OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

A LEVEL

Examiners' report

SOCIOLOGY

H580

For first teaching in 2015

H580/02 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.

i	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 2 series overview

This was an unusual year due to the pandemic and the awarding of centre assessed grade in the Summer. Autumn was an opportunity for candidates to sit an examination to improve on their centre assessed grades and thus only a small number of candidates chose to take the examination. Overall, the standard of answers illustrated a range of abilities, which suggests that the paper was differentiated appropriately.

Most candidates attempted to answer all questions and managed their time well. In particular, this year candidates seemed to reduce time spent on shorter answer questions to allow more time for extended response questions. As in previous sessions, there was a mix between candidates choosing to start with Section A or Section B but unlike in previous sessions, this does not seem to have impacted on their ability to address all questions in the paper.

Candidates who achieved high outcomes on this paper were able to illustrate their knowledge and understanding, they wrote in depth and used a wide range of sociological evidence to develop their ideas. At this end of the mark scheme, candidates were able to develop explicit evaluation points, supported with evidence.

For some candidates, there was often a lack of precise sociological knowledge, with some unable to apply sociological studies and/or concepts. Some relied heavily on contemporary examples and struggled to effectively use source material beyond lip service.

Candidates who did well on this paper generally did the following:	Candidates who did less well on this paper generally did the following:
• explicitly referred to source material to support their answer, e.g. 'In Source A ..' • used time effectively to meet the demands of the question • supported answers with studies, theories and concepts • included clear and explicit evaluation where required.	• over relied on contemporary examples • struggled to interpret and/or use source material to support their ideas • lacked explicit evaluation.

Section A overview

This section was generally answered to a good standard.

Question 1

This was the first question paper in the series using a source which focused on qualitative data. To achieve full marks on this question, candidates needed to outline two clear conclusions which could include 'feeling socially excluded', for example, and to then support their answer with evidence from Source A. Most candidates were able to outline at least one conclusion and were able to use text from Source A to support their conclusion.

Very few candidates were unable to achieve in this question. Weaker responses tended to copy large chunks of text from the source with no engagement with the precise nature of the question being asked.

	AfL	In questions such as this, clearly outline the conclusion first for example 'One conclusion is …', followed by 'this can be supported by Source A…' at which point text can be taken directly from the source to support their answer.

Question 2

This question was answered well overall; candidates were able to clearly identify two ways the findings may be used and were able to engage with the source material. Some candidates struggled to focus on the precise nature of the question which required them to identify how findings could be 'used' and instead referred the research method used to collect them or described the findings with no discussion as to how they could be used.

	Misconception	In previous exam papers candidates have been asked to consider why a particular research method or sampling technique has been used. It is important to read questions carefully, rather than to rely on what has previously been seen in past exam papers.

Question 3

On the whole candidates addressed this question well, with most able to correctly identify one advantage and one disadvantage.

AO2: candidates were able to explicitly apply material from Source A to support ideas such as identifying the precise size of the sample to illustrate lack of representativeness. Those who scored lower in this assessment objective tended to copy out the question or refer to the title of the source.

AO3: in order to fully develop ideas, candidates need to use methodological evidence. As in previous sessions, some candidates are merely 'dropping' in a range of concepts without explaining how or why they are relevant. Very few candidates wrote more than one advantage and one disadvantage.

	AfL	Each idea should be separated into its own paragraph. Then, when developing an advantage or disadvantage, a methodological concept should be used to support the idea.

> ### *Key point call out*
>
> When questions ask for a specific number of ideas, students need to make sure that they are not repeating ideas and that they are clearly signposting each one.

Question 4

Most candidates were able to answer this question reasonably well, with many focusing on the required number of minimum ideas – two advantages and two disadvantages. As in previous sessions, most candidates were able to use methodological concepts with many including both interpretivism and positivism.

This question asked candidates to refer to secondary quantitative data, few were able to explicitly refer to secondary data and mainly focused on the quantitative aspect of the question.

Source B tended to be used well in this question to explicitly support ideas for example when discussing patterns and trends candidates explicitly referred to higher rates of success in gaining places at Russell Group universities for students from independent schools.

> ### *Key point call out*
>
> Use methodological concepts for each point being addressed.
>
> Each point should be supported with a methodological concept or approach.

Section B

Question 5

For this question, candidates needed to discuss four fully developed ideas from at least two different forms of discrimination, the most common were gender, ethnicity, social class and age.

Some candidates struggled to focus on the precise question which was to focus on the area of work and employment. Some focused on education or family roles for example, many did this successfully by addressing how this could then impact upon work and employment. Some, only outlined discrimination in education and family without relating it to the precise nature of the question.

Question 6

Most candidates were able to discuss age inequalities with many being able to accurately apply a range of sociological explanations such as disengagement theory and Weberian theory. Evaluation tended to be via juxtaposition. Some candidates relied heavily on contemporary examples and lacked the precise sociological knowledge and understanding to fully address this question.

Key teaching and learning points – comments on improving performance

When using source material in Section A, it is good practice to 'lift' precise information from the source to support ideas. Use model answers to illustrate how simply 'dropping-in' sections of the source without explaining why it is relevant or copying out the question is not good application.

Use past papers to highlight the importance of focusing on the precise nature of the question. This would enable students to better understand the requirements of each question and how much they need to include for example when a question asks for 'two conclusions'.

When practising exam style questions, use a range of types of sources using both quantitative and qualitative data for section A.

Outline the difference between juxtaposition and explicit evaluation. Particularly for questions such as 'evaluate different sociological explanations', simply stating 'Marxists disagree with feminists' or using 'however' is not good evaluation. Candidates need to identify and explain how explanations can be challenged and the differences between them to move up through the mark bands.

ⓘ	**OCR support**	OCR has published past papers and exemplar candidate materials on the website .
		Candidate exemplars for 2018 for example are published on the website.
		2019 Exemplars and past papers will remain on Interchange until 2021 for you to use.
		The guide to assessment on Interchange will also be useful and discusses juxtaposition.

Guidance on using this paper as a mock

This exam paper could be used as a full mock exam for students or split into sections. It covers a range of the specification and can be completed in the time set. It would be particularly useful for highlighting the use of a qualitative source for Question 1 and the use of one advantage and one disadvantage in Question 3. In addition, it can help to highlight and address the nature of assessment objective 3 within Question 6 by focusing on the difference between juxtaposition and direct evaluation.

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