

Skills Exercises

Interpretation and application (AO2)

Cambridge IGCSE™
Sociology 0495

Cambridge O Level
Sociology 2251

For examination from 2025



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Introduction

Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology attracts a variety of learners from many different backgrounds. For all learners Sociology is a new subject and an opportunity to explore an area of study that interests them, while developing a set of transferable skills. The study of Sociology encourages learners to think critically about contemporary social, cultural and political issues. It provides opportunities to explore sociological concepts and arguments while studying a range of stimulating topics and real-world issues.

Skills and why they are important?

Skills are the key to success. The performance of candidates in Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology exams have shown a range of areas where improvement would be helpful. These areas of improvement tend to centre around the assessment objectives (AOs) of the course and we have addressed these three AOs in three Skills Exercises booklets.

- Skills Exercises – Knowledge and understanding (AO1)
- Skills Exercises – Interpretation and application (AO2)
- Skills Exercises – Analysis and evaluation (AO3)

The skills exercises in these booklets make use of exam-style questions and data and include activities and worksheets to help skills development and incorporate suggested teaching approaches, such as group work, discussion, structured support and writing in sequence. They do not attempt to cover all possible aspects of the examinations, only those problem areas which have presented consistently over time.

How will these skills be developed?

The Skills Exercises booklets aim to help learners develop skills in:

- demonstrating knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods.
- applying relevant sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods to support points or develop arguments.
- explaining how sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods apply to a particular issue or question.
- analysing and evaluating sociological theories, evidence, views and research methods. This includes how to construct, develop and discuss sociological arguments and reach conclusions and make judgements based on a reasoned consideration of evidence.

The skills exercises provide suggestions so you can have confidence that the materials you prepare and use in the classroom are building skills and resilience in your learners. This document should be used alongside the other teaching and learning resources provided on the [School Support Hub](#)

Interpretation and application (AO2)

The ability to apply interpretation and application skills is essential to be able to access interpretation and application (AO2) marks and to achieve good quality analysis and evaluation. Learners should be able to:

- interpret evidence from source material and apply relevant sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods to support points or develop arguments.
- explain how sociological concepts, theories, evidence, views and research methods apply to a particular issue or question.

The following table contains some command words that might indicate to learners that they need to demonstrate interpretation and application.

Command word	What it means
Describe	state the points of a topic/give characteristics and main features
Discuss	write about issue(s) or topic(s) in depth in a structured way
Evaluate	judge or calculate the quality, importance, amount or value of something
Explain	set out purposes or reasons / make the relationships between things clear / say why and/or how and support with relevant evidence

Exercise 1: Interpreting and applying research methods

For Paper 1 there is a compulsory section on research methods. As part of the first question learners will be expected to interpret data from a source. The source may be quantitative, qualitative or a combination of both.

Learners are required to identify or select two pieces of information or data from the source. In a quantitative source they may be required to identify where there may have been increases or decreases in the amount of something, for example over time. Practising the skill of interpretation is a good way of building confidence with source-related questions.

Activity 1: Interpreting quantitative data sources

It is important that learners can interpret data from a quantitative data source. The two sources and following examination-style questions in **Worksheet 1: Interpreting quantitative data sources** will get learners used to the AO2 skills needed to be successful.

Once learners have answered the questions, lead a feedback session to go through the answers.

Worksheet 1: Interpreting quantitative data sources

Read both sources and answer the questions.

Question 1

Source A

Average life expectancy in 1950 and 2019, in selected countries

The table below shows the average life expectancy for people in six countries between 1950 and 2019. The data is gathered from each country's official statistics, such as the census and death records.

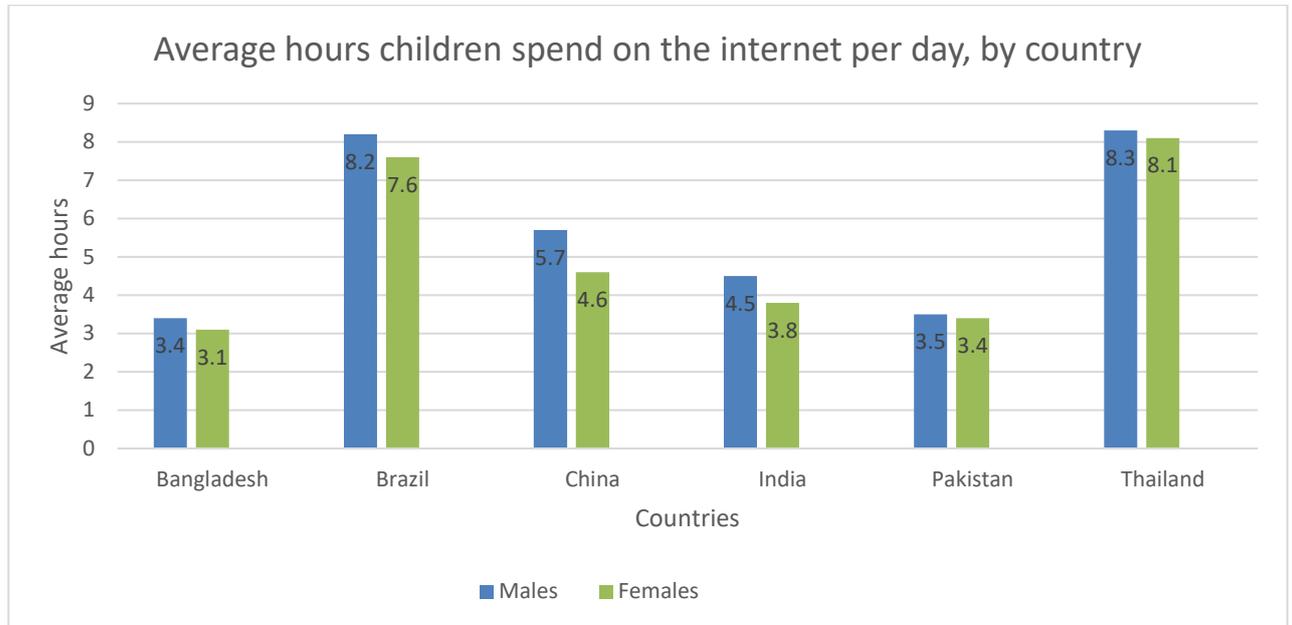
Country	Life expectancy in 1950 (years)	Life expectancy in 2019 (years)
Argentina	46	77
Botswana	44	70
Egypt	49	72
Ghana	48	66
Hong Kong	64	85
Mauritius	45	75

Source: adapted from *Our World in Data*

- a) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the highest life expectancy in 1950.
- b) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the lowest life expectancy in 2019.
- c) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the biggest increase in life expectancy between 1950-2019.
- d) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that has the lowest increase in life expectancy between 1950-2019.

