



GSOC.ST6 Inequality by Gender, Ethnicity and Age

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 75 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. Show your understanding by using sociological vocabulary and, where asked, your own examples.

- 1** Which term describes a system of social structures and practices in which men as a group hold more power, authority or advantage than women as a group, as identified by feminist sociologists such as Sylvia Walby?

- ☐ A) Patriarchy
☐ B) Meritocracy
☐ C) Ethnic penalty
☐ D) Structured dependency

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

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- 2** Define the term 'patriarchy' as used by feminist sociologists.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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- 3** Explain Sylvia Walby's (1990) view of patriarchy as operating through several different structures.

(Total for Question 3 is 4 marks)

4 Explain what sociologists mean by the term 'gender pay gap'.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain what sociologists mean by the 'glass ceiling'.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 Explain what sociologists mean by 'institutional racism', with reference to the Macpherson Report (1999).

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

7 State what sociologists mean by the term 'ethnic penalty'.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 State one way ethnicity can be linked to differences in life chances in the labour market.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

9 Explain what sociologists mean by 'ageism'.

(Total for Question 9 is 2 marks)

10 Sociologists study inequality by gender, ethnicity and age as evidence of how society is structured.

Evaluate the view that structural discrimination, rather than differences between groups themselves, best explains patterns of inequality by gender, ethnicity and age in the UK today. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one form of inequality.

(Total for Question 10 is 12 marks)

11 For each pattern below, state which form of inequality it best illustrates: gender, ethnicity or age.

(a) Women remain under-represented in the most senior roles in many organisations, despite entering the workforce in large numbers. (1)

(b) An organisation's collective procedures result in poorer treatment of people because of their ethnicity, without individual staff necessarily intending it. (1)

(c) Some older people's disadvantage is linked to exclusion from paid work created by policy and the organisation of the labour market, rather than only biological ageing. (1)

- 12** Explain one reason equality legislation, such as laws prohibiting discrimination in employment, is significant to sociologists studying inequality.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

- 13** Give one example of a workplace policy that could help reduce gender inequality linked to caring responsibilities.

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

- 14** State one strength of the concept of 'institutional racism' for sociologists studying ethnic inequality.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** Explain two reasons sociologists say inequality by gender, ethnicity and age should be understood as overlapping, rather than always studied entirely separately.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** State one similarity between Townsend's concept of structured dependency in old age and feminist explanations of gender inequality.

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

17 Explain why sociologists are careful to describe patterns of inequality by gender, ethnicity and age as being about groups on average, rather than about any individual person.

(Total for Question 17 is 2 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ST6 Inequality by Gender, Ethnicity and Age

Question 1

- **B1** A (patriarchy)
- **Answer: A**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men as a group hold more power, authority or advantage than women as a group (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. feminist sociologists such as Sylvia Walby argue this operates across several areas of life, not just in one place
- **Answer: Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices in which men as a group hold more power, authority or advantage than women as a group, operating across several areas of life.**

