

327/01

SOCIOLOGY – SOC 1

UNIT 1 - ACQUIRING CULTURE

A.M. MONDAY, 16 January 2006

(1 hour)

ADDITIONAL MATERIALS

In addition to this examination paper, you will need a 12 page answer book.

INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES

Answer all questions from **ONE** option only.

INFORMATION FOR CANDIDATES

The number of marks is given in square brackets at the end of each question or part-question.

The time you spend on a question should be in proportion to the marks available.

You are reminded that marking will take into account the quality of written communication used in your answers.

Option 1: Families and Culture

Comparisons with the 1960s.

Researchers led by Professor Nickie Charles, of the School of Social Science and International Development, University of Wales, repeated a 1960s study of family and **kinship** in Swansea to find out how family life there has altered in the past 40 years and how such change varies between different social and ethnic groups.

Fewer people marry or cohabit now compared with 1960. Birthrates have fallen and more people choose to remain childless. As a result, the proportion of their lives spent by people in nuclear family households has declined.

The classic extended family consisting of three generations living under the same roof, already rare in 1960, is now all but extinct. Almost the only group where such households remain is amongst the ethnic minority population, particularly Bengalis, the largest ethnic minority in the city.

Contact between households and generations remains high with contact between mothers and daughters being the highest.

In the case of brothers and sisters, however, there has been a marked decline both in living nearby and in contact. This, of course, affects potential extended family groupings and weakens the sense that people in an area are related to each other.

Support and contact is the key to who is counted as 'family'. Kin can lose the status of family members if they do not provide support and there is little contact. By the same token, friends can become 'family' and distant relatives become 'close' if they are seen often and help each other out.

And heterosexual partnerships are no longer necessarily based on a male breadwinner – in 30 per cent of cases, women's work status is higher than their partners'.

Adapted from ESRC briefings posted on ATSS website

1. Answer **all** of the following questions.

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term **kinship**. [5]
- (b) Using the extract above, summarise recent trends in family life. [5]
- (c) Using relevant examples, explain why people have fewer children than in the 1960s. [20]
- (d) Discuss reasons for increasing family diversity in our society. [30]

Option 2: Youth Culture

Young outdoor binge drinkers ‘at special risk of harm’.

A study for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation suggests that 14 - and 15-year olds who get drunk when unsupervised are at particular risk of injuring themselves in accidents or fights, becoming severely drunk, or putting themselves in danger through daring and irrational behaviour.

In-depth interviews with 64 young people aged 14 to 16 in south-east England who were chosen because they reported involvement in ‘risky’ drinking showed that getting drunk was seen as normal and acceptable behaviour among these young, heavy drinkers. They viewed their drinking as a social activity, and some claimed it raised their status among friends and **peer groups**.

The most frequently suggested reason for heavy drinking was a desire for self-confidence and social enjoyment. The young drinkers often maintained that getting drunk helped them to make friends and gain confidence in sexual situations.

A smaller number of interviewees said they got drunk on their own to ‘escape’ from normal life and to forget their problems. Others described getting drunk for the ‘buzz’ it gave them, or said they drank heavily because they were bored.

Asked about negative consequences of getting drunk, young people reported unprotected sex and other regretted sexual experiences that they did not think would have happened had they been sober. Risky drinking often led young people to compromise their personal safety: for example, by walking home alone, engaging in daring behaviour and ‘pranks’, or getting into cars with a driver who had also been drinking heavily. Evidence suggested that there were few differences between the drinking patterns of girls and boys.

Adapted from www.jrf.org.uk

2. Answer **all** of the following questions.

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term **peer group**. [5]
- (b) Using the extract above, summarise why some young people participate in illegal underage drinking. [5]
- (c) Using relevant examples, explain why female youth cultures are becoming increasingly similar to those of males. [20]
- (d) Discuss reasons why some young people are attracted to youth cultures. [30]

Option 3: Community and Culture

Nation and community.

What we mean by Britain and ‘the British people’ is difficult for sociologists to define. Most modern nations consist of people who have very different histories, cultures and ideas. The ‘British people’ is the result of a series of conquests – Celtic, Roman and Norman.

The United Kingdom (UK) presents a mixture of people and a mix of cultures. There is no single British **identity**. There are problems with naming too. Britain usually refers to England, Scotland and Wales whereas the UK includes these three countries and Northern Ireland too.

What do we mean by a **nation**? For example in the UK, which is a nation state, England, Wales and Scotland are usually thought of as nations. Some people consider the whole land mass of Ireland, and its people to be a nation. Others, Ulster Protestants would disagree because they believe that they are part of the UK.

A nation has a political system and laws. It also has a shared identity based on history, culture and language. The nation is therefore a cultural community bringing together the politics and the culture of the state.

The nation can be seen as an imagined community. Most of us will never meet everyone who shares our nationality. There are times when we feel part of a national community however.

How do we feel part of a nation? We often see it in terms of other nations, particularly through sporting events such as national competitions and matches. We also share our history and national rituals. The media reinforce our sense of national identity in a variety of ways.

Source: Adapted from Kath Woodward (2003) *Social Sciences: the big issues*

3. Answer **all** of the following questions.

- (a) Explain what is meant by the term **identity**. [5]
- (b) Using the extract above, summarise the difficulties in defining the term **nation**. [5]
- (c) Using relevant examples, explain how we acquire our national identity. [20]
- (d) Discuss the reasons why it is difficult for sociologists to define what we mean by ‘British identity’. [30]