Question 2**Source A****How long children spend per day on the internet**

The bar chart below shows the average number of hours that children spent per day on the internet in 2020. The chart shows information for males and female children in selected countries. The data was collected from an online survey.



Source: *adapted from Our Digital World.*

- a) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries where children spend the most time on the internet in 2020.
- b) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries where children spend the least amount of time on the internet in 2020.
- c) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the biggest difference between the number of hours males and females spent on the internet in 2020.
- d) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the lowest difference between the number of hours males and females spent on the internet in 2020.

Worksheet 1 answers:

Question 1

a) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the highest life expectancy in 1950.

Answer: *Hong Kong and Ghana*

b) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the lowest life expectancy in 2019.

Answer: *Ghana and Botswana*

c) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the biggest increase in life expectancy between 1950-2019.

Answer: *Argentina and Mauritius*

d) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the lowest increase in life expectancy between 1950-2019.

Answer: *Ghana and Hong Kong*

Question 2

a) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries where children spend the most amount of time on the internet in 2020.

Answer: *Thailand and Brazil*

b) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries where children spend the least amount of time on the internet in 2020.

Answer: *Bangladesh and Pakistan*

c) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the biggest difference between the number of hours males and females spent on the internet in 2020.

Answer: *China and India*

d) From **Source A**, identify the **two** countries that have the lowest difference between the number of hours males and females spent on the internet in 2020.

Answer: *Pakistan and Thailand*

Activity 2: Interpreting qualitative data sources

It is important that learners can interpret data from a qualitative data source.

The two sources and the following exam-style questions in **Worksheet 2: Interpreting qualitative data sources** will allow learners to become familiar with the AO2 skills needed to be successful. Similar types of sources and questions may be used to give extra practice to learners.

Once learners have answered the questions, lead a feedback session to go through the answers.

Worksheet 2: Interpreting qualitative data sources

Read the sources and answer the questions.

Question 1

Source A

The Sociology of Housework (1974)

Ann Oakley is a British feminist who wanted to end women's subordination to men in both the home and wider society. In her famous study 'The Sociology of Housework' (1974) Oakley's tried to understand the experience of housework from the point of view of the women who did it. Her aims were to describe the housewife's situation and to examine patterns of dissatisfaction.

Oakley conducted 40 semi-structured interviews with London housewives. The housewives were aged between 20 and 30. They were all mothers with at least one child under five. The interviews took two hours each and the interviews were conducted in the women's homes. She recorded the conversations so that she could have an accurate account of each interview. Using a tape recorder to record the women's words also allowed her to keep eye contact and therefore keep the conversations as natural as possible.

Oakley concluded that many housewives in her sample did most or all the housework and they experienced housework as boring, repetitive and with little or no reward. Her findings disagreed with a previous study by Wilmott and Young which suggested that there is now more gender equality in housework.

- a) From **Source A**, identify **two** conclusions from Ann Oakley's study, 'The Sociology of Housework'.
- b) From **Source A**, identify **two** reasons why recording the interviews was useful.
- c) From **Source A**, identify **two** characteristics of the sample in Ann Oakley's study, 'The Sociology of Housework'.
- d) From **Source A**, identify **two** aims of Ann Oakley's study, 'The Sociology of Housework'.

Question 2**Source A****The Millennium Cohort Study**

The Millennium Cohort Study is a longitudinal study which began in 2000 with a sample of 19,000 children and their families. Researchers track children at various time intervals.

The study aims to show how differences in early socialisation affect child development in health and also in education. The study also allows researchers to compare the development of children of different sexes and from different economic backgrounds.

The main research methods used during the study include questionnaires which are used to gather information about the child and family background, mental health and wellbeing, housing, employment and income. Cognitive tests measure verbal, language and numeric ability through childhood. Physical tests and self-reported health data provide information about different health conditions experienced by the study members.

Early findings showed:

- children from lower-income families, with parents who were less educated, were less advanced in their development at age five
- living in social housing put them behind in maths and literacy
- girls were consistently outperforming boys at the age of five in creative subjects and in literacy.

a) From **Source A**, identify **two** findings from 'The Millennium Cohort Study'.

b) From **Source A**, identify **two** methods of research used in 'The Millennium Cohort Study'.

c) From **Source A**, identify **two** topic areas the questionnaire gathers information on in 'The Millennium Cohort Study'.

d) From **Source A**, identify **two** aims of 'The Millennium Cohort Study'.

Worksheet 2 answers:

Question 1

a) From **Source A**, identify **two** conclusions from Ann Oakley's study 'The Sociology of Housework'.

Answer:

- (i) *many housewives in her sample did most or all the housework*
- (ii) *they experienced housework as boring, repetitive and with little or no reward.*

b) From **Source A**, identify **two** reasons why recording the interviews was useful.

Answer: any **two** from the following:

- (i) *conversations so that she could have an accurate record*
- (ii) *it allowed her to keep eye contact*
- (iii) *it allowed her to keep the conversations as natural as possible.*

c) From **Source A**, identify **two** characteristics of the sample in Ann Oakley's study, 'The Sociology of Housework'.

Answer: any **two** from the following:

- (i) *they were housewives*
- (ii) *they were from London*
- (iii) *they were aged between 20 and 30* (iv) *all were mothers with at least one child under five.*

d) From **Source A**, identify **two** aims of Ann Oakley's study 'The Sociology of Housework'.

Answer: any **two** from the following:

- (i) *to understand the experience of housework from the point of view of the women*
- (ii) *to describe the housewife's situation*
- (iii) *examine patterns of dissatisfaction.*

Question 2

a) From **Source A**, identify **two** findings from 'The Millennium Cohort Study'.

Answer: any **two** from the following:

- (i) *children from lower-income families, with parents who were less educated, were less advanced in their development at age five*
- (ii) *living in social housing put them behind in maths and literacy*
- (iii) *(iii) girls were consistently outperforming boys at the age of five in creative subjects and in literacy.*

b) From **Source A**, identify **two** methods of research used in 'The Millennium Cohort Study'.

Answer: any **two** from the following:

- (i) *questionnaire*
- (ii) *cognitive tests*
- (iii) *physical tests.*

c) From **Source A**, identify **two** topic areas the questionnaire gathers information on in 'The Millennium Cohort Study'.

Answer: any **two** from the following information about:

- (i) *the child and family background*
- (ii) *mental health and wellbeing*
- (iii) *housing*
- (iv) *employment*
- (v) *income.*

d) From **Source A**, identify **two** aims of 'The Millennium Cohort Study'.

Answer: how differences in early socialisation affect child development in:

- (i) *health*
- (ii) *education.*

Activity 3: Applying research design

In Paper 1, learners are required to create a basic research design.

In justifying their research design, it is important that learners **apply** their generic knowledge of research methods to the scenario given in the examination question.

