

Specimen Paper Answers

Paper 1 – Socialisation, identity and methods of research

Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology 9699

For examination from 2021



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Introduction

The main aim of this booklet is to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology for examination from 2021. In this booklet, we have provided high grade answers for Section A, questions 1, 2, 3, and Section B, question 4.

Each response is accompanied by a brief commentary explaining the strengths and weaknesses of the answers. Comments are given to indicate where and why marks were awarded, and how additional marks could have been obtained. In this way, it is possible to understand what candidates have done to gain their marks and how they could improve.

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9699 Sociology 2021 Specimen Paper 01

9699 Sociology 2021 Specimen Paper Mark Scheme 01

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Assessment overview

Paper 1

Socialisation, identity and methods of research 1 hour 30 minutes

60 marks

Candidates answer four questions.

Section A: three compulsory questions

Section B: one essay (26 marks) from a choice of two

Externally assessed

50% of the AS Level

25% of the A Level

Paper 3

Education 1 hour 15 minutes

50 marks

Candidates answer four compulsory questions. Question 4 is an essay (26 marks).

Externally assessed

20% of the A Level

Paper 2

The Family 1 hour 30 minutes

60 marks

Candidates answer four questions.

Section A: three compulsory questions

Section B: one essay (26 marks) from a choice of two

Externally assessed

50% of the AS Level

25% of the A Level

Paper 4

Globalisation, Media and Religion 1 hour 45 minutes

70 marks

Candidates answer two essay questions (35 marks each).

Section A: Globalisation

Section B: Media

Section C: Religion

Each section has two essay questions.

Candidates select one question from two different sections.

Externally assessed

30% of the A Level

Assessment objectives as a percentage of Paper 1

AO1 Knowledge and understanding	40%
AO2 Interpretation and application	30%
AO3 Analysis and evaluation	30%

Section A

Question 1

1 Describe two types of interview.

[4]

Specimen answer

One type of interview is a structured interview. This type of interview consists of a standardised set of questions that all participants are asked.

A second type of interview is an unstructured interview. This is more like a conversation between the researcher and the interviewee where the interviewee can talk freely as there are no set questions.

Mark awarded = 4 out of 4

Examiner comment

The candidate correctly identifies two types of interview (structured and unstructured). In each instance they go on to describe a key feature of these interviews (standardised questions/no set questions) and, in fact, do more than enough to secure the additional AO1 mark available for each element. This response is awarded full marks.

Question 2(a)

- 2 (a) Explain two reasons why some social groups may be more difficult to research than others. [8]

Specimen answer

Researching criminals may be more difficult to study than other groups. Since criminals are engaged in activities which are outside the law and could lead to punishment, they will not want to reveal this to a stranger. James Patrick, who studied Glasgow gangs, was only able to carry out his study as he knew one of the gang members who helped him get into the gang. Being introduced by an existing member of the gang meant it was easier to gain the gang's trust.

Children are another group that may be more difficult to study as there are legal and ethical restrictions on who can work with young people. The children's parents would need to give consent for them to take part in the research and they may not give this if the research is on a sensitive topic such as bullying.

Mark awarded = 8 out of 8

Examiner comment

This answer is laid out in a clear and structured way. The candidate provides two different and well explained reasons why some social groups may be more difficult to research than others using relevant material demonstrating (AO1) and applying it appropriately (AO2). In each response the candidate clearly:

- makes a point by identifying a reason in each paragraph e.g. "*criminals are engaged in activities outside the law...*" and "*legal and ethical restrictions*"
- explains the point identified, e.g. "*they will not want to reveal this...*" and "*on who can work with young people...*"
- supports the point made with relevant and correct sociological material, e.g. Patrick / need to obtain consent
- brings the response back to the point made by explaining how the sociological material supports the reason identified in each point. This demonstrates application of relevant material to answering the question (AO2).

Therefore the candidate has, for each response, fulfilled the four elements laid out in the mark scheme.

Question 2(b)

- 2 (b) Explain one strength and one limitation of overt participant observation as a research method. [6]

Specimen answer

One strength is that participants know they are being studied so the researcher can ask questions and make notes openly. This will mean they are less likely to forget or lose information gained during the observation.

A limitation is that participants may change their behaviour as they know they are being observed by a researcher. This change in behaviour will make the research lower in validity as the researcher is not getting a true indication of their behaviour.

Mark awarded = 6 out of 6

Examiner comment

This answer is laid out in a clear and structured way. The candidate provides two well explained strengths/limitations of overt participant observation as a research method using relevant material demonstrating (AO1) and then evaluating this appropriately (AO3). In each response the candidate clearly:

- identifies a strength/limitation in each paragraph, e.g. “*the researcher can ask questions and make notes...*” and “*participants may change behaviour*” (AO1)
- explains why the method has this strength/limitation, e.g. “*participants know they are being studied ...*” and “*they know they are being observed...*” (AO3)
- explains why it is a strength/limitation with relevant and correct sociological material, e.g. “*less likely to forget or lose information*” and “*make the research lower in validity*” (AO3).

