



General Certificate of Education

Sociology 5191

**SCY1 Families and Households; Health;
Mass Media**

Report on the Examination

2008 examination - January series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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SCY1

General

As in previous years, the papers elicited a very wide range of responses. However, a common shortcoming in many candidates' work was their relative lack of success in demonstrating the skill of interpretation. Among the typical weaknesses here were a failure to use material from an Item when required to do so by the question. This invariably means that the candidate will be unable to access the marks in the highest mark band. Similarly, many candidates showed a strong inclination to list every theory, study, etc with which they were familiar, regardless of its actual or potential relevance to the set question. Instead, of course, candidates need to reflect upon this material and select from it those aspects that they can demonstrate to be relevant to the question. This is often a case of working out how one theory or study compares with another, or with the approach identified in the question.

This said, however, many candidates showed good interpretation skills, with well focused answers that used their material to address the question from a number of different angles. Others were careful to study the relevant Item and to relate what they found in it to their own knowledge of other material.

As in previous years, there was a significant minority of candidates whose handwriting proved very difficult or even impossible to decipher. Where such cases are known to centres, it is in the candidate's and the centre's best interests to make use of one of the various options available and sanctioned by AQA, such as an amanuensis or a word processor. Advice on this matter can be obtained from AQA.

Question 1 – Families and Households

This was by far the most popular question on the paper.

- (a) Most candidates scored both marks here, but a minority gave two forms of domestic labour and thus gained only one mark.
- (b) Most had no difficulty in suggesting two reasons, such as the acceptability of alternatives to marriage or women's career opportunities.
- (c) Some candidates offered reasons for one or more changes in child-bearing or child-rearing, rather than simply identifying the changes themselves. This led to unduly long answers, some of which lost sight of the question and scored badly. Others scored for changes such as fewer births, later age of child-bearing, more involvement of fathers in child-rearing, etc.
- (d) Most candidates were able to identify one or two possible reasons, though many were unable to explain these with clarity, and some weaker answers amounted to a description of symmetry rather than an explanation of it. Popular reasons included the greater involvement of women in paid work, changing ideas of masculinity and the impact of feminist ideas.
- (e) Competent answers were able to present a reasonable account of the functionalist model of the transition from pre-industrial extended to industrial nuclear family structures, though better answers were richer in conceptual detail and also able to

present a number of alternative views, such as Laslett, Hareven, Anderson, Young and Willmott. However, not all candidates were able to present these views accurately or to distinguish between the various contributors. Many less successful answers were unable to achieve or sustain a focus on industrialisation and drifted into a variety of other material, usually on conjugal roles but sometimes on contemporary family diversity.

- (f) Responses were often disappointing here, with a significant number of candidates unable to do much more than recycle material from the Item. Better answers succeeded in identifying and describing a number of relevant policies, but only the most successful answers explained the impact of these on family life. These answers went on to relate the discussion to different sociological views of the role of policy – most often, New Right and feminist.

Question 2 – Health

Very few candidates answered this question.

- (a) Most candidates were aware that this meant ‘something created by society’ or similar.
- (b) This was generally well answered. Reasons commonly suggested included that men’s work commitments prevented them attending medical appointments, and that women’s responsibility for children’s health care gave them opportunities to consult the doctor about their own health problems.
- (c) Most candidates answered this appropriately, with reasons such as women are less likely to be smokers or engage in violent behaviour. However, some drew upon the reason in Item 2A (more frequent visits to the GP’s surgery), which was disallowed by the question itself.
- (d) Most candidates were able to identify at least one reason for class differences in the uptake of health care services, though some found that a second reason eluded them. The inverse care law, class differences in the availability of paid leave from work, or the linguistic skills needed to communicate with doctors were the most popular reasons.
- (e) On the whole, this question was not very well answered. While most candidates appeared to have some knowledge of reasons, this was often limited to a couple of undeveloped points about language barriers or poverty experienced by some minority ethnic groups. Some candidates devoted the whole of their answer to health care, with nothing on health chances, while others treated ethnicity as a proxy for class and presented an answer that was essentially about class differences in health chances and/or care. Good answers avoided these pitfalls and considered a wider range of reasons, as well as distinguishing between different ethnic groups.
- (f) Most candidates had some knowledge of sociological material on medicine and the medical profession and this was generally answered fairly competently. Material included Parsons on the sick role, Marxist, feminist or Weberian accounts of the medical profession or the pharmaceutical industry, etc. Some candidates made good use of the Item to develop a discussion of bio-medical versus social models of health, although these were not always applied fully to medicine itself.

Question 3 – Mass Media

This was the second most popular question on the paper.

- (a) Most candidates answered this successfully, usually in terms of a group being ignored or represented negatively by the media.
- (b) Common responses here were greater public acceptability of homosexuality and the influence of the gay rights movement.
- (c) Many candidates had difficulty in identifying relevant ways and often confused the state with media owners. Successful answers included censorship, the work of regulatory bodies, D-notices, the Official Secrets Act, etc.
- (d) Some candidates had little or no idea of what the post-modernist view of the mass media might be, and were thus reduced to guessing or recycling elements of the Item. Successful answers often took a structural position, for example adopting a Marxist standpoint, to criticise post-modernism for its neglect of the power of owners or media professionals, or of class, gender or other inequalities and differences in the audience, etc. Some suggested that post-modernism itself is a metanarrative, which was rewardable as an identifier, but few were able to explain this.
- (e) Most candidates were able to present one or more models of the relationship between media and audiences and were differentiated mainly by the breadth or range of views they were able to offer. Additionally, good answers were able to deploy appropriately the concepts associated with the different models and to organise the material to arrive at a relevant conclusion. Some were able to generate evaluation by considering different types of audience or media.
- (f) Candidates were generally able to offer two or more different views of the role of the media in relation to ideology. However, not all were able to focus specifically on the news, as required by the question. This led to somewhat generalised and formulaic 'perspectives' responses and an absence of appropriate empirical material such as the work of the Glasgow Media Group. Good answers focused squarely on news and some considered different types of news (eg political, foreign, industrial) or media (eg newspapers, television, the internet) or formats (eg 'rolling news').

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.