



Sociology

A Level

Sociology

Unit G673

Exemplar Responses and
Commentaries 2014

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The exemplars in this document have been re-typed for ease of reading but are taken from real candidate work and therefore include the original spelling and grammatical errors made by the candidates at the time.

QUESTION 3: EXEMPLAR 1

46 MARKS

3 Outline and assess sociological explanations of why there is a high crime rate in cities.

[50]

Statistics show that crime rates are higher in urban areas (cities). There are many interpretations of this.

The Chicago school, particularly Shaw and Mackay, studied the link between area and crime and used the concept of 'zones' to illustrate their theory. They found that 5 zones existed in total. The inner zone, zone 1, was the business district, so nobody really lived there. The second zone is where they concentrated most of their efforts. They found that this zone was characterised by a high population turnover, where immigrants would first stay as they arrived, really a place with no social structures. They labelled this zone as a 'zone in transition'. This zone had the highest crime rates and as you moved away from zone 2 outwards, levels of crime dropped. They believe that zone 2 had high levels of crime because of its characteristics. The mix of norms and values and no sense of community meant that anyone did anything they liked. Here you can see links to Durkheim. Durkheim argued that for society to function there must be a value consensus, so everyone shares the same norms and values. If there isn't, this may cause a sense of 'anomie' or normlessness, where everyone is committing crime. Lander found a similar thing occurring in Baltimore, so this evidence seems to apply not just to Chicago.

Shaw and Mackay are open to some criticism however. Firstly their argument is circular. They use crime as evidence of social disorganisation, but then say that crime is caused by social disorganisation. They found that as people got enough money, they moved outwards and stopped committing crime, suggesting that the area caused the criminality and so when people move they stop. However, this doesn't credit people with active choices. Maybe those people who don't commit crime choose to move away. Finally they use correlation analysis, assuming that area causes crime just because they correlate, which may not be accurate. There may be a third factor affecting crime rates such as poverty.

A sort of similar view comes from Sutherland and Cressey who call their theory of crime 'differential association'. They believe that certain areas have a culture of crime where crime is the norm. If you are raised in this type of area, you will come into contact with more deviant norms and values than law abiding ones. So you will become deviant. May studied inner city Liverpool and proved that this culture did exist. There was some confusion as to why some committed crimes and others didn't, but he argued that they all did, but not all of them got caught. So this theory suggests that cities have more people who are deviant than law-abiding.

In a slightly different analysis, Morris studied Croydon. Rather than just looking at the people, he actually considered that the council's housing policies had placed what he called 'problem families' together in council estates. So he argues that it is the people that make the area criminal rather than the other way round. Rex and Moore also found a similar theory of the council's problem family policy in Birmingham. These could be criticisms of the view of Shaw & Mackay.

Baldwin and Bottoms took a similar approach to the above but didn't blame the council. They looked at 2 estates in Sheffield, only separated by a carriageway. In one estate there was 300% more crime than in the other. They didn't blame the council, they argued that the good families moved out of the area they did live in, away from the problem families. So more and more families with the wrong norms and values were living together. Baldwin and Bottoms called this tipping, where estates tip over the edge into criminality becoming the norm.

All of the above are functionalist type analyses of the link between area and crime, focusing on norms and values. Gill, who was an interactionist, took a different approach. He studied Liverpool, and named the street he looked at 'Luke Street'. What he found is that Luke Street had a reputation of being a dodgy council estate, where nobody wanted to live. The residents on that estate started to internalise their labels and live up to them, so the self-fulfilling prophecy occurred. This had another negative consequence. Not only were they committing crime living up to their labels, it also affected

them getting jobs, for example, if employers knew where they lived. So the labelling caused a vicious circle. A criticism of the labelling theory is that not everyone lives up to their labels and some streets can actually try to prove themselves by reacting against them.

In all, the above approaches argue that certain places have higher crime rates due to poor socialisation and a lack of correct norms and values, which can be encouraged by labelling.

