

Item 1

Statistics suggest that women attend church more than men and generally are more likely to hold religious beliefs than men.

While some would explain this in terms of women's role in society, others (particularly some feminists) would explain it in terms of the function of religion in a male-dominated society. Other sociologists consider the impact of gender socialisation.

Applying material from Item 1, analyse two reasons why women are more religious than men. (10 marks)

One reason why women are more religious than men is that women and men are socialised with particular values and to perform particular roles in society and the socialisation of women is a closer fit with religious belief than that of men. First, women are socialised to be passive and compliant. Traditional religions often require passivity and compliance on the part of their members because there are rules and doctrines that are not to be questioned (it is a closed belief system). Men are socialised to be dominant and therefore while they are attracted to leadership positions in religions, a passive role in the congregation is not appealing. This goes some way to explaining why women outnumber men in church congregations by nearly 3 to 2. However, it is not just church attendance where women outnumber men but also in belief itself (a 1990 survey found 84% of women believed in God compared with 64% of men, in the UK). This too could be down to socialisation and particularly the way women are socialised to perform a different social role from men, being expected to bear and raise children and perform a nurturing role, including caring for the sick. Some have suggested that this role is one that leads to a greater religious faith because of seeing sickness and death. It has also been suggested that men are socialised to take more risks than women and not believing in God or the afterlife (or Hell!) could be viewed as risky behaviour.

However, another reason why women might be more religious is because the role of religion is to support patriarchy, and therefore women are the intended audience for religious messages. This is a radical feminist view. Feminists like Simone de Beauvoir agree with traditional Marxists that religion transmits ideology and creates a false consciousness, but instead of seeing this as a bourgeois ideology transmitted to the working class, she sees this as a patriarchal ideology transmitted to women. If the purpose of

A first reason is identified clearly drawn from a hook in the item. It is quite a broad reason and could probably have been broken down into two (values and roles) and therefore the whole answer be developed from there.

Some facts and figures are always helpful and there aren't too many to learn.

There is a nice chain of reasoning here and because there are two aspects to the socialisation argument they allow for a hint of evaluation.

A second, more complex reason is presented. This takes a bit more explanation. The comparison and contrast with Marxism helps the analysis.

religion is to convince women that they should be subservient, then they will tailor that message to women and largely present it to women. As such, this is really an argument that women go to church and believe in God in order to be socialised into being passive and compliant rather than vice versa. Of course, if this were the case one might almost expect women to outnumber men even more. Furthermore, women have used religious teachings in order to argue against patriarchy (for example quoting verses that suggest husbands should respect their wives and against domestic violence). However, there are just as many verses that can be quoted to justify women being subservient (for example women being expected to honour and obey their husbands, while men are expected to worship their wives).

Some useful explicit evaluation comes in, although this is not developed too far to avoid going down a tangent or answering a different question.

A clear link back at the end of a chain of reasoning.

[410 words]

Examiner Comments: *Mark Band:8-10*

A top-band answer that gets straight down to answering the question. Two hooks from the item are used to identify two clear reasons which are then developed well with plenty of analysis, some evaluation and good use of evidence and chains of reasoning.

There were a few possible hooks in the item so there were a few ways to go with this. The item was more generous in suggesting reasons than some are, but did not include much to develop in terms of clear allusions to particular sociological theory, so this needed to come from the candidate.