Provide learners with a series of research scenarios. The scenarios on **Worksheet 3: Applying research design** can be used or changed with other scenarios.

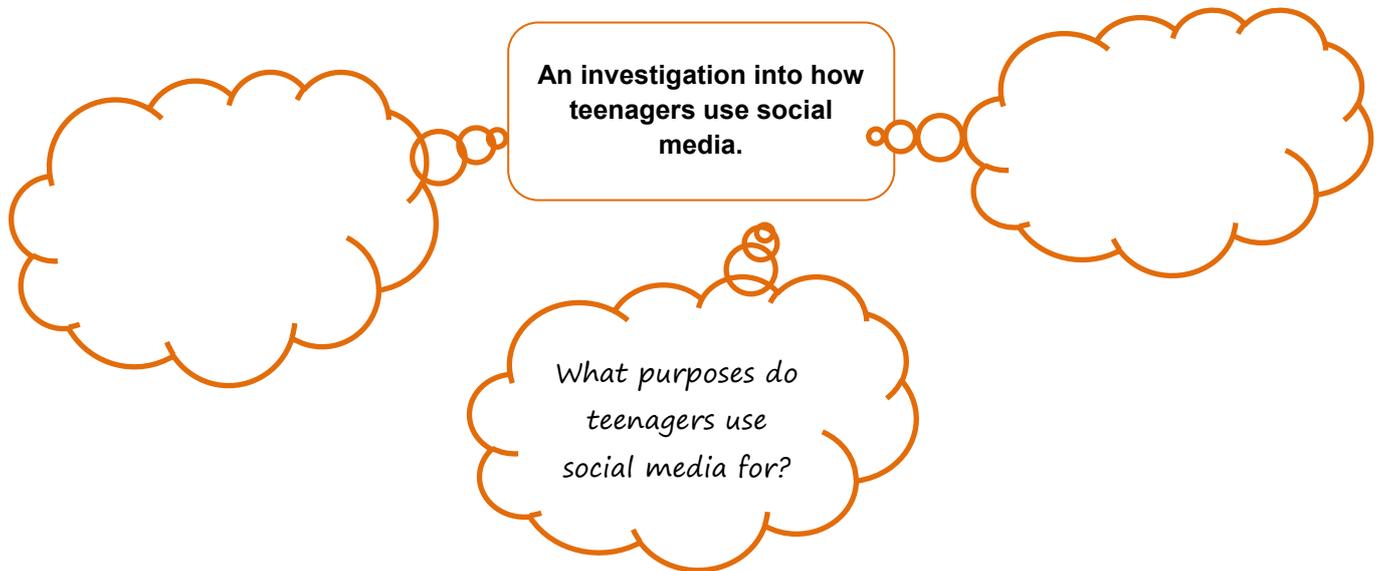
Learners choose:

- a) a primary method
- b) a sample (size and sampling technique)
- c) secondary evidence that would be useful for investigating the scenario.

Learners must justify their choices by giving reasons why this is useful for investigating the topic.

Worksheet 3: Applying research design

1. Break down the research scenario into a series of questions. An example is given.



2. Choose a primary method that you would use to investigate how teenagers use social media.

- Choose from: a survey, a questionnaire, a type of interview (e.g. unstructured) or a type of observation (e.g. overt participant).
- In your explanation of why the method is useful to the topic try to include concepts such as: qualitative or quantitative, validity, reliability, bias, verstehen, meanings and motivations, patterns and trends as appropriate.

Method:

Explain why it is useful for researching how teenagers use social media

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3. Now choose a sampling technique and sample for your primary research method.

- Choose one from these sampling techniques: random, stratified, snowball, systematic or quota sample.
- When choosing your sample composition think about the number and type of people you will target.
- In your explanation of why the sample is useful for the topic try to include concepts such as: representativeness and generalisability, cross-sectional, unbiased etc.

Sampling technique:

Sample composition:

Explain why it is useful for researching how teenagers use social media:

4. Finally, choose the secondary data that you would use to investigate how teenagers use social media.

- Examples of secondary data sources include: newspapers, statistics, sociological studies, diaries and other personal documents or digital sources.
- In your explanation of why the secondary data is useful to the topic try to include concepts such as: qualitative or quantitative, validity, reliability, bias, verstehen, meanings and motivations, patterns and trends as appropriate.

Secondary data:

Explain why it is useful for researching how teenagers use social media

Worksheet 3 answers may include:

1. Break down the research scenario into a series of questions. An example is given.



2. Choose a primary method that you would use to investigate how teenagers use social media.

- Choose from: a survey, a questionnaire, a type of interview (e.g. unstructured) or a type of observation (e.g. overt participant).
- In your explanation of why the method is useful to the topic try to include concepts such as: qualitative or quantitative, open or closed questions, validity, reliability, bias, verstehen, meanings and motivations, patterns and trends as appropriate.

Method: *Online questionnaire*

Explain why it is useful for researching how teenagers use social media.

A questionnaire will allow me to ask a series of closed and scaled questions to the teenagers to find out about the extent of their social media use. For example, I could ask how long per day they spend on social media and which platforms they use. Using scaled questions, I can find out what kinds of purposes they use social media for. This will give me quantitative data which I can use to see any patterns and trends in how teenagers use different social media platforms. My data will be reliable as the questionnaire is standardised and so should gain the same results if repeated with another sample, repeatable with the same or similar results.

3. Now choose a sampling technique and sample for your primary research method.

- Choose one of these sampling techniques: random, stratified, snowball, systematic or quota sample.
- When choosing your sample composition think about the number and type of people you will target.
- In your explanation of why the sample is useful for the topic try to include concepts such as: representativeness and generalisability, cross-sectional, unbiased etc.

Sampling technique: *Stratified*

Sample composition: *200 people – 100 males and 100 females equally divided in age intervals 13-15 and 16-19*

Explain why it is useful for researching how teenagers use social media: *My sample is stratified by age as I only need teenagers. To be representative my sample will be large and the 200 teenagers will be divided equally according to gender as if it was only boys the data would not reflect teenagers who are girls. I will divide my sample into age categories to see whether there is any difference in the use of social media by younger and older teenagers.*

4. Finally, choose the secondary data that you would use to investigate how young people use social media.

- Examples of secondary data sources include: newspapers, statistics, sociological studies, diaries and other personal documents or digital sources.
- In your explanation of why the secondary data is useful to the topic try to include concepts such as: qualitative or quantitative, validity, reliability, bias, verstehen, meanings and motivations, patterns and trends as appropriate.

Secondary data: *A recent sociological study on young people and social media*

Explain why it is useful for researching how young people use social media:

I would look for a sociological study which gives me more qualitative information about the reasons why young people use certain social media, what they like and do not like about them. Because this information has been gained from users' own accounts it is likely to be high in validity and will help me to gain a more holistic picture of teenagers use of social media than simply relying on the quantitative data from the questionnaires.

