



MARKSCHEME

November 2001

SOCIAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Standard Level

Paper 1

Extract (pp. 159-162) from Deborah Reed-Danahay (1996), Education and Identity in Rural France: The Politics of Schooling, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- 1. Describe *three* distinct ways in which the school building in Laviaille serves functions of *local* relevance. [4 marks]**

The school building is the venue in which Laviaille children are formally educated. While formal education is only part of children's socialization into adulthood, it nevertheless plays an important role in the overall process, in Western societies at least. The fact that children take their lunch in the school building, and that expenses for their lunchroom are met by the local council (even though the state does not require it), are subtle indications that daily life in the village encompasses the school building.

In addition, the school building is where the mayor and local council make local government decisions that affect the lives of Laviaille villagers. The archives that are kept in the school building are important for the State, but also meet the needs of the local council in keeping track of local affairs. Villagers get married in the school building; while marriage is in part an institution that the State regulates and keeps records of (and these are the aspects of the institution that are undoubtedly foregrounded in the school building), it is also an important event for both local persons and the local community. Laviaille villagers come to the school building to sign official documents that are required by the State but that also record and sanction local activities. Finally, the school represents certain duties that the community must perform, *e.g.*, maintain the building and pay for utilities and other expenses relating to children's schooling and teachers' lives.

Candidates may present three examples out of the above (there may be others). They may do so in a variety of ways, but in all cases they must present the examples in an organized fashion and in their own words. They must also make explicit the reasons for their choice of examples since, as demonstrated in the previous paragraphs, some examples (*e.g.*, marriage, archive storage) may illustrate both the local and non-local relevance of the school building.

2. **What are *three* examples of the ways in which the school is associated with the world *outside* of the village?** **[4 marks]**

This question is obviously the counterpart of question 1 and, together with the first question, may help candidates organize ethnographic materials that they will use in answering the last two questions.

The school building was built by the State, in an architectural style imbued with symbols of forms of power of a much larger scale than the village. One of its primary functions, the formal education of Laviaille children, is directly under the control of the State. The teachers play an important role in this outside control: they are appointed by the State, and from outside the village; they remain somewhat insulated from village life; and they live to a certain extent at the expense of the local community (presumably, no villager could ask the community to meet his or her living expenses in like fashion). The relatively modern comfort of the school building contrasts with the more basic accommodation that most villagers live in, and is a further reminder that the school follows different standards, associated with non-rural life. The other functions of the school building also symbolize otherness: this is where archives are kept and official documents are signed, records which enable the State to control people's lives. Voting also takes place in the building, and voting sends politicians away from the region and elevates them to positions even further removed from people's daily routines. The school does 'represent the village physically as a social collective' (line 54), but this representation is ambiguous: it represents itself to itself, but it is also designed to represent the village to the outside world.

As with question 1, the passage offers a wide choice of examples to candidates, who must present them in their own words and in coherent fashion, explicitly linking each observation to its implications.

3. What do Lavalie children learn from the attributes of the school about the relationship of their community to French society at large? [6 marks]

This question requires candidates to interpret the information that the passage provides, but does not presume theoretical sophistication to do so. It is premised on candidates recognizing, along with all anthropologists since the days of the culture-and-personality school, that children receive messages during socialization about the role of the person in the group and the role of subgroups in larger contexts. Many of these messages are communicated unconsciously or subliminally through ordinary things and ordinary acts.

The question is open-ended, and candidates may follow a number of avenues, which have equal potential. What is important is that candidates recognize that the ‘lessons’ that are conveyed to children in socialization are always complex and often ambiguous. Candidates who provide a single categorical characterization of what Lavalie children learn without mitigating or nuancing their answers will not earn full marks.

Answers may elaborate on the potential tensions between local and state forms of power: the state provides teachers for the school, but expects the community to meet some of their needs; the task of educating children, which is intimately local in its relevance, takes place in a building with strong associations with the state and the world outside; and the teachers, who are in charge of educating children, are appointed from the outside by an outside authority. What children learn from these observations is that the dynamics between what is local and what is extraneous to the community are blurred and subject to negotiation, and require a dose of trust and cooperation to run smoothly. From a different perspective, Lavalie children learn that their role as French citizens and their role as members of the local community are intertwined. They acquire an education, and later will get married and make local government decisions in the school building, activities which are all embedded in a local and personal context. However, the building in which these locally relevant activities take place is an imposing state-run building, occupied by strangers (the teachers), equipped with more modern features than most houses, and used to house archives for the state. Thus Lavalie children come to understand the close links between local and national identity. Perceptive answers may demonstrate tellingly that children in this community learn that the power of the French State looms large over ordinary people’s lives. Their formal education, for example, takes place in an imposing building that symbolizes dominance through its very size and associations. The state also controls children’s formal education through the medium of the teacher, an outsider from the city whose middle-class needs the community must meet.

Approaches other than those outlined here can be taken to good effect. Successful answers will provide an interpretation, rather than a mere description, of the ethnographic materials provided in the passage. They will do so in an organized fashion, in which all steps in the argument (*e.g.*, relationships between observation and analysis) are explicit.

- 4. Identify an institution, practice or physical space in a society that you have studied that carries more than one meaning or function, and compare it with the school in Laval.**

[6 marks]

Candidates can focus on a wide variety of possibilities, and of course not just institutions that mediate between local life and state power. They should identify specific ways in which the situation they have chosen resembles or differs from the Laval case. Answers must be organized in a clear manner, and the best answers will utilise relevant anthropological concepts (*e.g.*, power, localness, symbolism, nation-state) to capture similarities, differences, and generalisations. Candidates must situate the comparative case chosen in terms of group, place, author and ethnographic present.