Question 3

- **B1** identifies that Walby argued patriarchy is not a single cause but operates through several separate structures in society
- **B1** development, e.g. these include structures such as paid employment, for example patterns in pay and job segregation, and the household, for example the unequal division of unpaid domestic work
- **B1** identifies that Walby argued the strength of these structures could vary over time and between different groups of women
- **B1** development, e.g. this makes her account more flexible than theories that see patriarchy as a single, unchanging cause of gender inequality
- **Answer: Walby (1990) argued patriarchy operates through several structures, such as paid employment and the household, and that their strength can vary over time and between different groups of women.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies the gender pay gap as the average difference in pay between men and women across the workforce (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists note it is a whole-workforce average, not a claim that any individual woman is paid less than a man for doing the identical job
- **B1** identifies a possible structural explanation, e.g. women being more likely to work part time or take time out of paid work for caring responsibilities, or being under-represented in some higher-paid roles
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists study how these patterns relate to wider social expectations about caring roles, not to differences in ability
- **Answer: The gender pay gap is the average difference in pay between men and women across the workforce, linked to factors such as part-time work and caring responsibilities, reflecting social expectations rather than differences in ability.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies the glass ceiling as an invisible barrier that can make it harder for women, and some other groups, to be promoted into senior positions, even when they are qualified
- **B1** development, e.g. it is called 'invisible' because it is not a formal, written rule, but a pattern that can result from informal practices, such as who gets access to influential networks or flexible senior roles
- **B1** identifies that this concept is used to explain why women can remain under-represented in the most senior roles in many organisations, despite entering the workforce, and higher education, in large numbers
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists treat this as a structural or organisational issue rather than a reflection of women's ability or ambition
- **Answer: The glass ceiling is an invisible barrier, resulting from informal organisational practices, that can make it harder for women to be promoted into senior roles despite being qualified; sociologists treat it as structural, not about ability or ambition.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies institutional racism as when an organisation's collective failures, procedures or culture result in poorer treatment of people because of their ethnicity, even without individual staff intending to discriminate (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. the Macpherson Report (1999), the official inquiry into the murder of Stephen Lawrence, defined institutional racism along these lines and found it present within the Metropolitan Police at the time
- **B1** identifies that this concept shifted attention from only individual acts of racism to how an organisation's systems, procedures and culture can produce unequal outcomes
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists use the concept to study institutions more widely, not only the specific case the report examined
- **Answer: Institutional racism is when an organisation's collective failures or culture result in poorer treatment of people by ethnicity, even without individual intent; the Macpherson Report (1999) defined it this way, finding it present in the Metropolitan Police.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies, e.g. sociologists such as Anthony Heath have used the term to describe disadvantage in employment outcomes experienced by some ethnic minority groups that remains even after accounting for factors such as qualifications
- **B1** development, e.g. this points sociologists towards looking at discrimination and structural barriers, rather than at differences in qualifications or effort, as an explanation
- **Answer: Sociologists such as Anthony Heath have used the term 'ethnic penalty' for employment disadvantage experienced by some ethnic minority groups that remains even after accounting for qualifications, pointing towards discrimination and structural barriers.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a genuine point, e.g. some sociological research has found that job applicants with identifiably different ethnic-sounding names can receive different response rates from employers even when applications are otherwise similar
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists use findings like this as evidence for the existence of structural discrimination, rather than differences in applicants' skills
- **Answer: Research has found job applicants with identifiably different ethnic-sounding names can receive different response rates from employers even with similar applications, used as evidence of structural discrimination, not differences in skill.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies ageism as prejudice or discrimination against people because of their age, which can affect younger and older people
- **B1** development, e.g. an older worker being passed over for a role because of assumptions about their age rather than their actual ability, or a younger worker's views being dismissed because of their age
- **Answer: Ageism is prejudice or discrimination against people because of their age, affecting younger and older people, e.g. an older worker being passed over based on assumptions rather than ability.**

