6.8 Classifying Social Class and the Growth of an Underclass: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. For extended answers write in full sentences. Time guidance: 30 minutes for the whole pack.

1 Explain two policy responses that New Right thinkers typically propose to tackle an underclass.

(Total for Question 1 is 3 marks)

2 Identify one piece of evidence sociologists use to argue against the New Right view that welfare creates an underclass culture.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

3 Discuss whether Britain today has a genuine underclass marked by long-term worklessness and social exclusion.

(Total for Question 3 is 8 marks)

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4 Identify two differences between the Registrar General's scale and the NS-SEC for classifying people in Britain today.

(Total for Question 4 is 2 marks)

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5 Explain two reasons why sociologists moved from the Registrar General scale to using NS-SEC when studying class in Britain.

(a) Explain one reason related to changes in occupations and the labour market. **(2)**

(b) Explain one reason related to measurement and analytic usefulness for sociologists and statisticians. **(2)**

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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6 Define the embourgeoisement thesis as it relates to class and workers in Britain in the mid 20th century.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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7 State one way Goldthorpe's studies were careful methodologically when studying class in Luton.

(Total for Question 7 is 2 marks)

8 Outline one criticism of the embourgeoisement thesis that comes from a cultural or symbolic view of class.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 6.8 Classifying Social Class and the Growth of an Underclass: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies one policy, e.g. reducing welfare benefits to increase work incentives **B1**

development, e.g. the idea is that reducing benefits forces people to seek paid work **B1**

identifies second policy, e.g. promoting stricter law and order or sanctions to discourage welfare dependency **B1**

Answer: New Right policies include cutting or tightening welfare to increase work incentives, on the assumption people will seek paid work, and tougher sanctions or law and order measures to discourage dependency and antisocial behaviour.

Question 2

identifies evidence, e.g. studies showing worklessness often follows job loss and local economic decline rather than initial choice **B1**

brief development, e.g. this suggests structural causes drive dependency rather than welfare causing a culture of laziness **B1**

Answer: Evidence against the New Right includes studies showing worklessness often follows job loss and local economic decline rather than voluntary choice, suggesting structural causes drive dependency rather than welfare creating a culture of laziness.

Question 3

Level 1 Basic statements, limited development. May offer a simple claim about an underclass with little or no evidence or comparison of views. **1-2**

Level 2 Clear description of competing views and some analysis. For example, outlines New Right claims about culture of dependency and structural arguments about economic change, with some supporting evidence or examples. **3-5**

Level 3 Detailed and balanced discussion, evaluating both cultural and structural explanations, using evidence (for example research on long-term unemployment, transport barriers, stigma, or Goldthorpe style analysis of class). Reaches a supported and well-reasoned judgement about whether a distinct underclass exists in Britain today. **6-8**

Indicative content:

- The New Right view: claim that a distinct underclass has developed characterised by welfare dependency, low work ethic, persistent antisocial behaviour and multi-generational reliance on benefits.
- Structural explanations: long-term local economic decline, deindustrialisation, weak labour markets, poor transport and employer discrimination produce concentrated worklessness and exclusion, not a cultural pathology.
- Empirical evidence examples: studies showing concentrations of long-term unemployment in some neighbourhoods, evidence that job loss precedes welfare reliance, and findings on stigma and employer practices limiting re-entry to work.
- Methodological issues: difficulties measuring an underclass using occupation-based class schemes, the usefulness of small-area statistics, and the danger of moralising language in some New Right accounts.
- Evaluation: synthesis weighing the relative explanatory power of cultural versus structural accounts, possible interaction of factors, and a conclusion that accepts localized, serious exclusion exists while questioning whether this amounts to a single, homogeneous underclass across Britain.

Question 4

one correct difference, e.g. RG used six broad classes while NS-SEC has eight categories **B1**

second correct difference, e.g. NS-SEC emphasises employment relations and status, not just job title or manual/non-manual distinction **B1**

Answer: Differences include: the Registrar General scale used six broad classes while NS-SEC uses eight categories; NS-SEC emphasises employment relations and status rather than just a simple manual versus non-manual occupation split.

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Question 5

(a) identifies change in the labour market, e.g. growth of service and professional jobs making the old manual/non-manual split less useful **B1**

(a) development, e.g. NS-SEC better captures these new employment patterns and variety of work **B1**

(a) Answer: One reason is changes in the labour market, such as growth of service and professional jobs that made the old manual versus non-manual split less useful; NS-SEC better captures these new employment patterns.

(b) identifies need for a more nuanced measure, e.g. to reflect employment relations, job autonomy and status **B1**

(b) development, e.g. NS-SEC allows more precise comparisons across surveys and policy contexts **B1**

(b) Answer: Another reason is the need for a more nuanced measure that reflects employment relations, job autonomy and status; NS-SEC allows more precise comparisons across surveys and for policy analysis.

Question 6

identifies that embourgeoisement is the idea that skilled, well-paid manual workers adopted middle-class values and lifestyles **B1**

development, e.g. this suggested class culture was becoming more similar between manual and middle-class workers **B1**

Answer: The embourgeoisement thesis is the idea that skilled, well-paid manual workers began to adopt middle-class values and lifestyles, suggesting class cultures were becoming more similar between manual and middle-class workers.

Question 7

identifies a methodological strength, e.g. use of detailed interviews and surveys to gather both attitudes and behaviour **B1**

brief development, e.g. this provided both quantitative and qualitative evidence rather than relying on pay alone **B1**

Answer: Goldthorpe used detailed interviews and surveys combining attitudes and behaviour, providing both quantitative and qualitative evidence rather than relying on pay alone.

Question 8

identifies criticism, e.g. it assumes material position alone changes values and ignores persistent cultural distinctions **B1**

brief development, e.g. cultural identity and class symbols can persist even when incomes rise **B1**

Answer: A criticism is that embourgeoisement assumes material position alone changes values, ignoring persistent cultural distinctions; class identities and symbols can remain even when incomes rise.

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