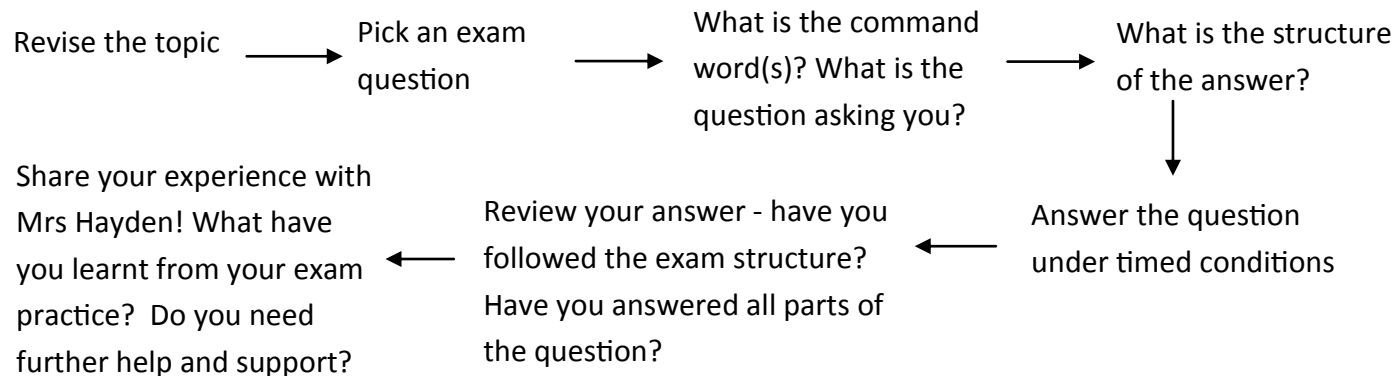


GCSE Sociology - Exam Questions



Exam question structures:

- Describe the ____ / Describe what sociologists mean by ____ (3)
- Identify and describe one example of ____ (3)
- From Item A, examine one strength/weakness of the research (2)
- Identify and describe one (from Item A) (4)
- Identify and explain one advantage/disadvantage of using ____ (method) to investigate ____ (topic) (4)
- From Item B, identify and describe the research method used by ____ (sociologist) including what you know of their perspective on ____ (topic) (4)
- Identify one (topic) and explain how you would investigate this ____ (topic) using ____ (method) (4)
- Discuss how far sociologists agree that (12)

Command words:

- **Define**
Specify meaning of the keyterm.
- **Identify and describe/explain**
Given an example and say why it is an example for the question
- **Explain**
Set out reasons, e.g. why something happens.
- **Describe what is meant by**
Define the keyword and give extra details, such as an example
- **Examine**
Given an advantage/weakness and say why it is an advantage/weakness. If the question refers to the Item, include an example from the item too.
- **Discuss how far sociologists agree that**
Debate 2 points and reach a conclusion

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TEST YOURSELF

Research has shown that testing yourself helps you remember significantly more than just re-reading information. Testing yourself can also help reduce the negative effects of stress associated with exams.



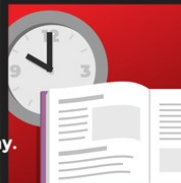
USE SPACING

Spread out your learning of material across several days and revisit it. This helps transfer information to your long-term memory.



STOP PROCRASTINATING

Schedule the revision of harder topics for the morning when you will be most awake. This stops you using tiredness as an excuse for leaving the harder topics until the next day.



MANAGE YOUR TIME

Break your revision down and give yourself a certain amount of content to learn each day.



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C

CONFUSED

If you don't know what you should be revising then don't be shy, ask for help.

H

HUNGRY

Teenagers who eat breakfast have better focus and concentration than those who don't.

E

EMOTIONAL

Find out about and use stress management techniques.

A

ABSENT MINDED

Students with phones on their desk are up to 20% less effective when revising.

T

TIRED

GCSE and A-Level students need around 9-10 hours sleep a night whilst revising to take all that information in.

