



GSOC.ST8 Classifying Social Class and the Growth of an Underclass

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

--

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. For extended answers write in full sentences. Time guidance: 60 minutes for the whole pack.

- 1** Which of the following is true about the historical Registrar General's social class scale used in Britain?

- ☐ A) It classified people by income bands only
- ☐ B) It used occupation to assign people to six broad classes often labelled I to V
- ☐ C) It measured attitudes and values rather than occupation
- ☐ D) It was created as part of the NS-SEC system

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Define what sociologists mean by the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC) in the study of class in Britain.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 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 4 is 4 marks)

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

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

6 Explain two findings from Goldthorpe's Affluent Worker studies in Luton that challenged the embourgeoisement thesis.

(Total for Question 6 is 4 marks)

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)

- 9** Item A: A short summary of research findings in a fictional northern town. "Researchers found a group of long-term workless households concentrated in two council estates. Many residents reported repeated job rejection, poor public transport to job centres, and felt stigmatised by employers. A minority described several generations of welfare reliance and isolation from local labour networks." Using Item A and your own knowledge, explain two structural causes of long-term worklessness described in the item.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

- 10** Using Item A and your own knowledge, identify and explain one way stigma or employer discrimination can contribute to the formation of an underclass.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** State one claim made by New Right writers who argue Britain has an underclass.

(Total for Question 11 is 2 marks)

- 12** State one structural view explanation for the existence of a long-term underclass in Britain.

(Total for Question 12 is 2 marks)

- 13** Explain one reason why reliance on occupational class measures alone might miss an emerging underclass in certain local areas.

(Total for Question 13 is 2 marks)

- 14** Give two ways sociologists might measure the existence of an underclass in a town, other than using occupation-based class categories.

(Total for Question 14 is 4 marks)

- 15** Explain two policy responses that New Right thinkers typically propose to tackle an underclass.

(Total for Question 15 is 3 marks)

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

(Total for Question 16 is 2 marks)

- 17** Write an answer discussing sociological views on whether Britain today has a genuine underclass, marked by long-term worklessness and exclusion. Use competing explanations such as the New Right cultural view and structural explanations, and reach a supported judgement.

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

(Total for Question 17 is 8 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ST8 Classifying Social Class and the Growth of an Underclass

Question 1

- **B1** B (it used occupation to assign people to six broad classes, often labelled I to V)
- **Answer: B**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that NS-SEC is an occupation-based classification used by statisticians and sociologists (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. it groups people into eight categories from higher managerial and professional down to long-term unemployed, reflecting employment relations and status
- **Answer: The NS-SEC is an occupation-based classification used by statisticians and sociologists; it groups people into eight categories, from higher managerial and professional down to long-term unemployed, reflecting employment relations and status.**

Question 3

- **B1** 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
- **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.**

Question 4

- (a) **B1** identifies change in the labour market, e.g. growth of service and professional jobs making the old manual/non-manual split less useful
- (a) **B1** development, e.g. NS-SEC better captures these new employment patterns and variety of work
- (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) **B1** identifies need for a more nuanced measure, e.g. to reflect employment relations, job autonomy and status
- (b) **B1** development, e.g. NS-SEC allows more precise comparisons across surveys and policy contexts
- (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 5

- **B1** 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
- **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 6

- **B1** identifies a finding, e.g. manual workers did not adopt middle-class political values as expected
- **B1** development, e.g. many retained working-class identities and voting patterns despite higher pay
- **B1** identifies a second finding, e.g. differences in leisure and lifestyle often reflected occupational culture rather than convergence
- **B1** development, e.g. Goldthorpe argued class divisions persisted in attitudes and social relations
- **Answer: Goldthorpe found manual workers often retained working-class political values and identities despite higher pay, and that leisure and lifestyle differences usually reflected occupational culture rather than a clear convergence with middle-class norms, so class divisions persisted.**

Question 7

- **B1** 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
- **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

- **B1** 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
- **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.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a structural cause from the item, e.g. poor public transport limiting access to jobs
- **B1** develops explanation, e.g. limited transport reduces opportunities to attend interviews or reach workplaces, increasing long-term unemployment risk
- **B1** identifies a second structural cause, e.g. local economic change and job rejection due to lack of local employment opportunities
- **B1** develops explanation, e.g. decline of nearby industries and weak local labour markets can create persistent worklessness across households
- **Answer: Two structural causes are poor public transport, which limits access to jobs and makes attendance at interviews or shifts difficult, raising long-term unemployment risk, and local economic change such as decline of nearby industries creating weak labour markets so people face repeated job rejection and few local opportunities.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies stigma or discrimination, e.g. employers reject applicants from certain estates or with long gaps in employment
- **B1** development, e.g. this locks people out of jobs, making workless households persist across generations and reinforcing marginalisation
- **Answer: Stigma can lead employers to reject applicants from certain council estates or with long gaps in employment, locking people out of jobs and making workless households persist across generations, reinforcing marginalisation.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies claim, e.g. existence of a culture of welfare dependency and absent work ethic in some groups
- **B1** brief development, e.g. the claim links benefits, single parenthood and crime as self-reinforcing behaviours
- **Answer: One New Right claim is that an underclass exists characterised by a culture of welfare dependency and a weak work ethic, with benefits, lone parenthood and criminal behaviour seen as mutually reinforcing.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies structural explanation, e.g. long-term economic change causing industrial decline and fewer jobs for less skilled workers
- **B1** brief development, e.g. combined with weak local services this produces persistent worklessness rather than a cultural choice
- **Answer: A structural explanation is that long-term economic change, such as industrial decline, reduced jobs for less skilled workers; together with weak local services, this produces persistent worklessness rather than a cultural choice.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies limitation, e.g. occupational measures exclude those who are long-term unemployed or detached from the labour market
- **B1** development, e.g. this can hide concentrations of worklessness and social exclusion in particular neighbourhoods
- **Answer: Occupational class measures can miss people who are long-term unemployed or detached from the labour market, so they can hide concentrations of worklessness and social exclusion in particular neighbourhoods where an underclass might form.**

Question 14

- **B1** first valid measure, e.g. rates of long-term unemployment or economic inactivity in local areas
- **B1** development
- **B1** second valid measure, e.g. levels of poverty, benefit dependency or low household income in small-area statistics
- **B1** development
- **Answer: Two other measures are local rates of long-term unemployment or economic inactivity, and levels of poverty or benefit dependency measured by small-area statistics such as local household incomes.**

Question 15

- **B1** 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
- **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 16

- **B1** 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
- **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 17

- **Level 1** (1-2): Basic statements, limited development. May offer a simple claim about an underclass with little or no evidence or comparison of views.
- **Level 2** (3-5): 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.
- **Level 3** (6-8): 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.
- **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.