Question 10

- **Level 4** (10-12): A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains structural and discriminatory explanations of inequality across at least two of gender, ethnicity and age, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists or sources. The answer analyses evidence of change and continuing debate, and reaches a reasoned, supported judgement. Throughout, patterns of inequality are treated as evidence of structure, discrimination and unequal opportunity, never as evidence about the characteristics of any group; sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently.
- **Level 3** (7-9): A clear evaluation that explains structural/discriminatory explanations for at least one form of inequality, with some accurate reference to sociologists or sources, and some awareness of debate or change over time. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported. No content attributes inequality to the qualities of any group.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some relevant explanation of one or more forms of inequality, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison. No content attributes inequality to the qualities of any group.
- **Level 1** (1-3): One or two isolated, undeveloped points about inequality, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail.
- **Level 0** (0): No relevant content, or content that inappropriately attributes inequality to the characteristics of a group rather than to structure or discrimination.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Gender: feminist sociologists such as Sylvia Walby (1990) argue that patriarchy operates through structures such as paid work and the unequal division of domestic responsibilities, helping to explain patterns such as the gender pay gap and women's under-representation in senior roles (the 'glass ceiling'), rather than differences in ability.
 - Ethnicity: the Macpherson Report (1999) showed how institutional processes, not only individual prejudice, can produce unequal treatment; sociologists such as Heath have used the term 'ethnic penalty' to describe labour-market disadvantage that persists even once qualifications are taken into account, pointing towards structural and discriminatory explanations.
 - Age: Peter Townsend (1981) argued that some of the disadvantage experienced by older people, such as exclusion from paid work and reduced income, reflects 'structured dependency' created by social policy and the organisation of the labour market and retirement, rather than simply being a natural result of biological ageing.
 - Evaluation/depth: sociologists can point to evidence of real, continuing change, e.g. equality legislation and shifting social attitudes, which some argue have narrowed certain gaps over time, while others argue structural patterns remain persistent and well evidenced across each area.
 - A candidate might also note that these forms of inequality can overlap for some individuals, for example a person's experience can be shaped by gender, ethnicity and age together, which sociologists study as intersecting rather than entirely separate influences.
 - A balanced conclusion should recognise the strong sociological evidence for structural and discriminatory explanations of these patterns, while acknowledging ongoing debate about how much progress has been made and how far particular policies have succeeded in reducing them; it must not attribute the patterns to the inherent qualities of any group.

Question 11

- (a) **B1** gender
- (a) **Answer: Gender**
- (b) **B1** ethnicity
- (b) **Answer: Ethnicity**
- (c) **B1** age
- (c) **Answer: Age**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies, e.g. it represents a formal, structural attempt to reduce unequal treatment based on characteristics such as gender, ethnicity or age
- **B1** development, e.g. sociologists study how far such laws succeed in practice, since formal rules do not automatically remove informal or institutional patterns of disadvantage
- **Answer: Equality legislation is a formal, structural attempt to reduce unequal treatment; sociologists study how far it succeeds in practice, since formal rules do not automatically remove informal or institutional disadvantage.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies a genuine example, e.g. shared parental leave, or flexible working arrangements
- **B1** development, e.g. brief explanation of how it could reduce the impact of caring responsibilities on a person's career, whichever parent takes them on
- **Answer: Shared parental leave or flexible working arrangements could reduce the impact of caring responsibilities on a person's career, whichever parent takes them on.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a genuine strength, e.g. it draws attention to how an organisation's systems and culture can produce unequal outcomes, even where no individual intends discrimination, widening the focus beyond individual prejudice
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: It draws attention to how an organisation's systems and culture can produce unequal outcomes even without individual intent, widening the focus beyond individual prejudice.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies one reason, e.g. a person's experience of inequality can be shaped by more than one characteristic at once, for example an older woman may face barriers linked to both her gender and her age together
- **B1** development
- **B1** identifies a second, different reason, e.g. some structural explanations, such as caring responsibilities affecting access to paid work, can apply across more than one of these forms of inequality, so overlapping study can reveal shared causes
- **B1** development
- **Answer: A person's experience can be shaped by more than one characteristic at once, e.g. an older woman facing both gender- and age-linked barriers; shared structural explanations, such as caring responsibilities, can also apply across more than one form of inequality.**

Question 16

- **B1** identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both explain a pattern of disadvantage mainly in terms of how society and its institutions are organised, such as policy and the labour market, or the household and paid work, rather than in terms of the characteristics of the disadvantaged group itself
- **B1** brief development
- **Answer: Both explain disadvantage mainly in terms of how society and its institutions are organised, rather than in terms of the characteristics of the disadvantaged group itself.**

Question 17

- **B1** identifies, e.g. patterns describe general tendencies across large groups, and do not predict or explain any single person's actual outcome, which is shaped by many individual circumstances as well
- **B1** development, e.g. this avoids stereotyping individuals based on a group-level pattern
- **Answer: Patterns describe general tendencies across large groups, not any single person's actual outcome, which avoids stereotyping individuals based on a group-level pattern.**