OCR
Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Thursday 23 June 2016 – Afternoon

A2 GCE SOCIOLOGY

G674/01   Exploring Social Inequality and Difference

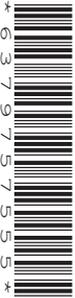---

Candidates answer on the Answer Booklet.

OCR supplied materials:
*   12 page Answer Booklet (OCR12)
    (sent with general stationery)

Other materials required:
None

Duration: 2 hours

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

*   Write your name, centre number and candidate number in the spaces provided on the front of the Answer Booklet. Please write clearly and in capital letters.
*   Use black ink. HB pencil may be used for graphs and diagrams only.
*   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.
*   Do **not** write in the bar codes.

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 Question Paper for marking; it should be retained in the centre or recycled. Please contact OCR Copyright should you wish to re-use this document.

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Turn over

You will be assessed on your understanding of the connections between sociological thought 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.

Read the source material. Answer Questions 1 and 2 and **either** Questions 3(a) and 3(b) **or** Questions 4(a) and 4(b).

SOURCE MATERIAL

Investigating Class and Identity in Online Social Networking

Robards and Bennett studied young people's use of online social networking sites like Facebook. They wanted to test the view that online social networking reinforces existing cultural differences and inequalities, like social class. It is argued this occurs because young people mainly use social networking sites to contact family and friends who share their own cultural background. For example, goths tend to contact other goths with a similar style, educational achievements and social class upbringing.   *5*

Robards and Bennett wanted to discover how individual young people use online social networking sites to develop relationships and share different experiences and tastes. They believed that social networking might also enable young people to create new identities online and join groups of people that intersect or cross traditional cultural boundaries, like social class   *10* and ethnicity.

To research these views, Robards and Bennett used ethnographic research to gather qualitative data about how young people use online social networking sites. The study included in-depth semi-structured interviews with 32 young people (11 males and 21 females) aged 18 to 27. The young people were recruited mainly from students studying social sciences at university. The   *15* interview discussions were guided by a list of themes that included:

*   the number and type of people in their online networks
*   how people make new relationships online
*   how decisions were made about what information and images to post
*   strategies for managing potential conflict, for example, romantic break-ups and unwanted   *20* contacts
*   strategies for dealing with inappropriate content.

The researchers had several ethical concerns when designing the study. For example, as the information gathered about individuals was sensitive it had to be confidential. The identities of individuals taking part were therefore changed and kept anonymous to prevent harm.   *25*

During the interviews common themes emerged. The young people described how online social networking gave them new opportunities to find and meet people who shared common interests and experiences. This was based mainly on their own personal choices and individual preferences. In practice, the young people created a wide range of different online networks and groups of 'friends' that often changed over time. Traditional cultural backgrounds like social class   *30* were only a part of the wide range of cultures and styles from which they actively selected to shape their online identities and patterns of networking.

Robards and Bennett concluded that online social networking enabled young people to create a variety of unique relationships and to join groups who shared similar tastes and experiences beyond their immediate social class background. They were chosen in a 'pick and mix' fashion   *35* from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds. This supported a postmodern interpretation of

youth culture and social life in general and suggested that social class might be less important in shaping identity than in the past.

A description of the research in 'MyTribe: Post-subcultural Manifestations of Belonging on Social Network Sites', by Robards and Bennett, in Sociology, Volume 45, Issue 2, 2011.

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

1   Outline and explain how the design of sociological research is influenced by ethical concerns.
[15]

2   Outline and assess the view that semi-structured interviews are the best way to research class and identity in online social networking amongst young people. **[25]**

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

3   **(a)** Outline the evidence that some age groups experience inequality in the contemporary UK.
[20]

   (b) Outline and assess Marxist explanations of age inequality. **[40]**

OR

4   **(a)** Outline the evidence that males and females experience some disadvantage in the contemporary UK. **[20]**

   (b) Outline and assess sociological views that gender differences are functional for society.   **[40]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER