2.6 Secondary and Official Statistics: 10-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 10 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use sociological vocabulary and name sociologists where you can.

1 Durkheim's Suicide study is a classic example of a positivist use of official statistics. Explain how Durkheim used official statistics in Suicide.

(Total for Question 1 is 2 marks)

2 Durkheim's use of official statistics in his suicide study has been criticised by later sociologists. Explain one criticism of Durkheim's use of official statistics in his suicide study.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Not all official statistics are equally straightforward to interpret. Define hard statistics.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 State one example of a 'soft' official statistic whose collection depends heavily on subjective interpretation or decisions by officials.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 2.6 Secondary and Official Statistics: 10-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies that Durkheim compared official suicide-rate statistics between different countries, religions and social groups to look for patterns — **B1**

development, e.g. from these patterns he argued suicide rates were explained by differing levels of social integration and regulation, not simply individual psychology — **B1**

Answer: Durkheim compared official suicide-rate statistics between different countries, religions and social groups to look for patterns, and argued from these patterns that suicide rates were explained by differing levels of social integration and regulation, not simply individual psychology.

Question 2

identifies a genuine criticism, e.g. interpretivist critics such as Atkinson and Douglas argue Durkheim treated suicide statistics as straightforward objective facts — **B1**

development, e.g. when in reality they are shaped by the differing ways coroners in different countries/religions interpret and classify deaths, undermining the comparisons Durkheim made — **B1**

Answer: Interpretivist critics such as Atkinson and Douglas argue Durkheim treated suicide statistics as straightforward objective facts, when in reality they are shaped by the differing ways coroners in different countries and religions interpret and classify deaths, undermining the international comparisons Durkheim made.

Question 3

identifies 'hard' statistics as official figures collected through a standardised, largely factual recording process, such as births, deaths or marriages — **B1**

development, e.g. generally seen as more straightforwardly reliable than 'soft' statistics, such as crime figures, which depend more on subjective interpretation — **B1**

Answer: 'Hard' statistics are official figures collected through a standardised, largely factual recording process, such as births, deaths or marriages, generally seen as more straightforwardly reliable than 'soft' statistics, such as crime figures, which depend more on subjective interpretation.

Question 4

identifies a genuine example, e.g. crime statistics, depending on police recording decisions, or suicide statistics, depending on coroners' judgements — **B1**

brief development linking the example to Q14's definition of a soft statistic — **B1**

Answer: Crime statistics are a soft statistic, since whether an incident is recorded as a crime depends on police officers' judgements, not just what happened; suicide statistics are another example, depending on coroners' interpretive judgements.

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