What is sociology topic

(These questions could feature in either paper and in any section)

Sociology the basics:

Identify and describe one possible use of sociological research (3)

Identify and describe one example of a social structure (3)

Identify and describe one example of a social issue (3)

Describe what is meant by culture (3)

Describe what is meant by norms (3)

Describe what is meant by values (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by socialisation (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by primary socialisation (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by secularisation (3)

Identify and describe one way the peer group could socialise an individual into norms and values (3)

Identify and describe one way schools could socialise an individual into norms and values (3)

Identify and describe one way religion could socialise an individual into norms and values (3)

Identify and describe one way the workplace could socialise an individual into norms and values (3)

Identify and describe one way the mass media could socialise an individual into norms and values (3)

Identify and describe one way the family could socialise an individual into norms and values (3)

Identify and describe one example of achieved status (3)

Identify and describe one example of ascribed status (3)

Identify and describe one example of role conflict (3)

Sociological theory:

Describe what is meant by bourgeoisie (3)

Describe what is meant by proletariat (3)

Describe what is meant by communism (3)

Describe what is meant by capitalism (3)

Describe what is meant by means of production (3)

Describe what is meant by social relations of production (3)

Describe what is meant by social cohesion (3)

Describe what is meant by organic analogy (3)

Identify and describe one criticism of the functionalism (3)

Describe what is meant by function (3)

Identify and describe one difference between consensus and conflict approaches (3)

Describe what is meant by patriarchy (3)

Describe what is meant by gender role socialisation (3)

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

Identify and explain one criticism of functionalism (4)

Identify and explain one similarity between Weber and Marx's approach to social class (4)

Identify and explain one difference between consensus and conflict approaches (4)

Research methods:

(These questions could feature in either paper and in any section)

Describe what is meant by a pilot study (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by primary data (3)

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

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

Describe (with reference to the census) what is meant by a 'large-scale longitudinal survey' (3)

Describe what is meant by the term 'response rate' (3)

Describe one difference between official and non-official statistics (3)

Describe what is meant by the term 'social policy' (3)

Identify and describe one difference between structure and unstructured interviews (3)

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

Identify and describe one difference between open-ended and closed questions (3)

Identify and describe one difference between structured and unstructured interviews (3)

Identify and describe one sampling technique (3)

Identify and describe one difference between a positivist and an interpretivist approach in sociological research (3)

Identify and describe one topic for which a researcher might use a longitudinal study (3)

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

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

Identify and explain one advantage of using a mixed method approach in sociological research (4)

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

Identify and describe one reason sociologists may use a non-representative sampling method in their research (4)

Identify and explain one way in which the quality of a piece of sociological research can be assessed (4)

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

Identify and explain one advantage of using postal questionnaires when carrying out this research (4)

Identify and explain one advantage of using structured interviews when compared to postal or emailed questionnaires (4)

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

Identify and explain one advantage of using structured interviews when compared to postal or emailed questionnaires (4)

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

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

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

Identify and explain one advantage of content analysis (4)

Identify and explain one reason why ethical guidelines are important in sociological research (4)

Identify and explain one way in which sociology can have an impact on society (4)

Paper 1 Section A: Families and Households

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'lone parent family' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by 'cultural diversity' (3)

Describe what is meant by 'joint conjugal roles' (3)

Describe what is meant by 'segregated conjugal roles' (3)

Describe the double shift experienced by women in marriage (3)

Identify and describe one way in which power can be measured in families (3)

Identify and describe one example of how patriarchy can affect the power relationship within families (3)

Identify and describe one reason why the majority of reconstituted families have a biological mother and a step-father (3)

Identify and describe one contemporary social issue related to the family (3)

Identify and describe one examples of an alternative to families in the UK today (3)

Identify and describe one alternative to nuclear family households (3)

Identify and describe one difference between the feminist and functionalist accounts of primary socialisation (3)

Identify and explain how one turning point in an individual's life might lead to change in their family or household situation (4)