Exercise 2: Applying knowledge of concepts, ideas and evidence

Concepts, ideas and evidence form a major part of a learners' sociological knowledge. Building upon this skill, learners need to be able to **apply** this knowledge in supporting points and in developing more extended sociological arguments.

Learning to apply appropriate sociological knowledge in the right social context or situation is an important skill.

Activity 1: Applying sociological knowledge

Learners need to be able to apply appropriate sociological knowledge in the right social context or situation; this is an important skill.

Provide learners with a mixture of different sociological statements which may or may not apply to the social context/situation provided in each question.

Worksheet 4: Applying sociological knowledge focuses on Topic 3 Social stratification and inequality, but the statements can be replaced with others from different topics.

Learners identify the correct statements that apply to the social context/situation.

Lead a discussion with learners about the different statements, identifying the correct ones and giving examples of why a statement is incorrect.

Worksheet 4: Applying sociological knowledge

Identify the correct statements that apply to the provided social situation.

1. An individual is **born into poverty** and finds it **impossible to improve his/her social position**. Which statements best describe his/her situation?

1. She/he is trapped in a cycle of poverty.
2. She/he lives in a meritocratic society.
3. His/her ascribed status will be low.
4. There are good opportunities for social mobility.

- A. 1 and 2
- B. 3 and 4
- C. 1 and 3
- D. 2 and 3

2. A **woman** is experiencing **discrimination in the workplace**. Which statements could indicate discrimination?

1. The introduction of a minimum wage.
2. Colleagues make sexist comments which make her feel afraid.
3. There is a gender pay gap in place.
4. A glass ceiling is present in the workplace.

- A. 1, 2 and 3
- B. 2, 3 and 4
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 2 and 4 only

3. The following statements describe global problems. Which are **global ecological issues**?

1. The world's climate is changing.
2. Pollution of the seas due to the dumping of waste.
3. Increased gap between the rich and poor in developed countries.
4. The increase in global crime due to the internet.

- A. 1 and 2.
- B. 1 and 3
- C. 2 and 3
- D. 3 and 4

4. Individuals often rely on the **welfare state** to improve their situation. Which of the following statements are examples of this?

1. Non-governmental organisations (NGO's) provide medical assistance to individuals in a crisis.
2. People receive unemployment benefit when they lose their job.
3. A charity offers free school places to children who cannot afford the school fees.
4. Everyone receives a state pension when they retire.

A. 1 and 2.

B. 1 and 3

C. 2 and 3

D. 2 and 4

5. A person from an **ethnic minority** is more likely to experience **barriers to improving their life chances**. Which of the following are examples of such barriers?

1. An ethnocentric curriculum at school.
2. Sexist attitudes in the workplace.
3. Less opportunity to live in a good standard, safe housing.
4. Media stereotyping of ethnic minorities as criminal and deviant.

A. 1 and 2 only

B. 1 and 3 only

C. 1, 2 and 3

D. 1, 3 and 4

6. Some individuals live in a **closed society**. Which statements describe a closed society?

1. There is movement up and down the social ladder.
2. A caste system exists.
3. Apartheid existed in South Africa where the Black majority were oppressed by the White minority.
4. All borders are closed so that illegal immigrants cannot enter.

A. 1 and 2

B. 1 and 3

C. 2 and 3

D. 3 and 4

Worksheet 4 answers:

1. An individual is **born into poverty** and finds it **impossible to improve his/her social position**. Which statements best describe his/her situation?

1. She/he is trapped in a cycle of poverty.
2. She/he lives in a meritocratic society.
3. His/her ascribed status will be low.
4. There are good opportunities for social mobility.

C. 1 and 3

2. A **woman** is experiencing **discrimination in the workplace**. Which statements could indicate discrimination?

1. The introduction of a minimum wage.
2. Colleagues make sexist comments which make her feel afraid.
3. There is a gender pay gap in place.
4. A glass ceiling is present in the workplace.

B. 2, 3 and 4

3. The following statements describe global problems. Which are **global ecological issues**?

1. The world's climate is changing.
2. Pollution of the seas due to the dumping of waste.
3. Increased gap between the rich and poor in developed countries.
4. The increase in global crime due to the internet.

A. 1 and 2

4. Individuals often rely on the **welfare state** to improve their situation. Which of the following statements are examples of this?

1. Non-governmental organisations (NGO's) provide medical assistance to individuals in a crisis.
2. People receive unemployment benefit when they lose their job.
3. A charity offers free school places to children who cannot afford the school fees.
4. Everyone receives a state pension when they retire.

C. 2 and 4

5. A person from an **ethnic minority** is more likely to experience **barriers to improving their life chances**.

Which of the following are examples of such barriers?

1. An ethnocentric curriculum at school.
2. Sexist attitudes in the workplace.
3. Less opportunity to live in a good standard, safe housing.
4. Media stereotyping of ethnic minorities as criminal and deviant.

D. 1, 3 and 4

6. Some individuals live in a **closed society**. Which statements describe a closed society?

1. There is movement up and down the social ladder.
2. A caste system exists.
3. Apartheid existed in South Africa where the Black majority were oppressed by the White minority.
4. All borders are closed so that illegal immigrants cannot enter.

C. 2 and 3

Activity 2: Applying examples

In Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology an examination question can be based on a single idea or concept. However, different examples may be given to illustrate skills in both knowledge and understanding (AO1) and the application of knowledge (AO2).

Examples are also fundamental to the ability to develop sociological points and arguments in a paragraph/extended answer.

Give learners a topic area from the syllabus. The topics in **Worksheet 4: Applying examples** is based on Topic 2 Identity: self and society. It can be used as a basis for the applying examples activity, or any other topic from the syllabus may be used.

Learners create a mind-map using different examples that link to the specific topic.