Other sociologists have taken completely different approaches when looking at the link between cities and crime rates, looking more closely at opportunities and the design of cities.

Clarke considers that people will weigh up their options before considering whether or not to commit a crime, which is called 'opportunity theory'. If the area is full of CCTV and is harder to access, many won't bother considering committing a crime there, regardless of the reward. Painter's study proves Clarke's theory with her research into street lighting in Stoke-on-Trent. Her study proved that lighting can reduce crime levels in areas. She noted that people felt safer out at night as there was more light. This meant that there were more people around so there would have been more witnesses to crime. So crime dropped by around 26% and 21% also in an adjacent area. So Painter challenges any criticisms of displacement with her findings.

These ideas link to right realist Wilson, who believed that people would commit crime if they think they could get away with it. He developed his ideas a little further arguing that the environment can create a culture of crime itself. He used the concept of broken windows to explain this, arguing that you never just see one broken window, if one is broken, they all are. So in cities which are run down and in places where no-one cares about crime, crime rates will be higher. Linking back to the functionalist views, South also agrees that places with no collective responsibility have higher crime. He argued that crimes such as vandalism occur in the public spheres where no-one takes responsibility. So responsibility should be reinforced through environmental crime prevention such as communal gardens.

A final theory of why some cities have a higher crime rate could be due to police targeting. Phillips and Bowling argue that the police over-police predominantly black neighbourhoods. This will obviously mean they will find more crime in these areas as they would if they concentrated their efforts in white neighbourhoods. This links with conflict theories who criticise the use of the OCS arguing that they are inaccurate and biased, so maybe crime doesn't occur more in cities at all.

In conclusion it can be seen that cities have higher crime rates. This is due to multiple factors such as chaotic normlessness, criminal cultures, labelling and over-policing.

COMMENTARY

LEVEL AND MARKS AWARDED

46 Marks

AO1: Level 5 – 23 marks

AO2a: Level 5 – 9 marks

AO2b: Level 4 – 14 marks

WHY DID IT ACHIEVE THE MARKS?

Extremely wide-ranging, mostly focused and developed – clearly enough for level 5. Though lacking depth in places, the overall understanding and links between studies and theories did show sophistication, and material selected was appropriate and generally well applied, though it lacked a focus on cities in places. Several evaluative points earlier in the essay, and alternative views were contrasted, but the evaluation was not sustained or explicit enough for level 5.

HOW THE ANSWER COULD BE IMPROVED

The evaluation mark slightly let this script down, so sustaining evaluation throughout would have improved the AO2b mark – later views were not evaluated at all. The range was almost too great, and considering a slightly narrower range of explanations, but including more depth and evaluation would have improved the essay further.

QUESTION 3: EXEMPLAR 2

27 MARKS

3 Outline and assess sociological explanations of why there is a high crime rate in cities.

[50]

Sociologists Shaw and McKay have argued that there are high crime rates in cities and they called this area of high crime the 'zone of transition'. There are several reasons why there is a high crime rate in inner cities including relative deprivation, higher opportunity, more policing and high population turnover.

Firstly, relative deprivation could contribute to the higher crime rate as in many cities there are impoverished areas which are run down and very close to the richer areas of the city. People living in the run down areas see the people with money and they want a better lifestyle like that – so they steal.

However, this is a generalisation. Just because people see others with expensive products doesn't mean they will steal. There would be much higher rates of theft if everyone just took things because they felt jealous of other people having them. On the other hand, Marxists and Left Realists would support this idea of relative deprivation (feeling poor in comparison to others) as an explanation of high crime rates in cities as they argue that increasing advertisement and our consumer culture leads to crime in general.

