8.1 Work, Poverty and Welfare: Explanations and Measurement of Poverty: 30-minute Pack

AQA 7192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Use full sentences for questions worth 4 marks or more. Spend about 30 minutes on the whole paper.

1 Using your sociological knowledge, explain two policy limitations when trying to reduce the feminisation of poverty in contemporary Britain.

(Total for Question 1 is 4 marks)

2 Discuss how far sociologists would agree that poverty in contemporary industrial societies is best explained by structural factors rather than by culture or individual behaviour. In your answer evaluate competing perspectives and reach a supported conclusion.

(Total for Question 2 is 12 marks)

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3 Identify and explain one weakness of using a subjective survey question asking people whether they feel poor to measure poverty in a national British sample.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

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4 Outline two ways Townsend's relative deprivation index differs from a simple government income-threshold measure when assessing poverty in Britain.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

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5 Item A: A local council area survey reports that 25% of households have incomes below 60% of the national median, but the same survey also finds 18% of households lack at least two goods or activities considered typical in that area, such as replacing worn-out clothes or inviting friends to the house. Using Item A and your sociological knowledge, explain two ways these two measures might give different perspectives on poverty in this council area.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

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Mark scheme · 8.1 Work, Poverty and Welfare: Explanations and Measurement of Poverty: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

identifies first limitation, e.g. childcare provision and costs limit womens ability to increase paid work	**B1**
develops first limitation, e.g. even if childcare funding increases, part-time low paid jobs and employer practices may persist	**B1**
identifies second limitation, e.g. pension rules and fragmented employment histories make reducing old-age female poverty difficult	**B1**
develops second limitation, e.g. policy changes to pensions require long lead times and face political resistance	**B1**

Answer: Two limitations are that insufficient affordable childcare and persistent low pay in part-time work limit womens ability to increase paid work, and that fragmented employment histories and pension rules make reducing old-age female poverty difficult, since pension reform is complex and slow.

Question 2

Level 1 Basic statements about causes of poverty with little development or use of sociological perspectives. Limited or no evaluation and a weak or no conclusion.	**1-3**
Level 2 Clear description of one or two explanations, for example structural factors and cultural explanations, with some use of sociological ideas. Limited evaluation of strengths and weaknesses and a simple conclusion.	**4-6**
Level 3 Good analysis of competing views: clear explanation of structural accounts such as Marxist and Weberian arguments and cultural or individualist accounts such as New Right explanations. Relevant evidence or examples used. Balanced evaluation showing understanding of limitations on both sides.	**7-9**
Level 4 Excellent analysis and evaluation, comparing Marxist, Weberian and structural accounts with New Right and cultural explanations, and feminist perspectives on gendered poverty. Discussion of empirical evidence and methodological issues, recognition of complexity and interaction between structure and agency, and a supported, well-reasoned conclusion.	**10-12**

Indicative content:

- Structural explanations: Marxist view of capitalism producing low pay, insecure employment and spatial concentration of poverty; Weberian life chances showing how class, status and party affect access to resources.
- New Right and cultural explanations: Murray's underclass and culture of dependency, claim that attitudes, family breakdown and welfare dependency reduce employment incentives and perpetuate poverty.
- Feminist perspective: feminisation of poverty shows structural factors intersect with gendered roles and labour market inequalities to produce gendered patterns of poverty.
- Evidence and evaluation: use of longitudinal studies, regional unemployment data and measures of material deprivation to assess structural causes; criticisms of cultural explanations for blaming the poor and insufficiently accounting for economic restructuring.
- Interactionist or nuanced approaches: some sociologists argue for a combination of factors, where structural economic change produces conditions in which certain cultural patterns emerge, so structure and agency interact.
- Methodological issues: difficulties in proving causation, limits of income-thresholds versus multidimensional measures, and the role of ideology in shaping policy responses.
- Conclusion should weigh the relative explanatory power of structural factors against cultural and individual explanations and argue a justified position, for example that structure provides the primary cause but culture and agency shape outcomes and policy effects.

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Question 3

identifies a weakness, e.g. responses are influenced by personal expectations and cultural norms **B1**

explains the weakness, e.g. two people with similar incomes might answer differently so the measure lacks objectivity and comparability **B1**

Answer: A weakness is that responses are influenced by personal expectations and cultural norms; two people with similar incomes might answer differently, so the measure lacks objectivity and comparability.

Question 4

identifies first difference, e.g. Townsend uses multiple indicators of resources and living standards rather than income alone **B1**

develops first point, e.g. Townsend included lack of common goods, overcrowding and inability to afford social activities **B1**

identifies second difference, e.g. Townsend emphasises socially perceived necessities and exclusion rather than a single income cutoff **B1**

develops second point, e.g. his approach captures exclusion from ordinary living standards as judged against society's norms **B1**

Answer: Townsend uses multiple indicators of living standards rather than income alone, for example lack of common goods and overcrowding, and he emphasises socially perceived necessities and exclusion rather than a single income cutoff, capturing inability to participate in ordinary social life.

Question 5

first point: identifies that the 25% figure measures income below a numerical threshold whereas the 18% figure records absence of at least two typical goods or activities **B1**

development of first point, e.g. savings or debt repayments could affect access to goods at a given income; the percentages alone do not show which households fall into both groups **B1**

second point: identifies that absence of typical goods or activities does not by itself demonstrate financial deprivation or inability to participate in ordinary social life **B1**

development of second point, e.g. absence may reflect preference or other reasons rather than inability to afford the goods or activities; the 18% figure alone does not establish the cause or severity of deprivation **B1**

Answer: First, the 25% figure identifies households below an income threshold, while the 18% figure records households lacking at least two typical goods or activities. Savings or debt repayments could affect access to goods at a given income, but these percentages do not show which households fall into both groups. Second, absence of typical goods or activities does not by itself demonstrate financial deprivation or inability to participate in ordinary social life. It may reflect preference or other reasons rather than inability to afford them, so the 18% figure alone does not establish the cause or severity of deprivation.

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