Identify and explain one function of the nuclear family from a Marxist perspective (4)

Identify and explain one factor that may have led to an increase in the number of symmetrical families (4)

Identify and explain one factors that may have led to changes in the relationships between parents and children over the last 100 years (4)

Identify and explain one factor that may have led to the increase in the number of lone-parent families since the 1970s (4)

Identify and explain one factor that may have led to changes in the patterns of fertility in the UK over the last 30 years (4)

Identify and explain one reason why the average age at which people get married in Britain has increased during the last 30 years (4)

Identify and explain one factor that may have led to the increase in cohabitation during the last 20 years (4)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that feminism has led to a change in gender roles within the family (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that in Britain today the wider family is becoming less important in people's lives (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that the changing gender roles in society are responsible for the increase in divorce since the 1960s (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that there is a 'typical British family' today (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that families are the main agent of socialisation (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that gender roles within families have changed considerably over the past 50 years (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that there is no longer a typical family in Britain (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that families remain an important agency of socialisation in Britain today (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that feminism has changed marriage in modern British society (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that in Britain today social classes have different experiences of marriage and family life (12m)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that the modern family has become more child-centred (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that marriage is no longer seen as important in modern British society (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that the roles of men and women in the family have changed significantly in the past 50 years (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that extended family members play an important role in British families (12)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that changing social attitudes are the main reason for changes in the divorce rate over the past 50 years (12)

Paper 1 Section B: Education

Describe what sociologists mean by the 'hidden curriculum' (3)

Describe what is meant by a faith school (3)

Describe what is meant by an 'independent school' (3)

Describe what Sociologist mean by 'de-schooling' (3)

Describe what is meant by 'Marketisation of education' (3)

Describe what sociologists studying education mean by the term 'self-fulfilling prophecy' (3)

Identify and describe one educational reform from the last 25 years aimed at reducing inequality in education (3)

Identify and describe one way in which an individual's home environment could influence their achievement (3)

Identify and describe one way in which the hidden curriculum socialises children (3)

Identify and describe one feature of the correspondence principle (3)

Identify and describe one form of pre-school educational provision (3)

Identify and describe one example of the cultural capital which middle class parents can use to give their children advantages at school. (3)

Identify and explain one function of education (4)

Identify and explain one way in which schools teach children to become part of our society (4)

Identify and explain one criticism of Durkheim's view of the role of education (4)

Identify and explain one function of the education system according to Parson's (4)

Identify and explain one disadvantage of the comprehensive system (4)

Identify and explain one argument in favour of private education (4)

Identify and explain one criticism of vocational educational (4)

Identify and explain one reason why male and female students often choose different subjects in higher education (4)

Identify and explain one reason why male students often achieve lower grades than female students (4)

Identify and explain one home factor that may affect attainment levels for some ethnic groups (4)

Identify and explain one way in which teachers might influence the educational achievement of ethnic minority students (4)

Identify and explain one factor that may have led to the relatively poor performance of working class pupils (4)

Identify one possible label that might be attached to students who fail to conform and explain the possible impact that label might have on their school career (4)

Identify and explain one effect of the introduction of the National Curriculum (4)

Identify and explain one effect of Marketisation on education in Britain (4)

Identify and explain one criticism of the introduction of greater choice in educational provision (4)

Identify and explain one example of material deprivation that could influence educational achievement (4)

Identify and explain one way in which parents' values and attitudes could influence educational achievement (4)

Identify and explain one possible effect of teachers labelling students (4)

Identify and explain one possible effect of streaming in schools (4)

Identify and explain one reason why female students may achieve better grades in school than in the 1970s (4)

