



GCSE AQA 9-1 Sociology

Studying Society and Research Methods



Model responses to 3-4 Mark Exam
Style Questions

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ANSWERS**

1. Identify and explain one example of a social structure (3)

A social structure is any part of society where people are related by some common things. For example, a family is a social structure because it ties a group of people together who must interact with each other. Social structures are important in society for society to function.

2. Describe what sociologists mean by culture (3)

Culture is the way of life of a people. It is based on learned norms and values in any society. For example, British culture is focussed on British ideas of fairness and democracy while North Korea has a culture of control and strict behaviour.

3. Describe what sociologists mean by functionalism (3)

Functionalism is a way of explaining society and how social institutions function. Functionalists in sociology include Emile Durkheim and Talcott Parsons. Functionalism is a consensus theory which means they see different parts of society working each other to ensure the survival of society.

4. Describe what sociologists mean by bourgeoisie (3)

Bourgeoisie is the upper class. According to Marxists, they own the factories and the land and the companies and are at the top of society. So they control wages and salaries and have lots of power over the working class.

5. Identify and explain one difference between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat (4)

One major difference is the difference in wealth. The bourgeoisie is the upper class and they own much more than the proletariat which means they can afford more and even have more power because they can use their money to get them ahead in life. The proletariat is more likely to work for the upper class so they have less wealth and therefore less power.

6. Identify and explain one criticism of functionalism (4)

Marxists believe that functionalists only see the positive side of social institutions like the family and education. The family is important for primary socialisation but is not perfect as there is a dark side of the family based on abuse and violence. Functionalists see schools as promoting meritocracy but Marxists accuse them of being rose tinted as schools have bullying and setting which harms pupils.

7. Identify and explain one similarity between Weber and Marxism (4)

One similarity between Weber and Marx is they both see society organised by economic ideas. They both see a super-powerful at the top and a very weak and poor at the bottom. They both agree that the super powerful have more wealth and power because they have more material wealth which means they can use this power to control the poor and those who have less.

8. Identify and explain one advantage of carrying out a literature review (4)

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One advantage of a literature review is that it is time saving as you do not have to waste lots of time working on sampling frames or primary data collection. An example of this was the Rapoport who did a literature review to study 200 different societies. They found there was a family unit in every society they studied. This saved them time and money as they didn't travel to all 200 different societies.

9. Identify and explain why it is important to have clear research questions, aims and hypotheses (4)

It is important to have clear research questions because this will focus the research aims. This will allow for a better hypothesis which is more linked to the research aim. This will help sociologists pick the right research methods and sampling techniques because the research aim and hypothesis will be focussing on particular areas for example, the impact of labelling on the educational performance of boys.

10. Describe one difference between a positivist and interpretivist approach to research (3)

Positivists believe that scientific methods that focus on quantifying results into charts and graphs is a better approach to studying society while interpretivists believe society is not the same therefore qualitative approaches are needed to study it. The focus more on observation and informal interviews.

11. Identify and explain one advantage of using mixed methods in sociological research (4)

One major advantage is better results or the best of both worlds for example using a structured questionnaire with participant observation allows sociologists to use both quantitative and qualitative data before making a conclusion. Mixed methods uses the benefits of positivism and interpretivism to improve the research.

12. Describe what is meant by a pilot study (3)

A pilot study is a smaller version of your research. This allows sociologists to check if their sampling is correct or if the questions in the survey are appropriate. This also checks for bias and sociologists can see if the research needs to change.

13. Identify and explain one advantage of using a pilot study (4)

One major advantage of using a pilot study is it allows for trial and error. This means researchers can use them to see what works and what does not. For example, if a pilot study shows a low response rate to an email survey, this could lead to the researcher using a telephone survey instead in their final survey. If a question is being misunderstood in a pilot survey, this can be changed in the final survey.

14. Identify and describe one sampling technique (4)

One sampling technique is simple random sampling. This means everyone in a sampling frame has an equal chance of being picked. It is as simple as drawing a name out of a hat. Simple

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random sampling can be used by companies by asking their customers to rate their service. It can also be used in the news where random people can be stopped and asked questions.

