



# **General Certificate of Education**

## *Sociology 1191*

**SCLY1      Culture and Identity;  
Families and Households;  
Wealth, Poverty and Welfare**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2009 examination - January series*

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## SCLY1

### Rubric

A number of candidates started to answer Question 1 (Culture and Identity), then crossed it out and started Question 2 (Families and Households). Also, some responses to Question 1 seemed to be better suited to Question 2. Centres must advise candidates about the layout of the question paper and make sure that candidates are aware of the sequence of the options in the paper. There was also an increase in the number of candidates who disregarded the rubric and attempted all three questions in the paper.

### Question 1 – Culture and Identity

A significant number of candidates appeared to have answered this question by mistake. There was often a handful of such candidates in a centre whose candidates overwhelmingly chose Question 2. This meant that their answers to 1(d) and 1(e) would have been more suited to 2(d) or 2(e).

- (a) Many candidates were unable to give a satisfactory definition of 'subculture'. Some gave a partial answer that included the notion of a small group but failed to go on to explain that the group had different norms and values to mainstream culture.
- (b) Candidates found this question surprisingly difficult. Many struggled to explain what these terms meant and the difference between them. The majority of candidates were able to identify a norm by explaining that it was a guideline or rule in a specific situation. This was often supported by an illustration. However, candidates often had trouble defining a value.
- (c) This question was generally well answered, though a significant number of candidates wrote at great length. Other candidates went to the other extreme and wrote just one word and so struggled to gain maximum marks. Popular responses referred to greater diversity of food, fashion, music and the media. A significant minority confused global culture with immigration and wrote about it generally without identifying effects.
- (d) There was a clear divide between candidates who were able to discuss studies and theoretical approaches to youth culture and those who could provide only vague quasi-sociological views on youth. The best responses included functionalist, Marxist, interactionist and postmodernist views on youth and were well focused. Candidates were often able to contrast these views and to consider gender and ethnic differences. Less successful answers tended to address youth via commonsensical or tangential material (eg the socialisation process). A significant minority wrote about childhood rather than youth.
- (e) Most candidates were able to produce a reasonable response. The majority of candidates dealt with both males and females, eg the improvement in the opportunities and status of females and, for males, the rise of the new man and metrosexual man. Weaker answers tended to discuss life chances and gender roles and not deal explicitly with gender identities. Good responses developed the item to consider how changes have led to a plurality of identities and to recognise the interconnection of male and female identities. Evaluation was provided by debate between radical feminist and postmodernist views on the extent of the variation.

## Question 2 – Families and Households

This was by far the most popular question.

- (a) Many candidates had difficulty with this question. Successful candidates referred to the emotional support or nurturing that the expressive role entails. Many candidates gave a partial answer about child care or some aspect of the housewife role. A significant minority had no idea of the meaning of 'expressive role'.
- (b) Successful candidates suggested two ways in which family life may have a harmful effect on women. Many made reference to domestic abuse, having to sacrifice a career, lack of participation in decision-making, or some version of the dual burden. Some candidates gave a partial answer by just stating 'dual burden' (and/or triple shift) without explaining it. A number of candidates simply asserted that family life oppressed women without identifying how, and therefore failed to score.
- (c) This question was generally well answered with many candidates obtaining full marks. Some answers, although scoring full marks, were excessively long. Others failed to score maximum marks by failing to relate their answer to change or decrease since 1900. Popular responses included medical advances, better health care, better sanitation, improved living conditions, and improved awareness of health issues. A significant minority suggested that death rates had fallen because birth rates had fallen or because life expectancy had risen, and therefore scored no marks.
- (d) There was a great variety in the quality of response to this question. More successful candidates clearly understood the theme of 'social construction' and most illustrated this with a competent historical narrative with reference to Aries. The best answers accompanied this with a combination of cross-cultural examples of childhood (or its absence) and/or discussion of the contemporary nature of childhood. Many candidates successfully made reference to Postman and also to the concepts of a 'toxic childhood', age patriarchy, also the contradictory position of children in society. Less successful answers tended to describe changes in children's experiences – mostly education, laws relating to work, and family size – without explicitly addressing the issue of social construction. A significant minority of candidates equated social construction with socialisation and discussed the role of family and education in socialising children.
- (e) In general, candidates displayed greater sociological knowledge (AO1) than the AO2 skills of interpretation, application, analysis and evaluation. This meant that many candidates were able to describe different types of family diversity and discuss theoretical perspectives on whether the nuclear family was desirable or not. However, many answers failed to address the question of whether the nuclear family was no longer the norm. The most successful answers addressed this explicitly by using the Item to debate the issue, often with reference to Chester and Somerville. They introduced the idea of life course and change within one lifetime. Good answers were able to consider the ideological norm as well as the statistical norm. Weaker answers relied heavily on the Item or tended to list different types of diversity, or alternatively drifted off into a debate about conjugal roles and domestic labour.

### **Question 3 – Wealth, Poverty and Welfare**

Only a handful of candidates attempted this question and comments should be considered in that light.

- (a) Almost all candidates were able to suggest two appropriate groups, such as older people and lone parents.
- (b) Most candidates scored well here. The most common answers related to the difficulty of both parents working and to the cost of child care.
- (c) The majority of candidates struggled with this question. Very few scored full marks. Many seemed to be very hazy about the difference between government services and those operated by charities and voluntary organisations. The most popular correct responses suggested that charities may have a better understanding of need, or were less bureaucratic in their approach.
- (d) There were some reasonable answers that were based on a theoretical (usually Marxist) account of differences in income. Some brought in issues of gender and ethnicity; however this often meant that the answer drifted into a discussion of poverty rather than a response to the question. Very few candidates differentiated between income and wealth, and even fewer had anything significant to say about the distribution of wealth.
- (e) Many candidates used this as an opportunity to discuss explanations of poverty rather than focusing on the question. More successful answers were able to discuss competing definitions and measurements of poverty, although some spent too long on this without using the material to inform the rest of their answer. The best answers were able to use knowledge of different studies of poverty to address the question and these were often able to link their answer to the current economic climate.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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