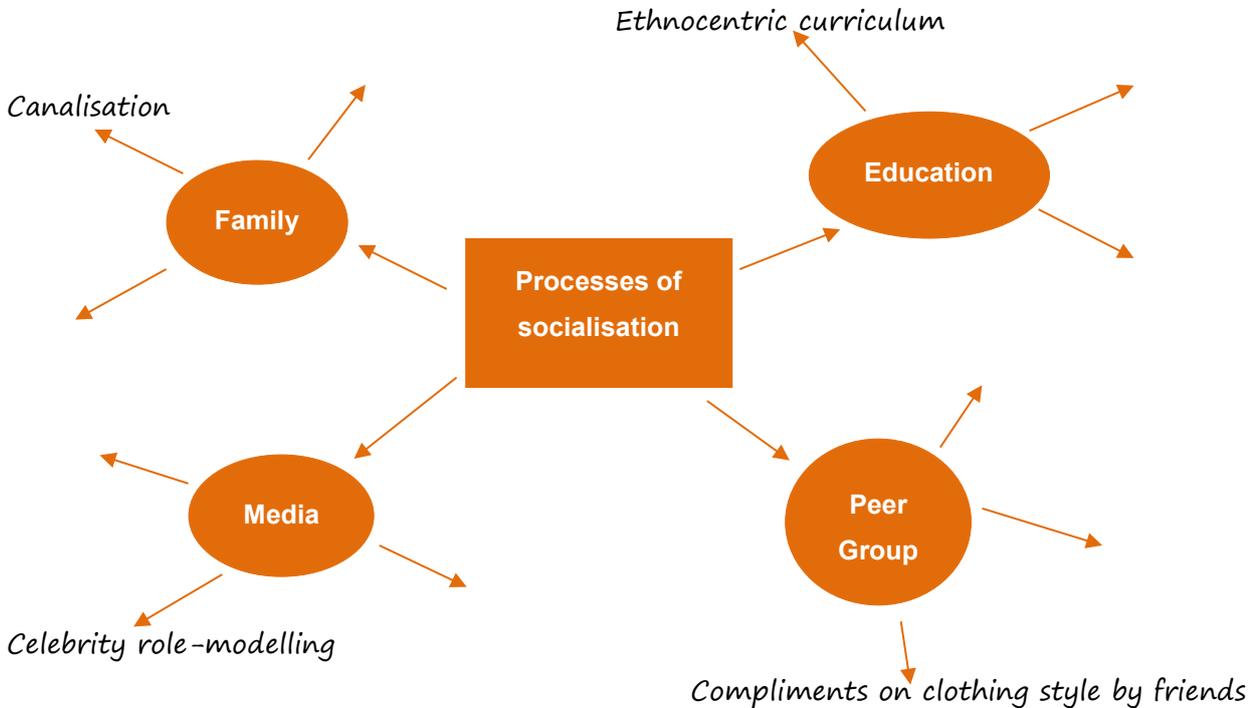
Learners share their ideas in groups. If a group has added an example that no-one else has, ask for an explanation as to why/how it links to the topic.

Lead a discussion on which example(s) might be most relevant when answering different examination questions.

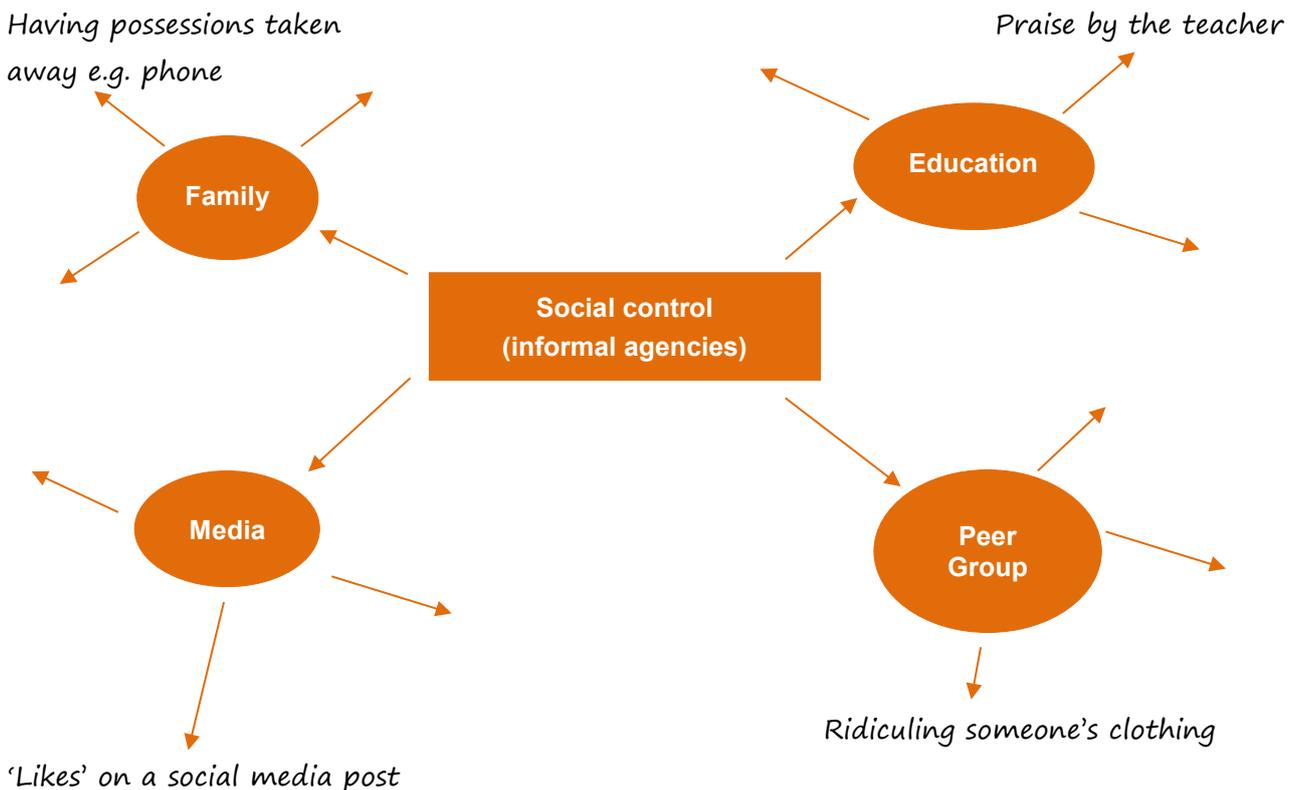
Worksheet 5: Applying examples

State at least **two** different examples of each sociological idea/concept. The first one has been completed for you on each agent or group.