15. Identify and describe one reason why sociologists may use a non-probability-based sampling method in their research (4)

Non-probability based sampling may be used by sociologists because they may want a specific group for their research. It eliminates the random aspect of sampling by focussing on having a certain group. It means you can focus your research more. For example if you are studying the attitudes of Bengali girls to education, you will need non-probability based sampling because you are researching a specific group.

16. Describe what sociologists mean by primary data (3)

Primary data is that which is collected as fresh by sociologists. Surveys, interviews and observations are all primary research methods that will give primary data. This is different to secondary data which already exists for example official statistics.

17. Identify and explain one advantage of using quantitative data in sociological research (4)

Quantitative data is usually presented in numbers charts or graphs which makes it easier to look for patterns, make comparisons and draw conclusions. This is because you can quantify a lot of data which covers a large population. Sociologists can use quantitative data on educational outcomes of all 16 year olds or the number of people convicted of a crime.

18. Describe what sociologists understand by ethical issues (3).

Ethical issues are the things that sociologists have to consider to make sure their research is fair and not biased. Ethical issues include, confidentiality, anonymity, the safety of the researchers and researched and consent. The British Sociological association helps to make sure that ethical issues are considered in research.

19. Identify and describe one way of carrying out a social survey (3)

One way of carrying out a social survey is through telephone questionnaires. This is when people are phoned and answer questions set by the researcher. Polling companies use this when they want to hear about the opinions of voters. They can reach large samples in less time compared to postal surveys.

20. Identify and describe one difference between open ended and closed questions (4)

Open-ended questions allow for a range of answers which give the researcher rich and detailed qualitative data while closed questions limit the answers available as the person has a choice of answers set by the interviewer. This means answers are easier to quantify and put into graphs and charts. Answers to open ended questions are harder to compare.

21. Imagine you are researching the amount of time women spend on housework and looking after children. Identify and explain one advantage of using postal questionnaires when carrying out this research (4)

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One advantage of using postal questionnaires to research the amount of time women spend on housework and looking after children is that it is less personal. This means the respondent will not feel sensitive about answering questions. Postal questionnaires do not involve an interviewer or researcher being present which means there will be less chance of interviewer bias.

22. Imagine you are researching the amount of time women spend on housework and looking after children. Identify and explain one problem you may face when carrying out this research (4)

One problem of researching the amount of time women spend on housework and looking after children is that it may not be a fair portrayal. Some women may exaggerate how much time they spend on looking after children and doing housework while some may under report how much time they spend. This is because people want to show their families as better than they think to outsiders.

23. Identify and explain one difference between the structured and unstructured interviews (3)

Structured interviews will involve the interviewer taking respondents through each question while unstructured interviews will involve the interviewer letting the discussion lead to different types of questions. This difference can lead to unstructured interviews becoming more time consuming and expensive.

24. Identify and explain one advantage of using in-depth interviews to study sensitive issues (4)

In-depth interviews to study sensitive issues are an excellent way of researching because they allow you to gain a lot of detail. They involve open ended questions which allow for rich and detailed information. For example rape victims may take time to open up about their experiences so in depth interviews may involve other questions which allow the researcher to build trust.

25. Identify and explain one disadvantage of using group interviews to study young men's experiences of being victims of violence (4)

One disadvantage of group interviews is it may not allow everyone to have a say as one person dominates the discussion or a small group dominates the discussion. This can cause bias to enter the discussion as others may wish to act like they agree with what is being said even if they don't and this could lead to different views being absent or ignored.

26. Identify and describe one topic for which a researcher might use a longitudinal study (4)

One topic could be educational success of working class children. The researcher could use a longitudinal study to study how well the child does at different points in their life to see how successful certain educational policies have been or to see how working class children develop

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over time. These studies are time consuming and expensive but allow sociologists to judge the success of educational policies.

27. Describe what is meant by the term participant observation (3)

Participant observation is when the researcher actively takes part in the group being observed. Participant observation is favoured by sociologists who may want to find out about the culture of a group. When it is covert the police may use it to understand gangs. When it is overt, it may be to explore how a tribe or group live. For example the woman who lived like a Muslim to understand Muslims experience of racism.

28. Identify and explain one reason why a researcher might decide to use covert participant observation to study football hooligans (4)

Football hooligans tend to be unpredictable and violent. This means they could pose a risk to a researcher who wants to understand how and why they behave the way they do. Covert allows the researcher to hide their true identity and get an insight into what is happening in the gang. The police use this too as a way of surveillance of football hooligans. Covert is safer which means you can observe dangerous issues without being in danger yourself.

29. Imagine you are studying the experiences and beliefs of animal rights protestors. Identify and explain one advantage of using overt participant observation when carrying out this investigation. (4)

Overt participant observation when studying animal rights protestors is a good way of understanding their beliefs and actions. By being overt, the researcher is not hiding anything from the group which makes him more trustworthy and will give him more opportunities to understand the issues they have. It is more ethical because the researcher will have consent, and this means more trust. There are disadvantages too but the question is focussed on one advantage.

30. Identify and explain one problem you could encounter if you used overt participant observation when studying animal rights protestors. (4)

One problem of studying animal rights protestors using overt participant observation is that you may not get a true portrayal of what is happening. Even though you may have consent, the protestors may not discuss certain things in front of you especially if it involves law breaking or violence because they don't trust you. This means the researcher is influencing what is happening and not getting a real view of what is happening.

31. Identify and explain one advantage of using non-participant observation when studying the behaviour of Year 7 students in school (4)

Non-participant observation is when you observe from a distance. The advantage is that you do not interfere or have an effect on the children being observed as you are observing from a distance. For example, lesson observations or play ground observations can happen and the children wouldn't know what is being checked so they will behave as normal. This helps the researcher get a picture of Year 7 behaviour.

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32. Identify and explain one problem you may encounter when carrying out non-participant observation when studying the behaviour of Year 7 students in school (4)

One disadvantage of carrying out non-participant observation when studying the behaviour of Year 7 students in school is you will not understand the reasons for good or bad behaviour as you will be far from the children as a non-participant. In lesson observations you may still affect the behaviour of the children because children do change how they behave if they are being watched.

33. Describe what is meant by a response rate (3)

A response rate is how many people respond to your survey per group of sent out surveys or telephone surveys. This could be high or low depending on the total number. Low response rates mean the data may be less reliable. High response rates mean the data may be more reliable.

34. Identify and explain one advantage of using official statistics to study divorce (4)

One advantage of using official statistics when studying divorce is you will get a picture of how many divorces happen per 1000 couples. This is known as the divorce rate. Official statistics can provide sociologists with a sampling frame if they want to study why divorces are rising or falling. Official statistics are collected by Government so they are seen as reliable.

35. Identify and explain one advantage of using quantitative data that has been collected by other researchers (4)

Quantitative data collected by other researchers will have gone through a similar process for example, if it is from other sociologists this means it will be collected in an ethical and fair way. Quantitative data could also include official statistics which is collected by Government and other agencies. This data can give you a picture of what is going on for example official crime statistics tell you how many crimes were committed in a given area.

36. Identify and explain one disadvantage of using quantitative data that has been collected by other researchers (4)

One disadvantage of using quantitative data collected by other researchers is you may not trust how the data has been collected. For example if it is crime statistics, how do you know it is really a true picture of what is happening because not all crimes are reported or recorded. Also quantitative data may not show the full picture because not everyone will be included in the survey.

37. Identify and explain one disadvantage of using written documents as sources of qualitative secondary data (4)

Secondary data can include, diaries, memories, old news and media articles and previously done research. One disadvantage of using them as sources of qualitative data is they may be outdated which means they would not be relevant to issues today. They may also be hard to find as not everyone has a diary that is found. Finally they may be biased because they took place at a time which is different to now.

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38. Identify and explain one possible use of sociological research (3)

Sociological research can be very useful in helping government make policy. For example sociologists can do research which is not biased and is fair about the poverty faced by lone parent families. This can help government make policies to support lone parent families for example through social and family policies like Sure Start or early intervention.