

**A LEVEL**

**Examiners' report**

# **SOCIOLOGY**

**H580**

For first teaching in 2015

**H580/01 Autumn 2020 series**

## Introduction

Our examiners' reports are produced to offer constructive feedback on candidates' performance in the examinations. They provide useful guidance for future candidates.



Reports for the Autumn 2020 series will provide a broad commentary about candidate performance, with the aim for them to be useful future teaching tools. As an exception for this series they will not contain any questions from the question paper nor examples of candidate answers.

The reports will include a general commentary on candidates' performance, identify technical aspects examined in the questions and highlight good performance and where performance could be improved. The reports will also explain aspects which caused difficulty and why the difficulties arose, whether through a lack of knowledge, poor examination technique, or any other identifiable and explainable reason.

A full copy of the question paper and the mark scheme can be downloaded from OCR.

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## Paper 1 series overview

Due to the pandemic and the awarding of centre assessed grades in the Summer, the Autumn examinations were an opportunity for candidates to sit the examination to improve their centre assessed grades. This year was therefore an unusual one and led to a very small number of candidates actually taking the examination. Overall the responses were good with a wide range, suggesting that the paper differentiated appropriately. All candidates attempted to answer all questions and generally managed to time their responses well. There were no rubric errors and candidates seemed overall well prepared, knowing the Assessment Objectives of each question. As usual, the Families and relationships option and Youth subcultures were the most popular, with only a handful of students choosing the Media option.

In Section A, the use of the sources continues to be answered well with most candidates engaging with both sources and interpreting them well. The link to wider sociological knowledge for the Source question is also improving but candidates still need to pay some attention to this (see key point call out below). The best responses signpost exactly what they are referring to, e.g. 'In Source A...' In Section B, candidates showed a good understanding of the demands of the questions, particularly when and when not to evaluate.

<i>Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:</i>	<i>Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• signposted their answer well, e.g. 'In Source A...'</li> <li>• knew the demands of each question and how much to write</li> <li>• used studies, theory and concepts well</li> <li>• had clearly practised under timed conditions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• gave 'common sense' answers with no evidence</li> <li>• got confused with key concepts and terminology</li> <li>• over-evaluated, e.g. providing three paragraphs of evaluation for Question 3</li> <li>• spent too much time on low tariff questions.</li> </ul>

With every question, in order to achieve marks in the highest mark band, candidates need to include a range of sociological evidence and to discuss these with some depth. Some responses, particularly the 20 mark questions in Section A and the 24 mark question in Section B, did not include the required range and depth of sociological evidence. 'Evidence' can include studies, theories, concepts and contemporary examples, although it should be noted that responses which rely heavily on contemporary examples will not score very highly because on their own, contemporary examples are not good sociology. Candidates and teachers should also be mindful that when marking, examiners will annotate every point made and decide whether it is developed, underdeveloped or undeveloped – this will then provide a guide for the mark given.

### *Key point call out*

Question 2 requires references to both sources and to wider sociological knowledge. Therefore, a good technique is to signpost your answer into three paragraphs dealing with firstly Source A, secondly Source B and then the wider sociological knowledge. This then makes it clear how you are satisfying the mark scheme.

In terms of Assessment Objectives, Knowledge and Understanding (AO1) remains the strongest area; strong responses were able to offer a whole range of sociological knowledge, mainly in the form of concepts and studies, but sometimes making relevant use of sociological contemporary theory. AO2 (application) is also strong with most candidates able to successfully apply and interpret sociological evidence or stimuli – this was particularly seen on Question 2. However, it should also be noted that Question 2 still requires wider sociological evidence with some candidates solely focusing on the sources. In terms of AO3 marks (analysis and evaluation), a variety of ways of achieving this was seen ranging from counter arguments to a question or specific individual criticism to a previous point. On occasion, some candidates are still over- or under-evaluating on particular questions. Only one developed point of evaluation is needed for Question 3 and the 16 mark questions with three points of developed evaluation typically seen for the 24 mark essay questions.

### *Key point call out*

Evaluation can take many forms and there are different ways to gain marks. Typically evaluation can be a point going against the question or may directly criticise a previous point a candidate has just made. Evaluation is needed for Question 3 and 5/8/11 where typically one developed point is needed and Question 6/9/12 where typically three developed points are needed.


## Section A overview

This section comprised three compulsory questions that all candidates needed to answer, with one question needing the source to be used and referenced.

The first compulsory question is only worth six marks. Values was clearly explained as being general principles or shared beliefs that were desirable or worthwhile and this was credited as being the core meaning. The best candidates were able to provide a core meaning, two examples and three development points to get full marks. Occasionally, some candidates got confused and gave examples that were norms – this was not credited.

