AQA

General Certificate of Education

Sociology 1191

SCLY1 **Culture and Identity;**

Families and Households;

Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

SCLY1

General

Overall candidates seemed more prepared for the requirements of the paper because there were far fewer candidates attempting all three questions. There were also fewer candidates starting question 1 and then crossing it out to start question 2. On the other hand many candidates wrote far too much for the shorter questions especially part (c) with some candidates writing over a side and a half, often meaning that they struggled to complete their answer to part (e). Also many candidates ignored the analytical and evaluative requirements of part (e) preferring instead to write a wholly descriptive, knowledge-based essay.

Section A – Culture and Identity

Question 1

(a)   Most candidates were able to refer to traditional or preindustrial societies and thus scored 2 marks. Partial answers tended to give an example only.

(b)   Many answers were able to identify the difference between high culture and low culture by making a reference to the quality or intellectual merit of cultural products. Partial answers focused on the audience in terms of social class or gave examples.

(c)   The majority of candidates answered this question successfully. The most frequent correct responses were social expectations, domestic duties, women subject to social control, and lack of opportunities. Many answers gave three different variations on socialisation and therefore scored 2 out of 6 marks only.

(d)   Social class was the most popular factor followed by disability and then age. A minority of answers assumed that sexuality meant gender and therefore struggled to identify relevant material. Many candidates who wrote about social class often drifted into accounts of life chances or Marxist theories of social class without focusing closely on identity. More successful candidates were able to identify a range of concepts and clearly relate these ideas to the shaping of identity. This was particularly true of disability. Candidates who chose this tended to demonstrate relevant knowledge and were able to apply this successfully to the question. In comparison many candidates who wrote about age drifted into accounts of stereotypes.

(e)   Most candidates were able to give an account of functionalist views however these were often about functionalism in general rather than focusing on the question of norms and values of society. Weaker candidates tended to list characteristics of different approaches while better answers were able to incorporate alternative perspectives (usually Marxism and feminism) into a debate about socialisation and norms and values.

Section B – Families and Households

This was by far the most popular section.

Question 2

(a)   Many candidates had clearly been taught these terms and were able to give clear and accurate definitions of both terms. However it was apparent that many centres had not covered these terms and candidates struggled to explain them. These candidates tended to have more success in explaining birth rate than the fertility rate.

(b)   Many candidates were able to identify appropriate reasons. These were usually about prioritising career or education or delaying marriage. Some of the answers did not express a sense of delay and sometimes described why women would choose not to have children at all.

(c)   This was generally well answered but some candidates wrote excessively long answers often going into great detail about the historical changes to childhood. Their answers sometimes failed to answer the specifics of the question. The most common responses were that children are better protected by legislation, are better educated or some reference to child-centredness. Many candidates ignored the reference in the question to the 'last one hundred years' and discussed the introduction of compulsory education and therefore gained a partial mark.

(d)   A good proportion of candidates were able to provide a number of laws/policies that may have affected family diversity. The most common were divorce laws, civil partnerships and benefits. The best answers suggested a range of policies, connected them clearly to diversity, and included appropriate theoretical perspectives, analysis and evaluation. Less successful answers tended to either describe policies without connecting them to family diversity or, more rarely, described diversities without connecting them to policies. A number of essays drifted into (seemingly pre-prepared) slightly tangential discussions of perspectives on social policy and family, or a discussion of perspectives on family diversity.

(e)   A significant number of candidates seemed to be unfamiliar with the Marxist perspective of the family and were therefore heavily dependent on the item. These candidates tended to give a short account of Marxist views and then go on to more detailed accounts of functionalist and sometimes feminist views. Indeed many candidates tended to ignore the question either by concentrating on functionalist views or by simply describing different views on the family rather than assessing them. Better answers were able to unpack the item and develop the Marxist perspective. These candidates made reference to ideas such as the inheritance of property, the ideology of consumerism, reproduction of the next generation of workers and social control and hierarchy. Good answers were able to explicitly evaluate the Marxist view with reference to detailed functionalist and feminist theory.

Section C – Wealth, Poverty and Welfare

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

Question 3

(a)   Successful candidates were able to convey the idea of a profit motive or being part of a commercial organisation. Partial answers tended to give an example without an explanation or definition.

(b)   Most candidates were able to explain absolute poverty but a number of candidates struggled with relative poverty by failing to identify the comparative element in the definition. Successful candidates made reference to society's expectations or similar.

(c)   Some very long answers that discussed the range of provision available to different groups often failed to clearly identify three different ways that the informal sector may provide day to day support. Others gave three examples of the same point. Successful candidates identified ways such as caring for the sick, providing emotional support, lending money on an informal basis, providing meals and doing housework.

(d)   The most common explanations put forward for why some ethnic minority groups are likely to experience poverty were language issues, poor educational performance and discrimination. Relatively few candidates were able to locate the discussion into a broader theoretical framework. Those that did tended to refer to dual labour markets and ethnic minorities as a reserve army of labour. Many weaker answers started with the idea that ethnic minorities are recent arrivals to the UK and therefore struggle with language and culture. These answers often confined themselves to a fairly basic account. More able candidates were able to incorporate these ideas into a wider discussion that differentiated between different ethnic minority groups and their experiences.

(e)   Many candidates answered this question reasonably well. They were able to identify a broad range of explanations as to why the welfare state had failed to abolish poverty. New Right views were often used to analyse the failings of the welfare state. Alternatively candidates presented different theories of poverty and used them to suggest why the welfare state had been unsuccessful. Relatively few candidates engaged with Marxist views outlined in the item about the purposes of a welfare state under capitalism. Some weaker answers lost focus and went into historical accounts of the development of the welfare state and therefore struggled to meet the demands of the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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