Therefore the candidate has, for each response, fulfilled the three elements laid out in the mark scheme.

Question 3(a)

3 'Peers are the most important influence in shaping an individual's identity.'

(a) Explain this view.

[10]

Specimen paper answer

One way in which peers can influence identity is by reinforcing a social class identity. Paul Willis studied how a group of working-class boys formed a counter-school culture. The 'lads' in the study were anti-school. They thought school was boring and meaningless as they aspired to working-class jobs which they saw as 'real' work. They did not follow the rules and instead were disruptive and made fun of those who worked hard. Manual labour was seen as more worthy than mental labour by the peer group, reinforcing their working-class identity.

Another way in which peers are important in shaping identity is the way in which peers control behaviour. An example of this is seen with the informal controls that peers exert over others in the group. Louise Archer studied the impact of peer control on working-class girls. She found that working-class girls created a hyper-heterosexual feminine identity in order to gain symbolic capital from their peers. To gain this form of capital, which gave them status and popularity, girls were expected to dress in a glamorous way and wear specific brands and styles such as Nike. Those girls who did not adopt the correct style were called 'tramps' and would be unpopular with their peers. This shows how peers can be important in controlling attitudes and styles.

Mark awarded = 10 out of 10

Examiner comment

This question requires candidates to explain the view expressed in the quotation. The answer provides two clear and well developed points supporting the view that peers can be seen as the most important influence shaping an individual's identity. Although the two identified ways appear fairly similar, they are sufficiently distinct and make different points in relation to the importance of peer influence.

The first identified way – “reinforcing social class identity” – is based on sociological evidence (Willis's study of working-class boys) and clearly explains how these boys formed an anti-school approach to schooling that, via their peer group, actively reinforced the working class element of their identity. Relevant sociological concepts such as ‘counter-school culture’ support the appropriately selected material set out in the answer. The explanation is fully focused on the question with the influence of the peer group in shaping identity central to all that is written – “...*manual labour was seen as more worthy than mental labour by the peer group, reinforcing their working-class identity*”.

The second identified way – “how peers control gender identity” – is also based on sociological evidence (Archer's study of working-class girls) and it clearly explains how the girls applied peer pressure to enforce a particular form of feminine identity – “...*those girls who did not adopt the correct style were called ‘tramps’ and would be unpopular*”. With this explanation the focus is more on the social control element of peer influence. There is also ample use of relevant sociological concepts, e.g. hyper-heterosexual feminine/symbolic capital. The answer shows detailed knowledge of the study and all the material used is clearly appropriate to the question and has fulfilled the elements laid out in the mark scheme.

Question 3(b)

3 'Peers are the most important influence in shaping an individual's identity.'

(b) Using sociological material, give one argument against this view. [6]

Specimen answer

Although peers may be important in shaping identity, in postmodern societies this may be less important. Postmodernists see society as being based on individualism and consumption. The rise of global media and increasing globalisation gives individuals access to a wide range of products and services which can shape identity. This is seen through the rise in New Age beliefs and self-religions including those that are found online. Rather than following ideas and styles from your peers, an individual can use free will to consume products that they choose for their individual identity. The greater the range of products available the more choice and so the individual is able to pick and mix their own identity. The choice may not be similar to those of a similar age group.

Mark awarded = 6 out of 6

Examiner comment

The candidate makes the argument that individuals now have greater opportunity to exercise "free will...and...so the individual is able to pick and mix their own identity", thus reducing the impact of peer influence in shaping individual identity.

The candidate goes on to outline how postmodern societies have led to greater individualism and consumerism, and they use a range of sociological evidence, concepts and theory (e.g. globalisation/'pick and mix'/postmodernists) to support this point.

The answer could be more coherent had the argument been set out explicitly at the beginning of the response instead of at the end, but it is still valid and fully supported by a range of material that is both relevant and sociological. As such it still fulfils the elements laid out in the mark scheme and is worth full marks (2+4).

Section B

Question 4

4 Evaluate the view that female identity is changing.

[26]

Specimen answer

Sociologists disagree on the nature of female identity and the extent to which it is changing. Many feminists argue that female identity is defined in patriarchal terms due to the nature of society. However, others argue that there has been positive change in the way female identity is constructed.

In the 21st century there have been changes to the roles of women that have impacted female identity. One change is the increase in achievement in education. This is linked to a number of factors. One of these is women's increased aspirations. The rise of feminism and campaigns for equal rights for women have meant women now aspire to have careers rather than become housewives. Sue Sharpe's studies between the 1970s and 1990s show the difference in what girls wanted to achieve between these years. The focus for girls in the 1990s was more on their careers compared to the 1970s where they were focused on finding a husband. Evans refers to this as a form of 'autonomous femininity' where women are involved in active competition with men. Autonomous women are likely to be highly educated, successful, and career focussed. This shows that female identity is changing as success in school and the workplace are now a part of female identity.