Another reason sociologists give for the high crime in cities is that there is more opportunity – there are many more shops and flats than in, for example, the countryside, and so more crime naturally occurs. Also there are less nuclear families in these areas so women have a higher opportunity to commit crime also, whereas outside of cities it is more common for women to be housewives and so they would have limited opportunities and also different priorities. Furthermore, unemployment is higher in these areas so people have more time to commit crime as well as less money so more need for example for theft or drug dealing.

However, this explanation is also criticised for being a generalisation. The vast majority of people have opportunity to commit crime, yet they do not. There must be a different motivation for criminals other than opportunity.

The fact that cities have a high population turnover is also given as an explanation of the high crime rates. As there is no sense of community, people living there never get to personally know each other and therefore they are less reluctant to commit crime as they do not feel guilt if it affects their neighbours, e.g. anti-social behaviour, theft, property crime. If there was a sense of community they would not want to badly affect their friends and therefore would not commit the crimes that do this. This is supported by Realists who argue that a lack of community cohesion is a major cause of crime.

One more reason given to explain high crime in cities is that there is more policing. This is a constructivist view as it states that because there are more police there are more people being labelled. If the police were to go outside of cities and focus there, they would see crime there also. This explanation is suggesting that high crime rates in cities is a social construct. Interactionists would support this as they argue crime is a product of labels and is a construct. Realists however would not support this, there is a reality to crime.

COMMENTARY

LEVEL AND MARKS AWARDED

27 Marks

AO1: Level 3 – 13 marks

AO2a: Level 3 – 5 marks

AO2b: Level 3 – 9 marks

WHY DID IT ACHIEVE THE MARKS?

This response contained a range of appropriate ideas, relevant to the question but lacked substantiation and depth. For example, Left Realist and Interactionists ideas were both relevant, but neither was fully developed or supported with evidence. So the response had the right sort of ideas, but was lacking substantiation. In terms of evaluation, there were a couple of underdeveloped points, suggesting that each view was a generalisation. These lacked supporting evidence, and could have been linked to alternative theories more successfully.

HOW THE ANSWER COULD BE IMPROVED

Ideas, such as those on population turnover, could have been developed further, for example, by linking to Shaw & Mackay's ideas on social disorganisation. Some theoretical references were made, but depth of understanding was not demonstrated. If the same ideas had been supported with more sociological evidence, the response would score significantly higher both for AO1 and AO2a. Similarly, to improve the AO2b mark, the evaluative points raised needed to be fully explained and supported with sociological evidence, and a greater range of evaluation was needed, bringing out the differences between the competing views.

QUESTION 5: EXEMPLAR 1

46 MARKS

5 Outline and assess sociological explanations of differences in educational achievement between ethnic groups.

[50]

Ethnic minorities can be seen as both underachieving and overachieving in the UK education system. Chinese are more likely to overachieve in education. The Youth cohort study found Indian pupils are more likely to achieve 5 or more GCSEs graded from A* – C. African Caribbean undergraduates are less likely to go to prestigious universities and are more likely to drop out. Babb et al found underachieving ethnic minorities are likely to be: male, from low socio-economic households, parents have low or no qualifications, live in single parent households, have many siblings, go to deprived schools and or go to schools with high levels of FSM (free school meals) eligibility. This suggests that social class may intersect with ethnicity as an explanation of educational achievement.

The New Right would argue that ethnic minorities have cultural deprivation, in that African Caribbean boys lack a male role model as most African Caribbean families are single parents and headed by women. They say that boys lack discipline, whereas girls succeed because they have their mother as a strong role model. Sewell also argues that because African Caribbean boys experience male desertion, this makes them more vulnerable to peer group pressure rather than educational achievement. These views show that ethnicity may also intersect with gender as an explanation of underachievement.

Marxists also argue that there is cultural deprivation in that Ball argues that ethnic minority parents are at a disadvantage as they may not understand the British education system. Gerwitz also argues that school application forms disadvantage ethnic minority parents because they require a high level of literacy to understand them and are often only available in English. Some also argue that there is a 'myth of return'. This means that ethnic minorities have a strong connection to their country of origin and hope one day to return. Pakistani pupils, for example, may take longer periods out of school to visit relatives. Bolognani argues that the myth of return has intensified due to Islamophobia in recent years.

