



GCSE EXAMINERS' REPORTS

**SOCIOLOGY
GCSE**

AUTUMN 2020

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Unit	Page
Component 1: Understanding Social Processes	1

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COMPONENT 1: UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL PROCESSES

General Comments

A relatively small number of candidates opted to take the 2020 Autumn examination. Considering the disruptions to education in the preceding year, many of the candidates who entered the examination displayed a pleasing grasp of sociological knowledge and understanding of concepts and theory. The majority of candidates were able to access most questions to a varying degree. As with last year, the paper proved a good differentiator particularly with the essay questions. Weaker candidates were able to gain marks on the lower tariff questions and were usually able to identify the debate in the essay question and to engage in basic discussion. Stronger candidates were able to identify the different sociological arguments and theories and to analyse and discuss them with understanding and to provide sociological studies as evidence. As with last year, the most successful candidates displayed ability in all three skills.

Comments on individual questions/sections

- Q.1 Most candidates received 4/4 marks.
- Q.2
- (a) Most candidates were aware of the meaning of cultural diversity.
 - (b) Most candidates were able to identify an example of cultural diversity from the passage. An example from outside the passage was not rewarded.
 - (c) Most were able to explain that differences in culture show that humans are taught culture. Many candidates only gained one mark. For two marks, the explanation should be developed and there are examples in the mark scheme how this could be achieved.
 - (d) Most candidates were able to identify two ways in which schools socialise children. The most common were the use of sanctions and the hidden curriculum. Candidates often did not go on to explain how these socialised children.
- Q.3
- (a) Candidates displayed a better understanding of gender identity than in the examination last year. Most were aware that the term refers to the way they or others see them in terms of male and female.
 - (b) Most candidates were familiar with how the media socialises children into gender roles. The answers were an improvement on a similar question on the family last year and were more focused on the process. Most candidates focused on role models and stereotypes. Some lost marks by not providing examples.
 - (c) Most candidates were able to explain at least one way how families socialises children into ethnic identities and focused on the teaching of language and the teaching of religion.

- Q.4 (a) Most candidates were able to attempt this question but did not pinpoint that it refers to having only one partner at a time.
- (b) Some candidates displayed a pleasing knowledge and understanding of relevant concepts and theories and wrote about families supporting capitalism by buying the products of capitalism, teaching children to be obedient and focusing on the 'cult of private life'. However, some candidates displayed a basic confusion asserting that Marxists valued families because they supported capitalism. These answers seemed unaware that Marxists are critical of the family.
- (c) Most candidates were able to identify two reasons why fewer couples are choosing to get married, the most common being improvements in the position of women and changing norms/attitudes. The best answers developed the reasons and explained the link to fewer couples getting married. Candidates who identified more than two reasons tended to score lower marks because they did not develop the reasons. Answers with sociological concepts and appropriate language were likely to score the highest marks.
- (d) This is a more demanding question as, unlike previous questions, it requires discussion and evaluation. Candidates were required to explain and discuss different views and sociological theories on the view in the question. Most candidates were able to do discuss reasons why the nuclear family may be considered to be under threat but very few candidates challenged this view and presented arguments/evidence to the contrary. The better candidates presented arguments supporting the view with reference to sociological theory/evidence and sociologists and then challenged this view. Very few candidates left this blank, with the weaker candidates gaining some marks by describing the growth of different family forms.
- Q.5 (a) Most candidates knew what anti-school sub-cultures were and were able to show how they could lead to underachievement through absence, not working etc.
- (b) Surprisingly very few candidates scored highly on this question. Many identified the feminist view that schools are patriarchal but did not go into detail on this. Those who evaluated the Feminist view were not credited as there are no AO3 marks for this question.
- (c) This question was generally well done. Most students had some knowledge and understanding of the hidden curriculum and were able to explain how it could affect achievement. Candidates focused on the hidden curriculum passing on gender, class and ethnic messages and also on preparing pupils for work.
- (d) As with question 4d, this question required discussion and evaluation and these skills were more evident in the answers to this question than in answers to question 4(d). Most candidates recognised the view in question as Functionalist and were able to explain the view and then challenge it with alternative views and evidence such as labelling; ethnocentrism, material and cultural factors. At the higher levels, answers need references to sociologists and sociological theories and some candidates were well versed in these.

- Q.6 (a) Few candidates scored highly on this and many were unclear about the meaning of sampling.
- (b) Candidates who knew what ethical issues were usually scored highly on this question.
- (c) Responses to this question were mixed. Some were weak and undeveloped with little use of sociological language/concepts. Those who used concepts often strung them together and did not demonstrate understanding of the terms. Better answers referred to the strengths and weaknesses of structured interviews and linked them to the concepts of validity; ethics; representativeness and reliability.

Summary of key points

- The more successful candidates used sociological terms and concepts with understanding and expressed their answers using sociological language.
- There was a pleasing knowledge and understanding of sociological theories.
- Many candidates were able to quote sociologists and their research with accuracy, using evidence to back up their points.
- Candidates need to be clear which answers require AO3 skills.



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