

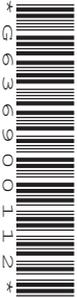
Friday 27 January 2012 – Morning

A2 GCE SOCIOLOGY

G674/01/I Exploring Social Inequality and Difference

INSERT – QUESTION BOOKLET

Duration: 2 hours



INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Answer questions 1 and 2 and **either** question 3 **or** question 4.
- Read each question carefully. Make sure you know what you have to do before starting your answer.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

- The number of marks is given in brackets [] at the end of each question or part question.
- The total number of marks for this paper is **100**.
- This document consists of **4** pages. Any blank pages are indicated.

INSTRUCTION TO EXAMS OFFICER/INVIGILATOR

- Do not send this Insert for marking; it should be retained in the centre or recycled.

You will be assessed on your understanding of the connections between sociological theory and methods of sociological enquiry as they apply to the study of social inequality and difference. This is linked to the core themes of power, social inequality, socialisation, culture and identity. In your answers to questions you are therefore encouraged to draw upon aspects of social inequality and difference studied throughout your course.

Answer questions 1 and 2 and **either** question 3 **or** question 4.

SOURCE MATERIAL

Investigating Gender, Class and Educational Achievement

In her study of gender, class and educational achievement, Becky Francis reviews evidence about the experience of schooling for boys and girls. She argues that sociology has often focused on the culture and experience of underachieving and deviant pupils in schools, usually upon working class boys. As a result, research has neglected the experience of girls and high achievers of both sexes. Francis was therefore particularly interested in exploring the experience of high achieving pupils of both sexes from all social class backgrounds in a variety of schools. 5

One of the key issues for the study was gaining access to the schools and pupils; the head teachers were important gatekeepers. The sample included 36 girls and 35 boys from different urban and rural areas, including 39 pupils from middle class backgrounds, 23 from working class and nine whose social class was unknown. 10

The study used an ethnographic approach. This included overt observation of the classroom interaction of 71 pupils identified as high achieving by their school. Overt observation meant that the pupils and teachers were informed that they were being studied and knew that they were being observed. Semi-structured, individual interviews were then undertaken with these pupils. The interviews were held confidentially in private settings. These were then transcribed, interpreted and analysed. 15

In addition, a survey of high achieving pupils about their friendship groups and social activities was conducted using questionnaires. The aim was to explore how high achieving pupils made friends and gained popularity and status amongst their peers. The study therefore used mixed methods.

Francis found that for high achieving pupils of both sexes there is a significant tension between high achievement and maintaining popularity. Many pupils talked about the difficulty of being a high achiever and popular, and were frightened of being labelled a 'boffin', 'geek', 'keeno', or something similar. Becoming a 'boffin' often resulted in a loss of status and popularity, leading to social exclusion and the possibility of bullying. Many high achievers therefore spent much time and energy finding strategies to avoid this label. High achieving pupils had to achieve a 'balance' between hard work and popularity to be seen as similar to others. 20 25

Francis also reported that most pupils believed that boys found it more difficult to achieve this balance. The socially accepted image of boys involved prioritising pleasure and friendships, whereas girls were regarded as more mature and responsible. As a result it was easier for girls to avoid the label of 'boffin' when they worked hard in school. This view was found in all areas and amongst pupils of both middle and working class backgrounds. This may help to explain why girls achieve more highly in school and are attaining higher positions in many aspects of contemporary society. 30

Adapted from 'The role of 'The Boffin' as abject other in gendered performances of school achievement', by Becky Francis, in The Sociological Review, Volume 57, Issue 4, 2009.

Use the source material **and** your wider sociological knowledge to answer **both** questions 1 and 2.

- 1 Outline and explain why mixed methods are used in sociological research. [15]
- 2 Outline and assess the view that overt observation is the best way to research gender differences in schools. [25]

Using your wider sociological knowledge answer **either** question 3(a) and 3(b) **or** question 4(a) and 4(b).

- 3 (a) Outline the evidence that working classes are **disadvantaged** in the contemporary UK. [20]
- (b) Outline and assess Marxist explanations of social class inequalities. [40]

or

- 4 (a) Outline the evidence that some ethnic groups are **advantaged** in the contemporary UK. [20]
- (b) Outline and assess Weberian explanations of ethnic inequalities. [40]

[Total: 100]

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