However, culture could also explain educational overachievement, not just underachievement. Archer and Francis argue that Chinese students succeed due to their culture placing a high value on education and success. They argue that Chinese parents take a more assertive role in their child's education to ensure success. Modood also argues that parents who place high value on education may help their children as they have high cultural capital for their children to follow.

Marxists would also argue that ethnic minorities face material deprivation as well as cultural. The Swann report found that 50% of ethnic minority pupils are receiving free school meals. Platt found that poverty is caused by a range of factors such as parents with low/ no qualifications, parents facing discrimination in the workplace and limited savings. Strand found that African Caribbean families are more likely to live in rented accommodation, go to deprived schools and live in deprived neighbourhoods. Ethnic minorities are likely to be in the working class. Smith and Noble found that families in working class may not be able to fund educational resources such as computers and many children miss out on school trips as parents can't afford them. So it may not be the culture of a family, but lack of money which really explains why some ethnic minorities do so less well.

Challenging these views, interactionists argue that factors inside school can impact on ethnic minorities' achievement in education, rather than factors in the family, focusing on labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy and issues of identity. Coard argues that the National Curriculum downplays the importance of ethnic minority culture such as black culture's music and art, which is largely ignored. Also European languages were given a higher status and position compared to ethnic minorities' languages. Tikly et al found that many black pupils felt invisible due to the dominance of white European curriculum and these students felt frustration that the only black history that was acknowledged

was slavery. It could be suggested that there is institutional racism within schools as teachers had expectations of certain groups and many pronounced ethnic minority pupils names wrong which created embarrassment. A Channel 4 report found that over 100,000 racist offences had been reported which has risen over recent years. Haynes et al found that teachers blamed mixed heritage pupils' problems on them not being able to have a clear identity. Gillbourn argues that African Caribbean boys are more likely to get detentions because teachers felt their language and behaviour was threatening their authority, suggesting labelling by teachers. However, Fuller found that Black girls worked together and wanted to prove teachers wrong, so teacher racism may not always lead to underachievement, and sometimes you may get a self-refuting prophecy.

Having looked at the ways in which ethnic groups achieve differently, it is clear that culture plays a big part as this is where people's values come from. However, Mirza argues that ethnicity is very important but that class is even more important in explaining differences in educational achievement. Additionally, Coard argues there is no clear definition of ethnicity or ethnic minorities anyway, so statistics are unclear. For example, he says that the second highest achieving ethnic group is 'missing', showing that those of unclear or unstated background, or mixed heritage are often differently defined in the statistics.

COMMENTARY

LEVEL AND MARKS AWARDED

46 Marks

AO1: Level 5 – 23 marks

AO2a: Level 5 – 10 marks

AO2b: Level 4 – 13 marks

WHY DID IT ACHIEVE THE MARKS?

Extremely wide ranging, with many studies and theory used to support the differing explanations considered. Selecting and applying appropriate evidence, and highly focused. Evaluation was slightly lacking development, but there was an evaluative tone throughout, using a range of explanations which contrast with one another and considering intersections with gender and class.

HOW THE ANSWER COULD BE IMPROVED

Using each competing view to more explicitly evaluate the others would have improved the AO2b mark, which was the weakest skill. In an essay such as this, where a range of views are required as knowledge, it is easy to neglect evaluation. As well as presenting and explaining the opposing views, candidates should be encouraged to explicitly discuss why they differ and how they would challenge the other views.

QUESTION 5: EXEMPLAR 2

23 MARKS

5 Outline and assess sociological explanations of differences in educational achievement between ethnic groups.

[50]

In 2008, 80% of Chinese and Indian students got their GCSEs at A* to C compared with only 20% of Afro-Caribbean students. There are many different sociological explanations for these educational achievements differences such as certain factors affecting these ethnic students for example cultural, material and internal factors.

Sociologist Bourdieu argued that certain students, mainly white middle class, have a significant amount more cultural, social and economic capital which benefits them above other ethnic groups. He claimed that culturally these white middle class children have access to more tools that would aid them in educational progress for example, these white middle class students were taught from a young age to value education. Their parents are more likely to spend the money, an example of economic capital, needed to take their children on educational trips or move to a better catchment area. On the opposite end of this scale, Afro-Caribbean students are more likely to live in a single parent household and so culturally are less able to gain access to these things.

The term material deprivation can be linked to Bourdieu and educational achievement affecting ethnic groups. Both the white and Asian students are more likely to live in better housing than those Afro-Caribbean students who live with a single parent. The poor housing can lead to ill health which can cause certain ethnic students to need time from school and this has a huge impact on their educational achievement. Materially, Asian and white students are able to access an area in their house with which to do their homework and living with only one parent, the black and Afro-Caribbean students have less chance of gaining access to such a space.

Sociologist Ball noted that ethnic minority parents living in England are often affected with language barriers. This puts pressure on their children, the students, who will have to learn English. These language barriers often affect ethnic minority parents when they are filling in school forms and on occasions they are unable to understand them. This can affect the educational achievement of the students in different ethnic groups because their parents may be unable to gain access to good schools in the area in which they live.

Internal factors also have a major impact on educational achievement between ethnic groups. Interactionists such as Keddie came up with the labelling theory. This was where teachers labelled their students according to their dress sense and skin colour. Black students were almost always labelled as disruptive and disrespectful and the Asian students labelled as well behaved and hard working. These labels often came from the teachers when they had the idea of what an 'ideal pupil' looked like (mainly it was a middle class white students). Once these labels were given, it affected the educational achievement because the teachers chose to act a certain way to the different labelled students.

Rosenthal and Jacobson developed Keddie's idea of labelling and added in a further stage, the self-fulfilling prophecy. This was where those students who had been labelled acted upon then and thus 'fulfilled' their label. Therefore those labelled as disruptive would indeed act disruptive and refuse to do the work. This caused differences in educational achievement for the black students. However, Fuller conducted a study and discovered that the black girls who had negative labels actually resisted the labels and outperformed a few other ethnic groups. This shows how labelling does not affect all students.

Becker added in another stage to labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy and this was the formation of anti-school subcultures. These were formed by those with negative labels who weren't gaining status through their school work. In order to regain status they chose to misbehave even worse in order to gain status from their peer group in the subcultures.

Overall there are many different sociological explanations for the differences which often focus on certain factors. In order to fully explore the differences, mention would have to be made to Douglas, who argued that the most important factor in specific differences was the parental interest of each ethnic minority group. Asian parents cared more when compared to black or Afro-Caribbean parents proving to have an adverse effect on educational achievement.

COMMENTARY

LEVEL AND MARKS AWARDED

23 Marks

AO1: Level 3 – 12 marks

AO2a: Level 3 – 5 marks

AO2b: Level 3 – 6 marks

WHY DID IT ACHIEVE THE MARKS?

This response did contain a range of studies and concepts, but this was mostly in reference to social class differences rather than ethnic differences, and a tenuous and sometimes assertive link to ethnicity was made, which was not always accurate. The response was confused in places, for example, over labelling, and was only directly relevant now and again. Thus it had some range, without depth and was related to the general topic area rather than the specific question, making it level 3 for AO1 and AO2a. There was only one explicit but underdeveloped evaluative point, in relation to the self-fulfilling prophecy, and otherwise, the different views were just presented, with no evaluative links being made, so it gets low level 3 for AO2b.