Paper 1 Section B: Education

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that a pupil's gender is the main reasons for differences in educational achievement (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the main function of the education system is to encourage 'British values' and social cohesion (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that school-based factors are the main cause of differences in the educational achievement of different social groups (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the type of school pupils attend has a significant effect on their chances of educational success (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that educational reform over the past 30 years have led to improvements in the educational performance of all pupils (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that a pupil's ethnicity is the main reason for differences in educational achievement (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that parental attitudes have a significant effect on a child's educational success (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the main function of schools is to prepare pupils for the workplace (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that pupils' gender is the main reason for differences in their educational achievement (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the main function of the education system is to serve the needs of the economy (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that a students' socialisation experiences in the home are the main reason for differences in their achievement (12)

Paper 2 Section A: Crime and Deviance

Describe what sociologists mean by 'methods of social control' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by 'anomie' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by 'the gender deal' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by 'the class deal' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by a 'moral panic' (3)

Describe one example of a delinquent subculture (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by 'agenda setting' (3)

Describe what is meant by 'news value' (3)

Identify and describe one example of deviant behaviour (3)

Identify and describe one example of an act that breaks the law but which is not usually deviant (3)

Identify and describe one example of a deviant act that is not against the law (3)

Identify and describe one public debate over criminal behaviour (3)

Identify one agency of formal social control and describe how it controls people's behaviour (3)

Identify and describe one similarity between Marxist and functionalist explanations of crime and deviance (3)

Identify and describe one difference between the Marxist and Functionalist explanations of crime and deviance (3)

Identify and explain one difference between crime and deviance (4)

Identify and explain one way in which peer groups may encourage members to conform to their rules (4)

Identify and explain one difference between formal and informal social rules (4)

Identify and explain one function of crime that Durkheim identified (4)

Identify and explain one way in which women may be controlled in public (4)

Identify and explain one reason why the recorded rate of crime may not include all crimes recorded (4)

Identify and explain one reason why corporate crime may be under represented in crime statistics (4)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that police recorded crime statistics provide an accurate account of crime (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that feminism has led to an increase in the number of female offenders in the UK over the past 40 years (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that police recorded statistics exaggerate the true level of crime among some ethnic minority groups. (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the middle class is less likely to commit crime than other social classes (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that inadequate socialisation at home is the main reasons for delinquency among young people (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that police recorded statistics do not accurately reflect the true level of female criminality (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that negative labelling leads to criminal and deviant behaviour (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that peer pressure leads to deviant behaviour in young people(12)

Discuss how far would sociologists agree that the type of crime committed in Britain has changed over the past 50 years (12)

Discuss how far would sociologists agree that negative labelling by wider society leads to deviant and criminal behaviour by young people (12)

Discuss how far would sociologists agree that official statistics give a true representation of crime in society(12)

Discuss how far would sociologists agree that gender socialisation is the main reason why women commit less crime than men (12)

Discuss how far would sociologists agree that the working class is more likely to commit crime than other social classes (12)

Discuss how far would sociologists agree that relative deprivation is the most important factor in explaining levels of crime in society today (12)

Discuss how far would sociologists agree that some ethnic minority groups are still stereotypes as criminal by the police and the legal system (12)

Discuss how far would sociologists agree that belonging to a sub-culture leads to deviant behaviour in young people (12)

Paper 2 Section B: Social Stratification

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'social stratification' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'life chances' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'gender' (3)

Describe what is meant by 'age discrimination' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'absolute poverty' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'relative poverty' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'relative deprivation' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'material deprivation' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'poverty trap' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'rational legal authority' (3)

Describe what sociologists mean by the term 'democracy' (3)

Identify and describe one similarity between Weber and Marx's approach to social class (3)

Identify and describe one example of how the traditional role of women in society may make them more likely to experience poverty (3)

Identify and explain one way in which governments have tried to reduce age discrimination in Britain over the last 15 years (3 marks)

Identify and describe one way in which having a high income may improve life chances (3)

Identify and explain one difference between individual and structural explanations of poverty (3)

Identify and explain what sociologists mean by functionally important roles (4)

Identify and explain one advantage of using unstructured interviews when investigating attitudes and values of powerful groups in British society (4)

Identify and explain what Weber meant by the term 'social class' (4)

Identify one way of measuring social class and explain why this measure might be used (4)