The 12 mark question required candidates to both engage with the source and to also use their wider sociological knowledge. To a large extent it is still only the source part of the question that was referred to in most responses. The best responses were able to discuss how primary socialisation progressed through to secondary socialisation. This was then further developed with links to Oakley regarding the family or Sewell in relation to cultural comfort zones. Some candidates were also able to use the photographs in Source B to discuss the relationship to formal social control or age related transition points. Weaker responses included common sense discussions which were just lip service and repeated the information in the source. There were a few responses that contained no reference to wider knowledge.

The 20 mark essay questions require students to outline and evaluate and on the whole candidates did this well. The most common responses used studies by Johal, Brah, Nayak and Gill for knowledge and were able to gain full development with the depth of their explanations or the use of concepts, e.g. Brasian or White wannabes.

	<b>Misconception</b>	Occasionally, there was too much evaluation with candidates providing several developed points when one would be enough.
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## Section B overview

Candidates had the option to select whether they did further questions on Families and relationships, Youth subcultures or the Media. Most opted for the Families and relationships or Youth subcultures. On occasion, some candidates were also employing a strategy in answering higher mark questions first in order to give them the appropriate amount of time and not leave higher mark questions to the end.

## Option 1 overview

Families and relationships is still very popular and it was clear that candidates were well prepared particularly in terms of theory and studies that they were able to recall.

In the first of the family questions, most candidates could provide two reasons for the increase in cohabitation with changing social attitudes, individualisation and the rise of confluent love being the most common. The best responses referenced sociologists such as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim and Giddens and sometimes data from the British Social Attitudes Survey was used. Some weaker responses were unable to provide evidence and therefore provided unsubstantiated comments or anecdotal evidence such as the cost of wedding getting higher.

The 16 mark essay was reasonably well answered with most candidates providing sociological evidence that children have more power than parents in family life. Typically the work of Furedi and pester power,

the emphasis on child centredness and the notion of various laws focusing on children's rights were common features. Evaluation often focused on parents still making the major decisions in family life or how children suffer abuse by other adults and the dark side of the family. On occasion, some candidate over-evaluated when only one developed point was needed.

The 24 mark essay was answered extremely well and appeared to be relatively straightforward. The best candidates used the Functionalist argument of the nuclear family being positive for society or the New Right perspective on the nuclear family being stable and desirable. Evaluation typically took the form of diversity arguments to emphasise how the nuclear family was not strong and so Postmodern research or Feminist critique featured heavily.

## Option 2 overview

The Youth subcultures section was just as popular as the Families option and was generally done well with good use of theory and studies.

Most candidates were able to answer the 12 mark question well with two clear reasons why females had been largely absent from the study of youth subcultures. A few weaker responses articulated themes about mainstream research and also bedroom culture but did not have the conceptual language or the exact sociological research to elevate their answers.

The 16 mark essay was answered well and often featured the work of Mac an Ghail, Sewell, Miller and Messerschmit. Candidates were often able to write three developed points on the r and there was a good use of concepts such as focal concerns and hyper masculinity.

The 24 mark essay was answered very well with the Marxist/Neo-Marxist position almost always articulated in terms of knowledge. In evaluation, alternative positions to conflict were given such as the Postmodern perspective or Functionalist view.

## Option 3 overview

Only a handful of candidates answered questions on the media but they were answered reasonably well. Candidates were able to recall specific terminology and use a range of theory and studies in their answers.

In the 12 mark question all candidates were able to offer two ways that representations of masculinity were changing. There were also some good examples from contemporary magazines and television programmes.

The 16 mark question was answered reasonably well with candidates providing some sociological evidence that media representations of the upper class are positive. In evaluation, the postmodern position was given about increasing media choice and about how representations of the upper class are changing.

The 24 mark essay was answered very well and appeared to be straightforward. The best candidates used indirect models such as the cultural effects and the two-step flow model in terms of knowledge. This was often then further reinforced with selective filter model and uses and gratifications model. Evaluation was typically robust using the work of the Hyperdermic syringe model, Bandura, Ross and Ross and the drip drip effect to criticise.

## Key teaching and learning points – comments on improving performance

To improve performance, it is important that candidates know the demands of each question and typically how long to spend on each question. The 'mark a minute' rule is a good indicator of how long to be spending on each question, e.g. 6 minutes for the 6 mark question and 24 minutes for the 24 mark question. This can guide candidates to not be spending too much time on low mark questions and should help them finish the paper in time. Finally, candidates are often unaware that they can make a plan or make notes on their answer booklet. Although they do not contribute to the marks allocated, planning is to be encouraged for the higher mark questions as spending 30 seconds writing down their thoughts can keep candidates on track and illustrate at a glance where their essay is going.

## Guidance on using this paper as a mock

This paper covers a wide range of the specification and is also straightforward so would be an excellent as either a full mock exam paper or could be split into sections. The paper can be completed in the time set and would hopefully give confidence to students that had revised. The paper can also be used to practise specific skills, e.g. the essay questions can be used to specifically develop evaluation, or Question 2 can be used to develop source work. Teachers could also use the paper to highlight each of the command words for each question and decode what each question is asking for.

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