HOW THE ANSWER COULD BE IMPROVED

The selection of supporting evidence needed to be more fully focused on ethnicity rather than social class. There are many studies on cultural and material factors, teacher-pupil interactions and pupil subcultures which are specifically related to ethnicity, for example, Sewell, Archer, Wright, Gillbourn, Mac an Ghaill amongst others. Generalisations about 'Afro-Caribbeans' and 'Asians' are best avoided or at least evaluated. A more accurate and in-depth understanding could have been demonstrated if more appropriate studies and concepts had been selected, and evaluation needed to be more explicit and frequent throughout.

QUESTION 7: EXEMPLAR 1

47 MARKS

7 Outline and assess the view that media representations of females continue to be based on traditional stereotypes.

[50]

The mass media, according to Jenkins, now consists of new media and with multi-functions. The way in which media can be interpreted has been explored by different perspectives. Branston and Ford claim that the media is simply a representation of reality. When applying this to the representations of females, stereotypes arise; this essay will argue that the media's representations of females continue to be based upon stereotypes. Feminists differ in the interpretation and application of their theories, but generally agree that the media does portray women in a stereotypical way. However, critics will argue that things are changing and also that the active audience will simply reject such stereotypes within the media.

Ideological ideals form the basis of research by feminists. Tuchman argues there is a 'symbolic annihilation' of women in the media, in which they are portrayed as passive or even invisible. For example, Tuchman says that women are often shown in domestic roles within the media, whereas men are hardly ever positioned in a caring role.

The objectification of women is significant to the research of female stereotypes, especially for feminists. Mulvey claims that the 'male gaze' accounts for the extent of the objectification of women; the male gaze means when the media is always portrayed through male eyes and what males want to see, so that even women see themselves in this way.

Although a stereotype is difficult to define, a common theme arises with the focus on the beauty of women. Advertising in the media ensures women feel the need to buy into beauty products. Kilbourne exemplifies this idea of as she explores the nature of female stereotypes in the media. In 'Killing us softly', Kilbourne states that according to media representations of women, if you are not young and perfect looking then you have no sexuality. She considers how advertising contributes to a lack of self-esteem in women. This therefore supports the view that the media continues to hold images of traditional stereotypes; women are seen as objects for men and encouraged to be complicit in their roles of pleasing men and their 'gaze'.

Naomi Wolf discusses the 'beauty myth' which is the way that images of beauty are used to control and dominate women by men. She argues that beauty is the last and most powerful myth that keeps females subordinate to males, creating insecurities and keeping women from feeling powerful and confident. Liberal feminists would suggest this will continue until legislation brings about a fundamental change and the prohibition of 'stereotypes'.

Radical feminists research the lasting effects of the pressure on women, from eating disorders to domestic violence. The 'cult of femininity' was identified by radical feminist Ferguson, who considered the portrayal of women in magazines and the obsession with pleasing men. Each feature would impose a 'perfect looking' female figure. Though this study is dated, a contemporary example would be coverage of Kim Kardashian. Women strive to achieve this, when in reality it is simply unachievable, especially with airbrushing in magazines. Slimness equals happiness is another ideological ideal shaped by the media. Women are still pressured into investing in the 'body project' according to Cumberbatch. Minn argued that because of the imbalance of control, women turn to the one thing they can control, which is their weight. The impossible images women are expected to achieve may lead to eating disorders, as argued by Susie Orbach. Women strive for the perfection that is glamorized in magazines and general TV content, however, this perfection is simply impossible.

Another example of stereotypes of females is in video games. There are no female characters in 41% of Nintendo games, and female characters which do exist are usually victims or weak characters, or are stereotypically sexualised such as Lara Croft. Greenfield argues that male and female characters are split into active and passive roles, a bit like in traditional fairy tales. However, Skirrow argues that females don't tend to play video games, so these stereotypes may affect males more

than females themselves. From a young age, males are being socialised and stereotyped as the perpetrators of violence in such games, so it is not always women who are stereotyped, but men as well.