Identify and explain one reason why the importance of class may have declined over the last 50 years (4)

Identify one way in which men have more power than women in society and explain why this situation continues today (4)

Identify and explain one factor which might limit a young people's opportunities to find secure long-term employment as experienced by many young people (4)

Identify and explain one reason for the gender pay gap (4)

Identify and explain one way in which British governments have tried to reduce social inequalities based on ethnicity over the last 40 years (4)

Identify and explain one reason why people from some minority ethnic groups might experience unemployment (4)

Identify and explain one way in which expectations surrounding childhood have changed in recent years (4)

Identify and explain one factor that might affect young people's life chances (4)

Identify and explain one reason why young people have more power over their lives today than 50 years ago (4)

Identify and explain one factor that might limit the opportunities of people with disabilities to find secure employment (4)

Identify and explain one difference between wealth and income (4)

Identify one way in which sociologists might measure poverty and explain one disadvantage of using this measure (4)

Identify and explain one reason why women are more likely than men to experience poverty in the UK (4 marks)

Identify and explain one feature of British society which led the sociologist Charles Murray to conclude that there was a growing underclass in Britain (4)

Identify and explain one reason why a government might use means-tested benefits (4 marks)

Paper 2 Section B: Social Stratification

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that social class rather than gender or ethnicity is the most important division in British society (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that a breakdown of the traditional family is one of the most important reasons that child poverty exists in modern society (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that children who are born into poor families in Britain will go on to experience poverty over the course of their lives (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the behaviour and culture of individuals is one of the most important reasons for poverty (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that gender is the most significant division in British society today (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that Britain today is a patriarchal society (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that Britain is a meritocratic society (12)

How far would sociologists agree that young people have more power over their lives today than 50 years ago (12)

How far would sociologists agree that Britain is a meritocracy (12)

How far would sociologists agree that government policies have been successful in reducing child poverty over the past 30 years (12)

How far would sociologists agree that the Welfare State has been successful in improving the life chances of all individuals (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that ethnicity is the most important source of inequality in British society today (12)

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that power is distributed widely in contemporary British society (12)

How far would sociologists agree that in the United Kingdom today power is still controlled by a wealthy elite (12)

How far would sociologists agree that there is still limited social mobility in Britain today (12)

How far would sociologists agree that in Britain today a person's ethnicity is the main cause of inequality (12)

How far would sociologists agree that welfare dependency is the main cause of poverty in Britain today (12)

How far would sociologists agree that, in Britain today, age is a more important cause of inequality than any other factor (12)

How far would sociologists agree that, in Britain today, social problems such as unemployment and homelessness can be dealt with effectively by government action (12)

How far would sociologists agree that discrimination against women still exists in Britain today (12)

How far would sociologists agree that the poor are largely responsible for their own situation (12)

How far would sociologists agree that social class is still the most important cause of inequality in Britain today (12)

Paper 1 and 2: Methods in context

Family:

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

Identify and explain one advantage of using official statistics to study families (4)

Identify and explain one advantage of using unstructured interviews to investigate relationships between family members (4)

Identify and explain one advantage of using unstructured interviews to investigate married people's attitudes towards marriage and family life. (4)

Identify and explain one advantage of using secondary sources to investigate family life in Britain today (4)

Identify one function of the family and explain how you would investigate this function using questionnaires (4)

Identify one aspect of family diversity and explain how you would investigate this aspect using structured interviews (4)

Identify one possible consequence of divorce for the former partners and explain how you would investigate this consequence using structured interviews (4)

Education

Identify and explain one advantage of using non-participant observation to investigate the behaviour of year 6 pupils during lessons in a local primary school (4)

Identify and explain one problem in using official statistics to examine the educational achievement of different ethnic groups (4)

Identify and explain one ethical issue that sociologists may face when carrying out research in schools (4)

Identify and explain one disadvantage of using overt observation when carrying out research in schools (4)

Identify and explain one disadvantage of using questionnaires to investigate the literacy skills of parents (4)