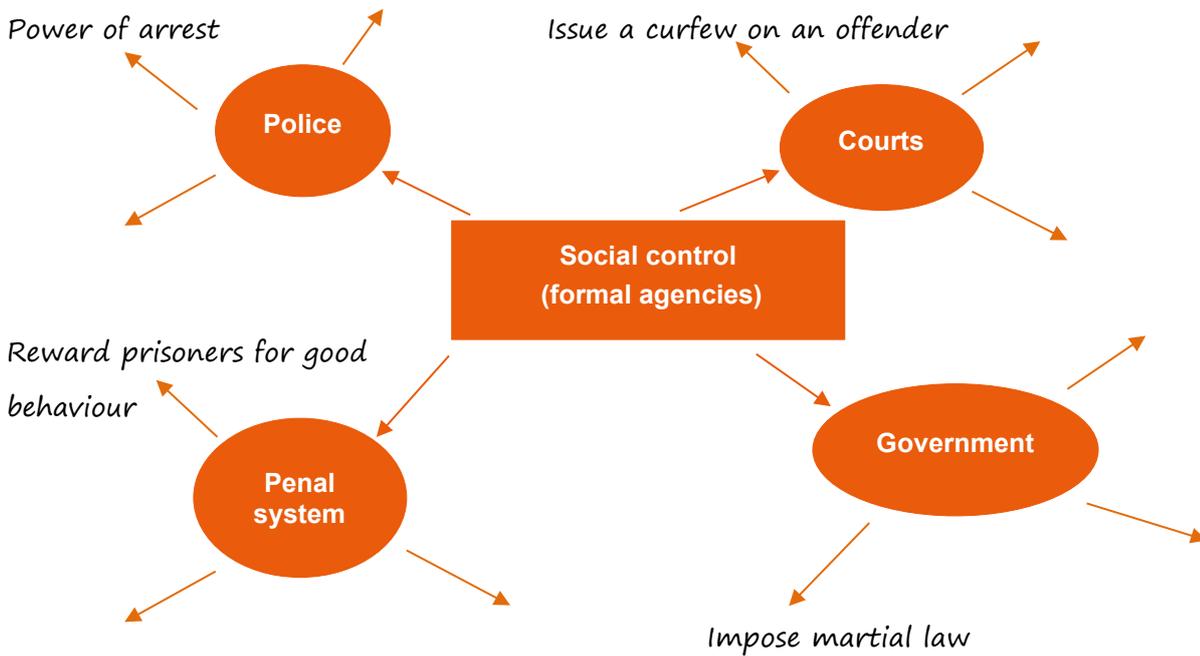
1. Processes of socialisation used by key agents.



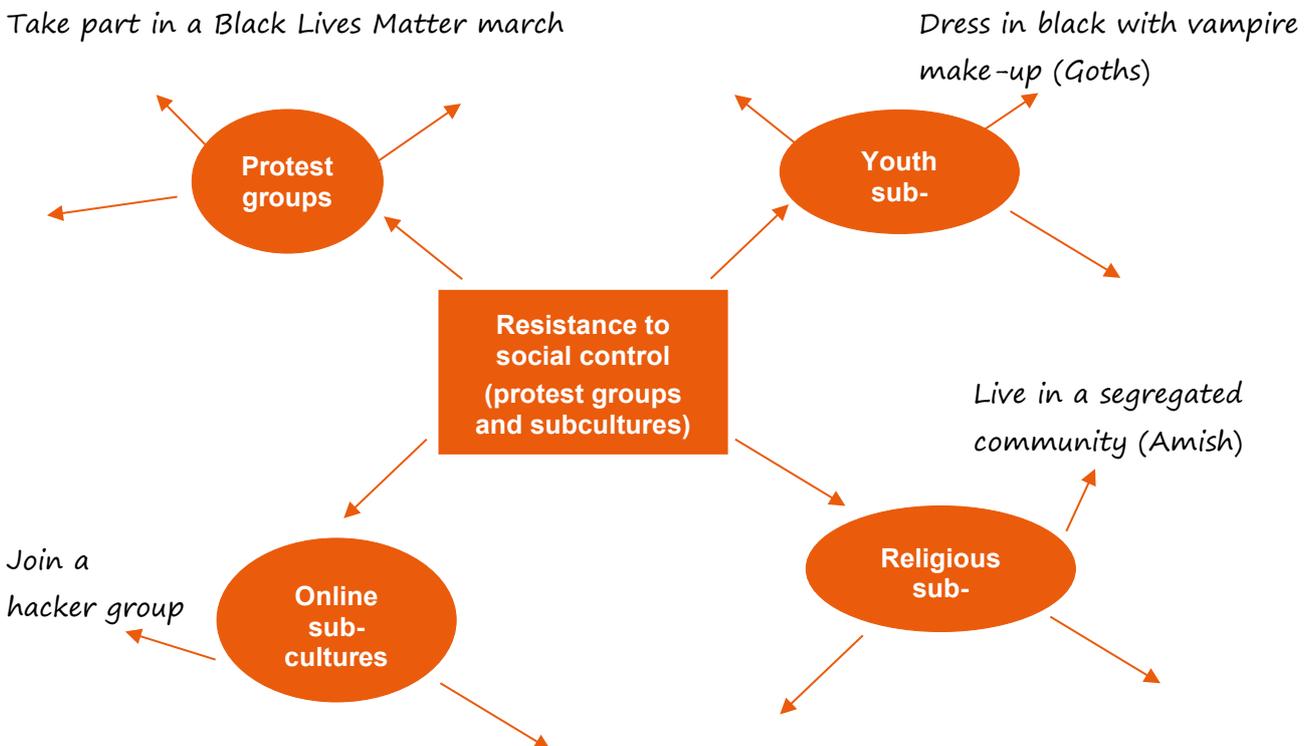
2. Examples of social control used by informal agencies.



3. Examples of social control used by formal agencies.



4. Examples of resistance to social control through protest groups and sub-cultures



Worksheet 5 answers may include:**1. Examples of processes of socialisation used by key agents.**

Family: * Imitation * manipulation * role-modelling * demonstration * instruction *

Education: * hidden curriculum * use of posters and assemblies * teacher expectations *

Media: * Representations * influencer role-modelling * stereotyping * imitation *

Peers: * peer pressure * imitation * role-modelling *

2. Examples of social control used by informal agencies.

Family: * telling off * rewards * denial of possessions * verbal praise * grounded *

Education: * detention * telling off * positive or letter/email: certificates * treat trips * exclusion

Media: * trolling * 'likes' * media stories about punishments for crimes *

Peers: * praise * compliments * ostracism * ridicule * peer pressure *

3. Examples of social control used by formal agencies.

Police: * arrest * detained * coercion * positive role-modelling *

Courts: * fines * imprisonment * tagging * curfews * rehabilitation orders * death penalty*

Penal system: * prison rewards * solitary confinement * lose privileges * coercion *

Government: * laws * tariff of punishments for courts * use of armed forces *

4. Examples of resistance to social control through protest groups and sub-cultures

Protest groups: * demonstrations * law-breaking * media stunts *

Youth sub-cultures: alternative clothing (Goths) * use of drugs (Hippies) * violence (skinheads) *

Online sub-cultures: * interact via the dark web * anonymity *

Religious sub-cultures: * terrorism * segregation/isolation * protest * traditional clothes/food *

Activity 3: Applying evidence

Evidence in sociology incorporates sociological studies, concepts, examples and data. Learners must be able to apply relevant evidence in their arguments in extended answers.

In **Worksheet 6: Applying evidence** sociological arguments from Topic 5 Crime and Deviance are used, but these can be replaced by arguments from other topics.

Once completed encourage learners to share their answers and discuss how each point could be developed further, perhaps with other examples.