A Weberian perspective argues that the 'glass ceiling' applies for women working in the media, as very few women obtain managerial positions in the media. The GUMG illustrate how most journalistic and managerial positions are filled by white middle class males. This could contribute to the stereotyping of women in the media and the continuation of the 'male gaze'.

However, Black feminists may point out that it is not only gender, but also race which affects women's portrayal in the media, since ethnic minority women are even more underrepresented, both on screen and off screen.

Alternatively, Marxist feminists would suggest that female stereotypes in the media continue, but they do so with the function of serving and benefitting the capitalist system. The consumer culture is enhanced by the media to encourage women to buy into Mulvey's male gaze and spend money on trying to achieve perfection, therefore benefitting the capitalist economy. Women are also the reserve army of labour, and perform unpaid domestic work according to Marxist feminists, so the focus on domestic roles such as cooking and cleaning in adverts also serves the patriarchal, capitalist economy.

Functionalists would disagree with the Marxist Feminist explanation of female stereotypes, as they argue that this serves society as a whole and is functional. Tunstall's claim about women being portrayed in domestic roles links to Parson's 'warm bath theory' which positions the female as the carer in the family and in the traditional role. This is not stereotypical according to functionalists, it is functional, and based on women's natural, expressive role.

Pluralists would also challenge the view that females are shown stereotypically, since they argue that the media reflects society. So women are shown in a representative way, and most women do do the housework, and men are still the main breadwinners. Pluralists argue that as society changes, the media also reflect this so they would challenge the view in the question also by arguing that the portrayal of females is not longer quite so stereotypical. For example, Gauntlett looked at the US comedy 'Friends' to illustrate how the female characters are shown as equally successful as the males.

Also contradicting feminist views is the postmodernist view. They suggest that women can filter through the media representations, since the audience today are media literate. Thus even though statistics suggest that for every all female advertisement, there are three all male ones, women have the power to choose and to build their identities from whatever media message is plausible to them.

However, arguing against this is that the media messages are too strong and alternatives to choose from are not really offered, therefore the misogynistic objectification of women in the media continues to be a problem. To conclude, most feminists would agree with Connell, that the media remains based on patriarchy and the media output is misogynistic.

COMMENTARY

LEVEL AND MARKS AWARDED

47 Marks

AO1: Level 5 – 23 marks

AO2a: Level 5 – 10 marks

AO2b: Level 4 – 14 marks

WHY DID IT ACHIEVE THE MARKS?

Excellent response. The range of evidence, including theory and empirical evidence, was extremely good, and though not all evidence was discussed in depth, there was so much content and such a clear understanding that it clearly reaches level 5. Evidence was interpreted and applied effectively, and the essay was well focused. Evaluative tone was present in the introduction and 4 developed evaluative points using theory were included, as well as a contrast of feminist views and some discussion at the end. However, the evaluation was not sustained into a critical commentary, so did not reach level 5.

HOW THE ANSWER COULD BE IMPROVED

Sustaining a critical tone throughout and evaluating each point made would improve the AO2b mark further. For example, the liberal feminist view that things are improving could have been considered, and more examples to support the pluralist and postmodernist critiques could have been discussed, as well as more clearly drawing out the differences between the feminist views.

QUESTION 7: EXEMPLAR 2

28 MARKS

7 Outline and assess the view that media representations of females continue to be based on traditional stereotypes.

[50]

Traditional stereotypes are considered to be the roles and values that are associated with a particular gender, for example, the traditional stereotypes associated with women consist of sexual objectification and association with domestic tasks such as cleaning and parenting. An example of this is the Iceland advertisement with the slogan 'that's why mum's go to Iceland'. Within this essay I will discuss the view that media representations of women continue to be based on these stereotypes.