The development of effective contraception and the availability of abortion has also given women reproductive rights. Being able to control when and how many children they have means women are able to make the choice to focus on other aspects of life such as their career. Women can make an individual decision about childbearing which means they can have a more equal status with regard to work. Choosing not to have children means women are better able to compete equally in the workplace as they do not need to take career breaks for children. In addition, changing social views on being childless reduces the stigma for those who do not have children. Overall these changes mean that motherhood is a less significant aspect of female identity.

Female identity is also changing as girls are able to construct more flexible identities that may be based around typically masculine features. The rise in popularity of traditionally masculine sports such as football and boxing amongst girls highlights that girls are now able to construct identities around traditionally masculine pursuits.

Specimen answer, continued

Similarly, Jackson studied a group of working-class girls who displayed what she described as a 'ladette' identity based around more traditionally masculine characteristics such as being loud, aggressive, rude, and disruptive in school. This shows that for some girls, identity and behaviour is not constrained by normative femininity, allowing them to experiment with more masculine ways of being female.

However, some sociologists have highlighted that these changes do not necessarily mean that female identity is really changing as many aspects of traditional femininity still exert control on women. For example, many studies have shown that although women are working more than in the past, they face a 'dual burden' as they are still required to complete the majority of housework and childcare.

Other sociologists argue that feminine identities are still framed and shaped by male beliefs and demands. The popularity of Instagram influencers could be interpreted in this way. Although girls may be able to construct identities and achieve financial success, these identities are largely based around traditional feminine ideas of beauty and physical appearance and are, at least to some extent, appealing to male desires.

In addition, the changes outlined above are not universal and in some places a traditional female identity is still the norm. For example, contraception and abortion are not universally available and many women still feel social pressure to have children. In some cases, this will disadvantage them in work and careers. For example, in Greece there is very little welfare provision and a woman would have to rely on her husband for support after childbirth. In many cases, government policies reinforce the patriarchal family through taxation, childcare policies and rules around maternity and paternity leave. These can confirm the patriarchal female identity as wife and carer.

Overall, despite the improvements in life chances for women and their increased presence in the workplace in many societies, there are still many ways in which a traditional female identity is expected of women. The domestic work and the role of carer are still seen as part of the female identity in many societies and this is often encouraged by the policies and social norms of society.

Mark awarded = 26 out of 26

Examiner comment

A clear introduction shows that the candidate understands the overall focus of the question and sets the scene for debate. The candidate puts forward a number of well-developed points explaining and supporting the view in the question: changes in relation to education, aspirations, the workplace and law, as well as theoretical and conceptual links (feminism and autonomous femininity) are outlined. There is also a brief historical timeline and some empirical studies (Sharpe/Evans) that provide helpful context. All of the material discussed is interpreted accurately and presented in a confident sociological tone. These points are then further developed in a range of ways – via exploring the impact of increased choice in relation to family and career, and also in relation to the broader options available for constructing more “flexible identities” that depart from “normative femininity”. These developments are all supported by more studies, evidence and concepts.

The candidate then presents three arguments that evaluate the validity of the points put forward to support the view. Firstly by way of empirical evidence (the persistence of the ‘dual burden’); secondly by questioning just how ‘flexible’ these new identities are, e.g. Instagram influencer identity is still rooted in traditional femininity. And thirdly, by introducing a comparative note pointing out that what changes may have occurred to female identity are not universally experienced, i.e. social policies and attitudes vary greatly across different societies. The essay ends with a balanced conclusion that returns to the focus of the question.

The answer is concise and consistently focused on the question. The arguments are organised effectively and relate back to one another in a way that gives the response a coherent, analytical feel. The points made are fully supported by reference to research evidence that is accurately interpreted, and there is very good use of relevant concepts – the inclusion of the Instagram example added a nice contemporary touch. There are many different arguments/points that could have been made and/or extended, but under the time constraints of an exam this degree of detail, range and depth is sufficient for Level 5 and the response satisfies all of the assessment objectives for this question. So this is a top mark answer.

Advice for candidates (Paper 1)

- Good awareness of the assessment objectives in relation to each question will ensure that candidates write answers that match the skills each question is requiring. For example, there is no requirement to include evaluative content in questions 1, 2(a) and 3(a) and answers that do so will not be rewarded.
- Good use of appropriate sociological material (concepts, research evidence and theory) will improve responses. Note how the exemplar answer continually makes use of appropriate sociological material to shape the answers made.
- With method questions in particular, sound knowledge and understanding of basic concepts like validity, reliability and representativeness will invariably enhance responses to a range of questions.
- In Section A the questions do not require candidates to preface answers with introductory remarks. The best practice and most time efficient approach is to directly address the question with a point/strength/limitation/reason/argument, etc. in the first line of an answer.
- With question 3(a) only two, fully developed points are required to achieve full marks, and with question 3(b) only one argument is needed.

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