Worksheet 6: Applying evidence

Argument 1: Education has a positive function for society

Evidence 1: *Through the hidden curriculum children are socialised into the norms and values of society such as punctuality and a good work ethic. This enables them to fit in and gain a sense of belonging to society.*

Evidence 2:

Evidence 3:

Argument 2: Material factors influence educational achievement

Evidence 1: *Some poorer learners may not have a computer or the internet at home due to the digital divide. This means that they cannot complete homework tasks as well as richer learners and may not develop digital skills. This will negatively impact their educational achievement as much learning takes place online.*

Evidence 2:

Evidence 3:

Argument 3: Girls do better than boys in school

Evidence 1: *Girls are less likely than boys to join an anti-school sub-culture. They are more conformist because of their gendered socialisation and thus more likely to study, behave and follow the teacher's instructions. This will lead them to do better than boys in tests and exams.*

Evidence 2:

Evidence 3:

Worksheet 6 answers:

Argument 1: Education has a positive function for society

Evidence 1: Through the hidden curriculum children are socialised into the norms and values of society such as punctuality and a good work ethic. This enables them to fit in and gain a sense of belonging to society.

Evidence 2: In schools children experience social control through negative sanctions or punishments if do not obey the rules and regulations of the school. An example is detention for not completing homework. This teaches the child to conform to expected norms and they carry this lesson into later life.

Evidence 3: All learners sit the same tests and exams such as IGCSE. This shows that education is meritocratic as everyone is judged by the same standards – those who work hard will do better than those who are lazy.

Argument 2: Material factors influence educational achievement

Evidence 1: Some poorer learners may not have a computer or the internet at home due to the digital divide. This means that they cannot complete homework tasks as well as richer learners and may not develop digital skills. This will negatively impact their educational achievement as much learning takes place online.

Evidence 2: Richer learners can afford to attend private schools where there are excellent facilities, small class sizes and a wide range of extra-curricular activities. This environment allows the learners to flourish and achieve well in comparison to poorer learners who may attend a school with few facilities and large classes with not enough equipment.

Evidence 3: In some societies the poorest children cannot afford to go to school or must leave school early to work to support the family. This will negatively impact their qualifications and future life chances such as their ability to get a high status, well-paid job.

Argument 3: Girls do better than boys in school

Evidence 1: Girls are less likely than boys to join an anti-school sub-culture. They are more conformist because of their gendered socialisation and thus more likely to study, behave and follow the teacher's instructions. This will lead them to do better than boys in tests and exams.

Evidence 2: Due to the work of feminists, women have now achieved equal rights and now have access to top jobs. As Sue Sharpe's study shows, girls are aware of this fact and have high aspirations to succeed in the new meritocracy instead of being content in the housewife role.

Evidence 3: There are now more successful female role models in powerful positions in politics and business, e.g. Christine Lagarde or Kamala Harris. Such women inspire girls to achieve social mobility by hard work in the classroom and this leads to better exam results.

Exercise 3: Applying sociological theories

In Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology learners need to be able to apply key sociological theories in each option topic. The main theories are functionalism, Marxism and feminism.

Theory can be challenging and some ideas are complex in and of themselves, so it is important that learners practice applying the main ideas within each theory to each topic. In each syllabus topic there are sections outlining specific areas where learners may be required to apply their knowledge of sociological theories.

Activity 1: Applying sociological theories: Topic 4 Family

This activity requires learners to have a general knowledge and understanding of the three theories of functionalism, Marxism and feminism.

Worksheet 7: Applying sociological theories: Topic 4 Family can be used to encourage learners to apply core ideas within these theories to the context of the family.

The initial starter statements could be replaced in the second column with appropriate statements from the Topic 5 Education or Topic 6 Crime, deviance and social control.

Worksheet 7: Applying sociological theories: Topic 4 Family

Some key ideas from the functionalist, Marxist and feminist views of society are given in the first column.

Complete the activity by showing how these ideas can be applied to the family in the second column.

1.

Marxist ideas about society	Marxist ideas applied to the family
Capitalism is...	<i>The family benefits capitalism.</i>
Capitalism ensures that existing social classes are reproduced.	<i>The family helps to reproduce class inequalities.</i>
The ruling class control how people think through ideologies.	<i>The family transmits capitalist ideologies.</i>

2.

Functionalist ideas about society	Functionalist ideas applied to the family
Society needs stability and order from one generation to the next.	<i>The nuclear family gives stability across the generations.</i>
The organic analogy shows that each institution is functional for society as a whole.	<i>The family has several functions which allow society to run smoothly.</i>
Gender is built upon natural sexual differences between men and women which means that they are suited different roles in society ... men are instrumental and women expressive.	<i>The 'warm bath' theory shows that the sexual division of labour is functional for both family members and society.</i>

3.

Feminist ideas about society	Feminist ideas applied to the family
Society is a patriarchy where males have power over and dominate women.	<i>The family benefits patriarchy and male power.</i>
Males use violence or the threat of violence to maintain their power.	<i>The family illustrates the use of male violence to maintain power in domestic violence and abuse.</i>
Patriarchy uses gender stereotypes to oppress women and preserve male privilege.	<i>Children are socialised into gender stereotypes from an early age.</i>

Worksheet 7 answers may include:

1.

Marxist ideas applied to the family

The family benefits capitalism because it is an important unit of consumption. Marketing for different products targets both adults and children. For example, children may use 'pester power' on their parents in response to advertising about brands of food, clothing, toys etc. that are marketed at them. In western societies this is seen particularly at Christmas time when parents may go into debt to satisfy their children's wants.

The family helps to reproduce class inequalities. Marxists argue this is because richer parents will send their children to private schools where they will be socialised into competitiveness and have access to social and cultural capital which gives them educational advantages. This contrasts with families in poverty who may not be able to afford much education and must send their children out to work at an early age. In this way the children of the rich maintain their privileges whilst the poorest remain socially excluded and in a cycle of poverty.

The family transmits capitalist ideologies. For example, working class parents will often promote the 'myth of meritocracy' and encourage their children to work hard despite their material disadvantages. If their children do not succeed, they believe that it is their fault and that the successful middle-class children deserve their success. They thus develop a false consciousness and capitalism can continue unchallenged.

2.

Functionalist ideas applied to the family

The nuclear family gives stability across the generations due to the process of primary socialisation identified by Talcott Parsons. Children learn basic skills both parents such as talking and walking as well as key social norms and values such as honesty and the importance of caring for others. All of this prepares children to integrate into society and to identify with its values.

The family has several functions which allow society to run smoothly. As well as socialisation these include the biological reproduction of the next generation in a stable loving environment. The New Right argues that the nuclear family offers the best environment in which to have and look after children. Another function is social control. Children learn the importance of good behaviour through positive and negative sanctions which creates self-discipline, a key skill throughout life.