Identify one function of the education system and explain how you would investigate this function using observation (4)

Crime

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

Identify and explain one reason why a researcher might decide to use covert participant observation to study the behaviour of 'football hooligans' (4)

Identify and explain one problem that an adult researcher may face when investigating young people's involvement in crime using semi-structured interviews (4)

Identify and explain advantage of using content analysis to investigate the way the popular press (tabloid) press cover crime (4)

Identify and explain one advantage of using structured interviews to investigate people's experiences of crime (4)

Identify and explain one reason why researchers might find it difficult to obtain a representative sample of offenders (4)

Identify one agency of informal social control and explain how you would investigate this aspect using unstructured interviews (4)

Identify one ethical issue you might experience when researching young people's involvement in crime and explain how you would address this issue (4)

Stratification

Identify and explain one problem that sociologists might encounter when investigating social mobility (4)

Identify and explain one disadvantage of using overt observation when investigating people's attitudes, lifestyle and aspirations (4)

Identify and explain one advantage of using group interviews to study minority ethnic groups' experiences of unemployment (4)

Identify and explain one disadvantage of using content analysis to investigate the way the media portray asylum seekers and refugees (4)

Identify and explain one disadvantages of using social surveys to investigate people's experiences of poverty (4)

Identify and explain one disadvantage of using structured interviews to research young people's experience of unemployment

Identify one type of social mobility and explain how you would investigate this type using questionnaires (4)

Discuss how far sociologists agree that feminism has changed marriage in modern British society. [12 marks]

Some sociologists would agree that feminism has changed marriage in modern Britain. However, other sociologists would say that the influence of feminism has been limited or even that it has had a negative impact.

Feminists believe that the nuclear family is patriarchal and mainly benefits men. Functionalist sociologists like Willmott and Young have suggested that families in modern Britain have become more symmetrical, with men and women sharing equal responsibility for employment and domestic duties. However, feminists like Anne Oakley have been critical of Willmott and Young. Oakley believes that they collected insufficient research evidence to support the idea of the symmetrical family.

In her own research Oakley found little evidence of men participating in domestic tasks. She found that women continued to take on the major responsibility for housework and childcare, even if they were in full-time employment. More recent research continues to show that women spend more time than men on child care and domestic tasks, with women experiencing a double shift (paid employment and then taking on the main responsibility for housework/child care). This would suggest that for many women feminism has not had much of an impact on traditional roles within marriage.

Some New Right sociologists are critical of the feminist approach to marriage. They believe that women who have taken advantage of increased educational and employment opportunities often have unrealistic expectations of marriage and that in reality many women are unable to adequately care for their children and pursue a full-time career.

In conclusion whilst feminism has had some impact on marriage, in reality even if they have jobs many women continue to be expected to fulfil traditional roles as housewives and mothers. This would suggest that feminism has had only a limited impact on marriage.

This student clearly responds to the question with a detailed answer demonstrating a sustained application of relevant theories, concepts and evidence. The answer provides a well-developed critical analysis and evaluation of the impact of feminism on marriage. The student’s argument is well supported, references various sociological perspectives and reaches evidence based conclusions.

12 marks

Discuss how far sociologists agree that setting/streaming is an effective way to raise overall educational achievement.

Setting/streaming is when students are grouped by ability. So all the high ability students are taught together, separate from the low ability. This could lead to different knowledge and skills being taught to the different groups.

Interactionist sociologists would tend to disagree. For them, setting will have a negative impact on the interactions between teachers and most of the students. Students in the middle and lower sets can feel that they have been negatively labelled, such as thick. These students may believe these labels and then behave in a way they think the teacher expect , for example playing up and not completing work. Many schools also struggle with anti-school subcultures: streaming is divisive and exclusionary, many students will disengage, give-up and potentially join an anti-school subculture.