One view which supports the view that females are continuing to be represented based on traditional stereotypes is that of the Radical feminists who believe that the only way in which females can be truly free of their stereotype and male dominance is through the removal of men. An example of females continuing to be represented with their stereotypical image is through the portrayal of their sexuality to sell products, such as the Burger King advert in 2004 which shows a woman erotically eating a burger. A sociologist who supports this view is Dohan who found that the media still persists in the objectification of women. In addition to this, women are only given limited airtime which is reflective of their submissive behaviour. An Ofcom study in 2005 found that over 90% of commentators are male. However, in criticism to this point it can be argued that the media has created role models for women who haven't been sexually idolised. An example of this is the TV show Ugly Betty or comedians such as Dawn French and Miranda Hart. And finally, women are portrayed in positions of authority such as Oprah Winfrey, Margaret Thatcher and Beyonce, who attended a United Nations conference in 2011. This therefore shows one way in which it can be argued that women are continually portrayed within their traditional stereotypes through their sexualisation and objectification within the media.

A second way in which it can be argued that the media continue to represent women based on traditional stereotypes is through their portrayal of domestic duties within the family. This can involve anything from cleaning to cooking to pleasing the male of the household. This view of women is continually reinforced by the advertising industry in order to gain revenue as they believe that women are their key market. An example of this is within cleaning product adverts such as Flash, as it portrays a woman having problems with her unclean floor. A study which supports these ideas is McRobbie who conducted a 40 year analysis of children's and women's magazines and concluded that the media does impact upon the creation of women's identities, which not only shows that the media are portraying these images, but that they are also being accepted by the audiences too. However, in criticism of this view it can be argued that women are not accepting these views and are pursuing roles outside what are considered their domestic duties. For example, after the 2010 election the number of women pursuing political positions had increased. This therefore shows that women are rejecting the stereotypes and accepting what they wish, which is additionally supported by postmodernists who say that society is a diverse culture. Polhemus suggests that we can 'pick and mix' the images and stereotypes portrayed within the media.

A final way in which it can be argued against the view that traditional stereotypes are still being portrayed in the media is that of the liberal feminists who have used the media to gain their goal of legal equality for women. An example of this is the suffragette movement in which a female jumped in front of a horse and died which in consequence of this was in all of the papers and was heard of globally that she had sacrificed her life in order to gain the vote for women which was successfully achieved. In addition to this it could be argued that Cohen's idea of moral panics influenced the gain of women's vote. This therefore goes against the media traditional stereotype that women are submissive beings under the influence of male dominance.

However, this argument can be criticised by Radical feminists who maintain that women still continue to be suppressed by men through the stereotypes in the media, for example the dominance of disneyfication in which men play the hero such as in The Incredibles.

In conclusion, after weighing up arguments both for and against the view that the media representations of females continue to be based upon traditional stereotypes, I have concluded that although it is true that some stereotypes of women still remain such as their sexual objectification, it can be said that there are signs of improvement which can be beneficial to society such as the increasing number of female role models within the media such as Michelle Obama, Beyonce and Oprah Winfrey.

COMMENTARY

LEVEL AND MARKS AWARDED

28 Marks

AO1: Level 3 – 13 marks

AO2a: Level 3 – 5 marks

AO2b: Level 4 – 10 marks

WHY DID IT ACHIEVE THE MARKS?

This response does show some good understanding of the debates, but relies on examples quite heavily, with some undeveloped and sometimes inaccurate references to theory and studies. There were a couple of developed evaluative points about women not accepting the stereotypical roles, and some developed examples of more positive portrayals. However, some points were confused and underdeveloped – for example using the Suffragettes example to support Liberal feminists, with a confused link to moral panics. So understanding was shown, but lacking depth and range of evidence.

HOW THE ANSWER COULD BE IMPROVED

A greater range of appropriate evidence could have been interpreted and applied, supplementing the contemporary examples with relevant studies. The theoretical framework of the debate also needs more emphasis, highlighting the difference between the different strands of feminism mentioned, and also bringing in pluralists to support the evaluative points. More development of points was needed to fully demonstrate understanding, which at times seemed fairly superficial.



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