The 'warm bath' theory shows that the sexual division of labour is functional for both family members and society. Functionalists argue the male breadwinner plays the instrumental role earning money for the family. He comes home filled with frustration and tired from his day's work. Women play the expressive role and are crucial in feeding and taking care of the male breadwinner, easing their tension so that they are ready to enter the workplace afresh the next day.

3.

Feminist ideas applied to the family

The family benefits patriarchy and male power. This is particularly true of the nuclear family because it reinforces traditional gender roles – men as breadwinners and women as housewives – and socialises children into such roles. These roles are patriarchal as they benefit men more than women and are the basis for patriarchy in society.

The family illustrates the use of male violence to maintain power in domestic violence and abuse. Not only violence but the threat of violence socially controls women and makes them afraid to resist male dominance over family money, decision-making etc. Dobash and Dobash showed how common such abuse is and the negative impact it has on the emotional and physical wellbeing of women and children

Children are socialised into gender stereotypes from an early age. Ann Oakley showed how the processes of canalisation, manipulation and verbal appellation are used by parents to socialise children into stereotypical gender identities. So, little girls are encouraged to be feminine which involves being compliant, caring and expressive. This then prepares girls for their future role as housewives and mothers in a patriarchal society.

Activity 2: Applying theoretical ideas

In Cambridge IGCSE / O Level Sociology several examination questions require learners to develop points and arguments in support of or against a claim.

Successful learners will integrate a knowledge of sociological theories into their answers.

In developing or unpacking points learners should be encouraged to discuss examples of key ideas within the sociological theories. In **Worksheet 8: Applying theoretical ideas** learners are given core ideas from each main theory. Learners should give examples of how the idea can be applied to Topic 4 Education, specifically to schools.

The activity can be repeated with the other topics in the syllabus.

Lead a class discussion asking learners for their ideas and giving guidance and feedback.

Worksheet 8: Applying theoretical ideas

For each of the following theories identify examples of how key theoretical ideas about education can be applied to schools.

An example is provided for each key theoretical idea. Aim to find **at least two** more examples for each idea.

1.

Functionalists argue the roles and functions of education are positive for society.

Schools socialise children into the norms and values of society, ensuring social stability and social cohesion.

2.

Marxists argue education reproduces class inequalities.

Schools promote the myth of meritocracy.

3.

Feminists argue that the roles and functions of education maintains gender inequalities.

Gendered subject choices benefit males and disadvantage girls.

Worksheet 8 answers:

1. Functionalists argue the roles and functions of education are positive for society.

Accept any reasonable answer including:

- *Social control in schools prepares young people for similar social control in the workplace.*
- *Schools have an economic function: teaching learners the skills and knowledge necessary to gain jobs and contributing to the economic well-being of themselves and society.*
- *Schools practice selective role allocation by channelling learners to the subjects and careers that they are most suited for.*
- *Schools are a meritocracy as they give learners equal opportunities. All learners have a chance to achieve well and provides a platform for future social mobility.*
- *Schools prepare learners for the workplace by emphasizing achieved status through standardised testing, by sifting and sorting learners in sets and by encouraging some learners into vocational rather than academic learning.*

2. Marxists argue education reproduces of class inequalities.

Accept any reasonable answer including:

- *Both socialisation and social control ensure working class children conform to the status quo and develop a false class consciousness – they do not question the unjust society.*
- *The hidden curriculum is used to ensure that working class learners accept the ‘myth of meritocracy’ and therefore their failure is seen as deserved.*
- *Schools have a middle-class culture, e.g. the importance of cultural capital in academic success.*
- *Working class children do not achieve as well as middle- and upper-class children due to material factors, e.g. a lack of access to digital technology and other equipment.*
- *Working class children are often behind when they arrive in secondary school where they are then put in lower sets which dooms them to failure.*

3. Feminists that the roles and functions of education maintain gender inequalities.

Accept any reasonable answer including:

- *Schools have a patriarchal culture with teachers reinforcing traditional gender identities and expectations of both girls and boys.*
- *Teachers do not always challenge male power in the classroom, e.g. disruptive behaviour and dominating the classroom space.*
- *Schools often operate as a gender hierarchy because males are frequently headteachers whilst teachers are more likely to be female. Thus, gender inequality is seen as normal.*
- *Girls in some cultures lack strong female role models as teachers are often male.*
- *In some cultures, girls do not have the same access to education as boys which leads to continued gender inequality in society.*
- *Boys often label girls in their peer group in negative, sexualised ways to control their behaviour. This mirrors male behaviour in wider society.*

Skills Exercises

Activity 3: Applying theory through examples

It is important that learners can give examples of key ideas from the main theories when they develop points in exam answers.

Worksheet 9: Applying theory through examples focuses on Topic 6 Crime, deviance and social control, but the key ideas here can be substituted for others from topics 2 – 5.

Encourage learners to find real-life examples or cases for some of the key ideas.

Worksheet 9: Applying theory through examples

Read the ideas in column one and then provide examples of key ideas in column two.

1. Marxist Ideas about crime

The crimes of the rich often go undetected.

Material deprivation/poverty causes crime.

Capitalist values encourage greed which leads to crime.

The crimes of the rich and powerful are often unpunished or punished less harshly than working-class crimes.

2. Feminist ideas about crime

The justice system punishes women harshly for 'double deviance'.

Female socialisation and social control mean women commit less crime.

The culture of masculinity leads to crime.

Crimes against women often go unreported and unrecorded.

Worksheet 9 answers may include:

1. Marxist Ideas about crime

The crimes of the rich often go undetected.

Tax evasion or business fraud.

Material deprivation/poverty causes crime.

People in absolute poverty steal food or things they can sell to survive.

Capitalist values encourage greed which leads to crime.

Capitalists like American Bernie Madoff – stole billions even though he was rich to begin with which illustrates that even the rich can never have enough wealth and status.

The crimes of the rich and powerful are often unpunished or punished less harshly than working-class crimes.

Corporate crimes that involve loss of life often do not bring prison sentences, e.g. Bhopal disaster in India or the Deepwater Horizon oil explosion.

2. Feminist ideas about crime

The justice system punishes women harshly for 'double deviance'.

Women who commit crimes against children are demonised in a way that are not, because they have offended against the expectations of 'femininity' as well as their crime, e.g. Myra Hindley in the UK.

Female socialisation and social control mean that women commit less crime.

Women are more conformist and less prone to violence due to cultural expectations; they have less opportunity to commit crimes in many cultures due to their domestic role.

The culture of masculinity leads to crime.

Men commit more violent crime than women, e.g. assault, murder, armed robbery.

Crimes against women often go unreported and unrecorded.

Rape is massively unreported. Many women do not report domestic violence for fear of retribution or shame.

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