Durkheim (1925), a functionalist sociologist, argued that the main function of education is the transmission of norms and values and skills, and that the education system serves as a link between individual students and the wider society. If true, streaming is a good thing because as soon as students leave school they will find themselves in a word of ability based “streams” since different occupations require different degree of skill, talent and dedication. Streaming prepares students for stratification in society, and helps the education system effectively allocate roles in wider society. This can be criticised has lacking statistical evidence to support it: streaming seems to make schools less effective overall.

In conclusion: most sociologists would probably not agree with the hypothesis. The case made by Marxist and interactionists is too strong.

This essay has been marked at 10 marks.

What is good about it?

What would you improve to make it 12/12?

Discuss how far sociologists agree that official statistics of crime do not accurately reflect the true level of middle class criminal behaviour. [12 marks]

Marxist sociologists would agree that the official statistics of crime do not reflect the true level of middle class crime. They believe that this may be for many reasons, but one important reason is that ‘white collar’ crimes committed by middle class people are often either ignored or treated more leniently by the criminal justice system. As a result middle class crimes are under-reported and under-recorded.

One example of this would be tax evasion scandals involving celebrities like Jimmy Carr; although Carr broke the law he was not charged for his offence and was allowed to simply pay the tax he had evaded. Marxist sociologists would argue that this can be compared to the treatment of a working class man who steals a similar amount of money but is then sent to prison for his crime.

New Right sociologists would disagree; from their point-of-view working class people, particularly if they are a member of the ‘underclass’ are simply more likely to commit crimes than members of the middle class. They believe that members of the underclass have grown up in a culture of dependency on benefits and have reduced life chances e.g. few if any qualifications. They are also more likely to come into contact with members of a criminal subculture and as a result to become involved in crimes like benefit fraud and drug dealing. However, other sociologists do not believe that an underclass or culture of dependency exists. They believe that members of the so called ‘underclass’ have the same attitudes and beliefs as other members of society and they are no more likely to commit crimes than any other member of society.

In conclusion, sociologists disagree about the accuracy of criminal statistics concerning middle class crime. Marxist sociologists are far more likely to doubt their accuracy than New Right sociologists. New Right sociologists believe that some members of the working class are simply more likely to commit crimes than members of the middle class and that official statistics accurately show this difference.

This is a level 4 response. This student provides a detailed and sufficiently well-developed answer to justify a L4. Their argument is logical and well-constructed but needs to focus more on the issue of official statistics and the nature of reported/recorded crime in order to achieve the maximum available marks.

10 marks

What would you improve to make it 12/12?

Discuss how far sociologists agree that social class rather than gender or ethnicity is the most important division in British society. [12 marks]

Marxists agree that social class is the most important division in British society. Class impacts on many areas of day to day life. For example the upper classes still have more power and more opportunities in life. There is a cycle of wealth with those at the upper end of society going to best schools, getting the best jobs, earning the most money and having the best chance of inheriting property. At the other end of the scale many people in Britain face relative or even absolute poverty; they are dependent on the Welfare State or homeless.

However, feminists argue that gender is the most important division. They believe that Britain is still a patriarchal society where men dominate. For example, feminists point to the gender pay gap, with men continuing to earn more than women. Women who look for promotion are often faced with a ‘glass ceiling’ that limits their opportunities. Other sociologists emphasise the differences between ethnic groups.

In conclusion, I believe that the available evidence shows that social class remains the most important division in our society. Regardless of your gender or ethnicity it is your social class that will have the greatest impact on your chances in life. To be working class is an obstacle faced by anyone who hopes to get on in life. To be a woman and/or a member of an ethnic minority is an important difference, but women or members of ethnic minority groups who are middle or upper class face far less of an obstacle in life than members of the working class e.g. they are more likely to succeed at school, go to university and get secure well-paid jobs.

This is a level 4 response. This student provides sufficient evidence of relevant knowledge and understanding to justify a L4, although lacking the necessary detail to justify a mark at the top of L4. Their argument is logical and reasonably well-constructed with evidence based conclusions.

10 marks

What would you improve to make it 12/12?