Oxford Cambridge and RSA

Wednesday 4 June 2025 – Morning

A Level Sociology

H580/02 Researching and understanding social inequalities

Time allowed: 2 hours 15 minutes

You must have:
- the OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS
- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer **all** the questions.

INFORMATION
- The total mark for this paper is **105**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets **[ ]**.
- Quality of extended response will be assessed in questions marked with an asterisk (*).
- This document has **4** pages.

ADVICE
- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

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Section A

Read the source material.

Source A

A small-scale study of the experience of upward social mobility

Upward social mobility involves a person changing the social class position they were born into by achieving a higher social class position than their parents.

Samantha Evans and Madeleine Wyatt were interested in how people who had achieved upward social mobility might experience difficulties because of cultural differences between the social class they were born in and that of their workplace as adults.

As part of their study, a semi-structured interview was used on a sample of 20 people, allowing qualitative data to be gathered.

The following are some quotes from interviewees in their study who had experienced upward social mobility from working class backgrounds into middle class occupations.

- "The organisational culture is very middle class where it might be that you can quote Latin, that you drink wine rather than beer, that you socialise in a certain way." (Kate)
- "As a whole, the idea that we're all actually colleagues, is something that is essentially given lip service to [not taken seriously] and really you should shut up and know your place." (Nigel)
- "I look at those on a higher pay grade to me and I think I could do that, but I would never dream of applying for that job – I know my place." (Nora)
- "I used to be a lot more self-conscious about how I spoke as I used to have a stronger working-class accent. If I was in a situation where someone was …. of a higher social class …. then I'd probably be more careful with how I spoke and try not to have such an accent." (Danielle)

Adapted from Evans, S., & Wyatt, M. (2022). 'A Bridge over Troubled Borders: Social Class and the Interplay between Work and Life'.

Source B

A questionnaire to measure public attitudes concerning social class inequality in the UK

In 2021 the Social Mobility Commission, a body set up and funded by the UK government, published its 'Social Mobility Barometer 2021'. This showed that over half (56%) of all adults in the UK think that social inequality has increased as a result of the Covid pandemic. Almost four fifths (79%) of adults believe there is now a large gap between social classes in Britain with 34% stating that it's a very large gap.

There were also big regional differences in perceptions of opportunities. People in London are much more likely to think the opportunities to progress in their area are 'good' (74%) compared to people in the North East (31%).

The findings were taken from research based on an online questionnaire with a total sample size of 4,693 adults, undertaken between 27 January and 1 February 2021.

The researchers aimed to ensure that their research was representative based on several criteria, including:

- age
- gender
- political interest
- region
- social class
- education level.

The questionnaire used closed questions, offering a choice of possible responses. For example, in one question respondents were asked which one of a choice of social classes they felt they belonged to: 'working class', 'middle class', 'upper class', 'none of these' or 'don't know'.

On some questions people were asked to choose between two viewpoints, for example: 'Everyone has a fair chance to go as far as their talent and their hard work will take them,' or 'Where you end up in society is mainly determined by your background and who your parents were'. Interestingly younger people were more likely to agree with the first statement than older people and white people were more likely to agree than Black and Minority Ethnic respondents.

Adapted from: Social Mobility Commission (2021) *Social Mobility Barometer – public attitudes to social mobility in the UK*

1 Using data from **Source A**, outline **two** conclusions that sociologists could reach about the experience of upward social mobility. **[4]**

2 With reference to **Source B**, explain **two** problems with government-funded research. **[6]**

3 With reference to **Source A**, explain **one** advantage and **one** disadvantage of using semi-structured interviews to understand the experience of upward social mobility. **[10]**

4* Using **Source B** and your wider sociological knowledge, explain and evaluate the use of questionnaires to collect quantitative data as a means of studying attitudes towards social class inequality in the UK. **[25]**

Section B

5* Outline ways in which gender inequalities still exist in work and employment in the UK today. **[20]**

6* Assess Weberian explanations of social inequality. **[40]**

END OF QUESTION PAPER

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