the passage. Stronger responses may also develop a critical discussion of the concept.

- Status as a socially defined aspect of a person, which entails certain rights and duties in relation to others, making clear how statuses are embedded in systems of stratification or inequality
- Status as a position in a social system, relating it to the closely linked notion of role.
- Distinction between ascribed and achieved statuses
- Status as a synonym for social honour or prestige (utilizing Weber)
- The notion of embodied status
- The concept of master status.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples of description and application:

- Assumptions about the differential status of persons based on inferred race
- Whitening as status enhancing when this is applied by police officers to individuals
- Differential treatment of arrested persons based on (moral etc.) assumptions of their status dependent on ideas about race (e.g., of the pizza-eater and ticket-thief)
- Assumed status of victims when deciding whether or not to arrest police officers for killing innocent civilians
- Status of the policemen
- Assumptions about White fathers as workers who contribute to the maintenance of the institution of the family and to capitalism / economic productivity.

Other appropriate applications should be credited.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response demonstrates a basic knowledge and understanding of the concept. There is a partial application of the concept in relation to the text.
3–4	The response demonstrates sound knowledge and understanding of the concept; the concept is described in detail. The concept is clearly applied in relation to the text.

2. Analyse the ethnographic data presented in the passage using the concept of **power**. [6]

This question requires candidates to develop an analysis and explanation of the ethnographic text using the key concept of **power** to help make sense of the ethnographic data. In order to do this, candidates are required to demonstrate an understanding of the key concept and use it to discuss relevant issues within the context of the passage, developing an analysis with reference to the ethnographic data of the extract.

Possible ways of defining the key concept:

- As an essential part of social relations, as a person's or group's capacity to influence, manipulate or control others and resources
- Involving distinctions and inequalities between members of a social group
- In relation to its capacity to produce subjectivities
- In relation to hegemony and resistance
- In relation to authority and legitimacy
- In relation to race, class, and social positions
- Terms such as discourse, ideology, social control, structural power, symbolic power, discipline, symbolic violence, habitus, and agency, may be utilized in the response.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples and ways of analysing:

- Power illustrated through structural violence of the police system (e.g., treating those arrested differently based on assumptions of “race” and the moral associations linked to these, sending the Black teenager to detention centre but releasing the White father with no penalty)
- Racist and classist biases of the police officers in positions of power resulting in lethal violence against innocent individuals (the couple shot by the police because the latter assumed they were Black, unemployed, and therefore criminal)
- Tension between agency and structure (e.g., difficulties experienced by the detective in deciding whether or not to arrest police officers for killing an innocent couple)
- Knowledge and power
- Structural inequality of Brazilian society (e.g., processes of cultural exclusion, unequal access to justice)
- Symbolic violence
- Power as innate in Whiteness.

Other appropriate examples and ways of analysing should be credited.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response offers a common-sense or superficial understanding of the key concept. There is an attempt to relate the key concept to the text, and some ethnographic examples are presented but these are only partially relevant.
3–4	The response demonstrates an understanding of the key concept and establishes its relevance to the text. There is an analysis of the text using the key concept, although there are some inconsistencies. Relevant ethnographic examples from the text are presented to support the analysis.
5–6	The response demonstrates a clear understanding of the key concept, discussing this in the context of the text. There is a clearly explained analysis of the text using the key concept and a detailed interpretation of the ethnographic data. Clear and explicit ethnographic examples from the text support the analysis.

3. Compare and contrast the ways in which the key concept of **society** or **identity** is evident in this passage with how it is evident in **one** other ethnographic example you have studied. [10]

Candidates are expected to show an ability to think about the text in relation to other contexts and to draw explicit comparisons. In order to do this, responses must demonstrate an understanding of how either the key concept of **society** or **identity** relates to this ethnographic context. The key concept on which such comparison may be drawn should be made explicit and clearly linked to any anthropological issues raised by the text.

The target societies for this comparative question are varied and many. Candidates should be able to establish a relevant comparison with one other group or society based on the key concepts in the question. The response should be structured as a comparison, highlighting similarities and differences. Candidates must situate the comparative case in terms of place, author, and fieldwork context.

For society, possible ways of defining the key concept include:

- the way in which humans organize themselves in groups and networks.
- as created and sustained by social relationships among persons and groups.
- a human group that exhibits some internal coherence and distinguishes itself from other such groups.
- a group or network that may share common interests and have a distinctive culture and institutions.

Possible examples from the text about society may include:

- the police may be said to constitute a “society” within the larger society as a group that exhibits some internal coherence, and distinguishes itself from other groups
- differences in power / status and agency between groups in a society which is demonstrated by differences in how they are treated by the police (preferential treatment for White fathers, assumptions of criminality for those assumed to be Black)
- _the state power to classify and create social identities within hierarchical categorizations
- absence of society (common interests/internal coherence/networks) for persons of different races when arrested and/or in police custody.

For identity, possible ways of defining the key concept include:

- either the individual’s private and personal view of the self—this is sometimes referred to as the “*moi*”—or the view of an individual in the eyes of the social group
- group/collective identity, which may take the form of religious identity, ethnic identity, or national identity for example
- the identification with one’s own culture and self-reflection of the way one is to live in a given socio-cultural environment
- considered as a source of both cohesion and conflict, and can alternately represent sameness or difference, be an imposition or a choice, singular or fractured, and static or fluid
- the tension between the idea of an innate, stable identity and the “postmodern” construction of identity as an amalgam of multiple incoherent and unstable selves
- “hybrid” identities, in which the idea of rigid group boundaries has given way to the sense of movement between multiple identities
- identities which may be invented, challenged, denied, or sustained for political and other purposes
- identity-based violence, xenophobia, multiculturalism, and social movements known as “identity politics,” in which groups advocate legal recognition of their identities.

Other appropriate definitions should be credited.

Possible examples from the text about identity may include:

- as dynamic and subject to change, “whitening” is possible (e.g., the couple shot by police whitened when it became clear that they were both employed and parents)
- as the justification for how a person is treated by the police / institutions (e.g., absentee but White father / Black teenager)
- as likely to increase the risk of violence, including lethal violence used against particular individuals based on their assumed identity (e.g., couple shot by police)
- as a protection from arrest (e.g., in the case of police officers – with a professional identity of law officer - who might not be arrested even when they have committed crimes against innocent citizens).

Any other relevant point of comparison used from the text should be credited.

OR

4. Compare and contrast the approaches to research adopted by the anthropologist in this passage to the approaches to research used by **one** other anthropologist you have studied. Make reference to concepts and ethnographic material in your answer. **[10]**

Here, candidates are expected to show an ability to think about the text with emphasis on the methodological and theoretical perspectives of the ethnographer as the focus on which such comparisons should be established.

By “approaches to research” the question essentially refers to the research methods used by the anthropologist to gather data. However, as theory is required for level 5–6 and above, it is expected that candidates will also discuss theory with reference to approaches.

Possible comparative examples regarding approaches may include:

- participant observation
- informal/ethnographic interviews
- qualitative methods
- insider/outsider; emic/etic; local categories/analytical categories
- access to the field
- positionality
- field relationships; power dynamics
- representation.

Any other relevant point of comparison used from the text should be credited.

Identification of ethnographic material includes: fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s)*, group(s) studied, and ethnographer(s).

*fieldwork context refers to when the fieldwork was carried out regardless of the publication date of the material.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented but in limited detail; relevance is only partially established. The response is not structured as a compare and contrast. The identification of ethnographic material is missing.
3–4	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented and although this is in limited detail, its relevance is established. The response is structured as a compare and contrast, but this is not balanced and lacks detail. The identification of ethnographic material is partially complete.
5–6	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is established and explained. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast; however, either comparison (similarities) or contrasts (differences) are explained in detail, but not both. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
7–8	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is clearly established and explained in detail. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast with comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences) being discussed in detail, although this is not balanced. The response demonstrates anthropological understanding. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
Capped marks	If fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s), group(s) studied and ethnographer(s) have not been fully identified, no more than 8 marks will be awarded.
9–10	Comparative ethnography or approaches are presented; relevance is clearly established and discussed in detail. The response is clearly structured as a compare and contrast with comparisons (similarities) and contrasts (differences) discussed critically. The response demonstrates anthropological understanding. The identification of the ethnographic material is complete.

5. What does it mean to be a person? Discuss with reference to **at least two** sources of ethnographic material **and** examples from the passage.

[10]

This question requires candidates to develop an argument that is built on an understanding of the following “big anthropological question”: **What does it mean to be a person?** This response should develop discussion and analysis and should be supported by making reference to the passage and by relevant, detailed ethnographic material that gives evidence of the understanding of this big question in different cultural contexts. This big anthropological question should be the very backbone of the response.

In the development of their response, candidates may make reference to a number of ideas or propositions connected to the question. Listed below are some points that may appear in candidates’ responses. However, any other relevant lines of thought should be rewarded.

Possible issues to develop an argument may be:

There are many different ways that candidates can approach this question, and any valid discussions of the strengths and limitations of anthropological endeavour is acceptable. While it is not possible to predict how candidates will use any additional ethnographies, in relation to the passage they may focus on:

- different types of personhood
- materiality / physical aspects of the body
- relations of different types of person to/in official institutions
- nature of personhood as malleable (shifting) and context-dependent
- the cultural construction of the individual human being, the “self”
- person as a subject of rights, legal position, and status
- in relation to dignity and respect
- as the embodiment of set social relationships
- experiences of violence / exclusion of categories of persons in society.
- as a culturally and historically constituted notion and subject to change regarding what constitutes a “person” (as opposed to a non-person) / or types of persons (human, non-human) / or degrees of personhood (disabilities, impaired personhoods).

Other appropriate discussion and arguments should be credited.

Identification of ethnographic material includes: fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context(s)*, group(s) studied, and ethnographer(s).

*fieldwork context refers to when the fieldwork was carried out regardless of the publication date of the material.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1-2	There is limited understanding of the big anthropological question. The response refers to ethnographic material; relevance to the question is superficial or not established. There is no reference to the passage. The identification of ethnographic material is missing.
3-4	There is partial understanding of the big anthropological question. The response presents some ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question, but this lacks detail. There is no or limited reference to the passage. There is an attempt to analyse and interpret the ethnographic material in relation to the big anthropological question, but this lacks clarity and coherence. The identification of ethnographic material is partially complete.
5-6	There is an understanding of the big anthropological question. The response presents a range of ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is some reference to the passage. There is some analysis and interpretation of the ethnographic material and passage in relation to the big anthropological question but there is a limited or undeveloped argument. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
7-8	There is clear understanding of the big anthropological question in different cultural contexts. The response presents detailed comparative ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is clear reference to the passage. Analysis and interpretation supports the development of an argument; however minor inconsistencies hinder the strength of the overall argument. The identification of ethnographic material is mostly complete.
Capped marks	If fieldwork location(s), fieldwork context, group(s) studied and ethnographer(s) have not been fully identified, no more than 8 marks will be awarded.
9-10	There is a clear understanding of the big anthropological question in different cultural contexts. The response presents detailed comparative ethnographic material and establishes its relevance to the question. There is clear reference to the passage. Analysis and interpretation supports the development of a reasoned argument; any minor inconsistencies do not hinder the strength of the overall argument. The identification of ethnographic material is complete.