General Certificate of Education

Sociology 1191

SCLY1 **Culture and Identity;**

Families and Households;

Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

This Report on the Examination uses the <u>new numbering system</u>

SCLY1

Rubric

As in January 2009, there was a tendency for a few candidates to start answering Question 1 and then cross out their response and begin answering Question 2. Also, some responses to Question 1 seemed to be better suited to Question 2. Centres should remind candidates about the rubric and layout of the question paper and make sure that candidates are aware of the position of the different topics in the paper.

As in January 2009,a few candidates attempted to answer all three questions.

Culture and Identity

This question was the second most popular on the paper.

01 Most candidates were able to identify two agencies. The most popular answers were education, the media, and peer group. A minority of candidates suggested parents, which was excluded by the question.

02 This was generally answered well with many candidates scoring full marks. Dressing children differently, role models, and verbal appellations were all common responses for successful candidates.

03 Candidates were either able or unable to answer this question. Most candidates seemed to be familiar with the idea of postmodernism and made references to globalisation, consumption and/or choice.

04 There was a clear divide between candidates who were able to discuss interactionism and those who seemed to be unfamiliar with interactionist views. There were some excellent answers that were clear about Mead, Cooley and Goffman, as well as Becker. They were able to discuss ideas such as the looking-glass self, impression management, labelling, and master status. These candidates were often able to contrast interactionist ideas with structural theories such as functionalism and Marxism. Weaker answers tended to describe labelling and the self-fulfilling prophecy, coupled with a general description of the socialisation process. A minority of candidates seemed to be completely unfamiliar with interactionist views of identity and wrote general answers about factors influencing identity.

05 Answers to this question differed greatly in quality. Many candidates made good use of the Item and discussed the idea of mass culture in society. Many of these answers then brought in other Marxist views of culture, contrasting them with pluralist views. Many were able to contrast mass culture with ideas about folk and high culture. However, a number of candidates assumed that 'mass culture' means 'global culture' and went on to describe examples of global culture. A minority of candidates seemed to be unfamiliar with sociological ideas about culture and made little use of the Item to help them.

Families and Households

This was by far the most popular question.

06 Many candidates found it hard to distinguish clearly between these two concepts, but some made an excellent effort to draw out the difference. For example, in a household, people may or may not be related but live under the same roof, whereas families will be related but not necessarily live under the same roof. Many candidates were able to define a household satisfactorily but struggled with a definition of 'family' and were more likely to describe, with an example, rather than define.

07 This was generally well answered. The most common responses were about custody usually being awarded to women and about cultural norms. Most candidates who failed to score merely asserted that women were more likely to head lone-parent families or raised points that applied equally to both men and women.

08 A number of candidates assumed this question was about lone-parent families rather than one-person households and therefore usually failed to score. Successful candidates referred to increased divorce, rising affluence, and/or the rise in women wishing to pursue a career. A number of candidates referred to women living longer than men, but failed to discuss the idea of an increase or tie this successfully to the question.

09 There was a great variety in the quality of response to this question. A significant proportion of candidates included a good range of reasons, including infant mortality rates, contraception, the expense of raising children, women's independence, later childbirth, and child-centredness. Some made excellent use of material on structure to address the question of family size, although this was rare. However, other candidates described the change from extended to nuclear families without making it relevant to the question, or discussed family diversity, again without linking this to the question. Many candidates were confused about pre- and post-1900, with industrialisation for some candidates starting in the 1960s and children working down mines up until this date. Some centres had clearly not taught any of this material so their candidates struggled.

10 Some candidates saw this question as an opportunity to present feminist accounts of the role of the family without addressing the question of whether gender roles and relationships have become more equal. Many also gave fairly timeless accounts of material from Willmott and Young, and from Oakley, unaware that these are more than 30 years old, while the question referred to 'modern family life'. Other candidates referred to concepts such as triple shift and joint conjugal roles without having a clear view of the research evidence. Good answers were able to refer to more contemporary material on roles and relationships. On average, candidates tended to focus on the domestic division of labour and make minimal reference to power and control, domestic violence and financial decisions, while those who did this were rewarded accordingly.

Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

Very few candidates attempted this question and comments should be considered in that light.

11 A number of candidates had difficulty with this question and seemed unfamiliar with the term. Others were able to give a clear explanation.

12 Most candidates were able to explain universal benefits. Some were able to identify the selective element of means-tested benefits, but failed to mention income.

13 Many answers referred to aspects of people's lives that were related to a lack of ability to buy things and therefore failed to score. Successful candidates referred to ways such as poor housing, stress and depression, social exclusion, and health.

14 Most candidates were able to explain the difference between absolute and relative poverty, though there was considerable confusion as to how these had been measured. Rowntree and Townsend featured strongly but few other studies were mentioned. Many answers ignored the reference to wealth in the question. Candidates who did write about wealth usually explained only what it meant and distinguished between marketable and non-marketable wealth. Very few candidates discussed how to measure wealth and many confused wealth with income.

15 Most candidates were able to identify Marxist and New Right perspectives on the causes of poverty, but few explained them well. The ideas of the culture of poverty and the poverty trap that were raised by the Item were largely ignored. Some answers drifted into a consideration of the social groups involved and struggled to focus explicitly on the question. Good answers were able to locate the discussion in a theoretical framework and use this to discuss alternative views on the causes of poverty. Many weaker answers provided a thin account and/or a one sided view of the causes.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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