AQA

General Certificate of Education

Sociology 1191

SCLY1 **Culture and Identity;**

Families and Households;

Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

SCLY1

General

There were very few rubric errors and generally candidates seemed to be very familiar with the demands of the examination. Most candidates seemed able to manage their time appropriately and leave enough time for the final essay. However, there was a tendency for candidates to ignore the actual wording of the question. Many of these candidates demonstrated a range of knowledge and understanding of sociology but failed to apply their knowledge to the set question (for example Question 10) or they left out a significant aspect of the question (for example Question 09).

Section A – Culture and Identity

Question 01

Many candidates had difficulty with this question. Many muddled status with identity. However, successful candidates were able to define status satisfactorily as 'position in society'.

Question 02

The majority of candidates were able to identify stereotypes. Common responses included 'dependent', 'inability to work', and 'object of pity'.

Question 03

Many candidates wrote quite lengthy answers that gave detailed descriptions of the sources of ethnicity. The most popular sources cited were language, food, clothes and music. A significant minority wrote about socialisation in general with no reference to ethnicity and therefore scored poorly.

Question 04

There were very few rubric errors, as most candidates limited themselves to discussing two agencies of socialisation. However, many candidates confined themselves to fairly basic functionalist accounts of how the family may shape the socialisation process, followed by a brief account of socialisation in schools. The minority that made reference to the role of the media in promoting norms and values in society were often more successful in discussing the complexity of the socialisation process. This is because these candidates tended to discuss the extent to which the media promoted anti-social as well as pro-social values and norms. The most successful candidates were able to frame their discussion of the role of different agencies in shaping the socialisation process with reference to different perspectives. For example, some were able to analyse and evaluate more explicitly and therefore score more marks by contrasting functionalist with feminist accounts of the role of the family in the socialisation process.

Question 05

Many candidates struggled to address the issues raised by this question. A minority of candidates distinguished between leisure and consumption, but most treated them as the same thing. Postmodernist accounts of the significance of leisure and consumption were often little more than fairly generalised descriptions of the importance of designer labels for the construction of identity. More successful candidates were able to discuss the importance of consumption and leisure choice with reference to concepts such as pick-and-mix identities, media saturation, body image, diversity and choice. These candidates were often able to contrast such views with perspectives that emphasise the continuing importance of class and/or gender. These were sometimes merely stated, with little reference to the question or to the previous discussion of postmodernist views. However, some candidates were able to successfully integrate their discussion into a more coherent critique, for example by pointing out that consumption choices were still constrained by income, or alternatively that leisure choices are still determined by gender expectations.

Section B – Families and Households

By far the majority of candidates attempted this section.

Question 06

Some candidates had no idea what serial monogamy means and suggested that it was a form of cohabitation or relationships that were not serious. Successful answers were able to explain both monogamy and the repetitious nature of serial monogamy. A number of candidates gave partial answers by failing to explain both aspects of the term.

Question 07

Secularisation, changing attitudes and growing independence of women were the most common reasons offered. However, many candidates failed to score maximum marks by only giving reasons why people cohabit rather than by explaining the increase.

Question 08

The majority of candidates were able to identify three ways in which childhood may not be a positive experience for some children. However, a large minority of answers were extremely long and often went into an extended discussion of whether childhood was disappearing or not. Although these answers often eventually identified some appropriate ways, candidates were not making the best use of their time. The most common responses identified ways such as children living in poverty, experiencing divorce, being subject to abuse. A number of successful answers made references to children around the world being forced to work at a young age, or being forced to fight in armies, or being denied access to an education. Some candidates made reference to both parents working, or to lone-parent families, but failed to be explicit about the subsequent possible negative experience for children; such answers were credited as a partial response.

Question 09

It is clear that some centres are still not teaching this aspect of the specification and their candidates therefore struggled to offer a coherent response. On the other hand, there were some excellent answers that discussed a range of reasons for the fall in the death rate. These reasons included better sanitation, improved living standards, improved nutrition, improved health care, and the development of medical science. The best responses were able not only to identify a reason but also to explain clearly how it led to a fall in the death rate. These responses included some evaluation as to the relative significance of this factor, such as comparing the importance of social and economic factors with improvements in medicine. When it came to discussing the consequences of the fall in the death rate, many candidates ignored this aspect of the question and therefore were unable to access the higher bands in the mark scheme. Many candidates who did discuss the consequences often did so in entirely negative terms. These answers tended to identify the financial burden for future generations, overcrowding, the costs of health and social care, and the rise in the dependency ratio as the key consequences. A minority of candidates were able to discuss the consequences in a more balanced manner and raised issues such as beanpole families, the role of grandparents in childcare, rising living standards, political power of older age groups, and the raising of the retirement age. Some candidates did recognise that a fall in the death rate can be seen as a positive trend.

Question 10

Generally, this question was not answered as successfully as Question 09. Many candidates failed to focus on changing functions but instead discussed changing roles and diversity and assumed that this was the same as changing functions without making any explicit connection. Candidates often demonstrated a range of knowledge of different perspectives on the family, such as functionalist, Marxist or feminist accounts, but failed to apply this knowledge to the demands of the question. A common response was to outline Parsons' and/or Murdock's views on the functions of the family and then discuss how conjugal roles have changed, without making explicit reference to changes to the functions of the family. Very few candidates made use of the reference in the Item to family instability and its impact on the ability of the family to fulfil the functions of socialisation and stabilisation of adult personalities. Good answers were able to take Murdock's four functions of the family, for example, and discuss each one in turn in terms of whether modern families still fulfil this function. For example, they discussed whether falling birth rates, the rise of surrogate mothers and the growing number of births outside marriage meant that the reproductive function of the family was being lost.

Section C – Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

Very few candidates attempted this question.

Question 11

Candidates either knew what the term means or did not; there were very few partial answers. Successful candidates were able to explain a deprivation index with reference to a list of items, the lack of which indicates poverty.

Question 12

A significant minority of candidates struggled with this question and tended to confuse an absolute definition of poverty with a relative definition of poverty. Other candidates were able to identify one problem, such as problems of comparison over time or the difficulty of defining necessities, but were not able to identify a second problem.

Question 13

Most candidates were able to suggest three reasons why the working class may be more likely than other social groups to experience poverty. The most popular responses were low wages, more likely to be unemployed, and lack of success in education leading to lack of success in the labour market.

Question 14

There was a variety of responses to this question. Some candidates were able to make reference to a number of ways in which government policies attempt to deal with the problem of poverty. These tended to offer a fairly narrow range including policies such as Sure Start, tax and benefit policies, and the minimum wage. Some candidates took this as an opportunity to discuss welfare dependency and therefore tended to drift away from the question. Alternatively, more successful candidates were able to outline the features of the welfare state with some reference to tackling poverty, but these answers often lacked an analytical and evaluative framework and remained descriptive in their approach.

Question 15

Many candidates made good use of the Item as a starting point for their discussion. They were able to identify the advantages and disadvantages of different modes of delivery. The best discussions tended to be about private provision (almost always of health) and voluntary organisations. Few candidates considered informal care and the role of family and friends. Many candidates did not get beyond the discussion of individual components and relatively few looked at the issue of a mixed economy of provision as a whole.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.