6.3 Poverty and Wealth: 30-minute Pack

AQA 8192 · about 30 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / _____

Answer ALL questions. Show your understanding by using sociological vocabulary and, where asked, your own examples.

1 Evaluate the view that poverty is best explained by structural factors, such as low pay and unemployment, rather than by the culture or behaviour of the people experiencing it. In your answer you should refer to sociologists' views and consider more than one explanation.

(Total for Question 1 is 12 marks)

2 State one similarity between wealth inequality and income inequality as forms of economic inequality.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

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3 Explain why sociologists distinguish between poverty and low income.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

4 Explain Seebohm Rowntree's approach to measuring poverty in his studies of York.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

5 Explain one difference between Rowntree's and Townsend's approaches to defining poverty.

(Total for Question 5 is 4 marks)

6 State one reason wealth in the UK is unevenly distributed.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

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Mark scheme · 6.3 Poverty and Wealth: 30-minute Pack

Question 1

Level 4 A detailed, well-balanced evaluation that accurately explains BOTH structural explanations of poverty AND the cultural/behavioural (underclass) explanation, supported by accurate reference to named sociologists. Murray's underclass thesis is correctly treated as a contested position with genuine criticisms, not as an accepted fact. Strengths and weaknesses of each explanation are analysed, and a reasoned, supported judgement is reached that does not attribute poverty to the character of people experiencing it. Sociological terminology is used accurately and consistently throughout. **10-12**

Level 3 A clear evaluation that explains both structural and cultural/behavioural explanations, with some accurate reference to sociologists. Some analysis of strengths/weaknesses. An attempt at a conclusion, which may be only partly supported. **7-9**

Level 2 Some relevant explanation of one or both explanations of poverty, with limited development or accuracy. Little clear evaluation or comparison. **4-6**

Level 1 One or two isolated, undeveloped points about poverty, with little or no sociological terminology or accurate detail. **1-3**

Level 0 No relevant content. **0**

Indicative content:

- Structural explanations: sociologists such as Townsend argued poverty results mainly from structural factors in society, such as low wages, unemployment, insecure work and inadequate benefits, rather than from the behaviour of people experiencing poverty.
- Cultural/behavioural explanations: Charles Murray argued in the late 1980s and 1990s that a section of the poor had developed a distinct 'underclass' set of values and behaviours, such as long-term reliance on benefits, which he argued could be passed on and help perpetuate poverty; this is a strongly contested position within sociology, not a settled fact.
- Evaluation of structural explanations: supporters point to well-established patterns showing that poverty is closely linked to structural conditions such as job insecurity, low pay and housing costs, which individuals experiencing poverty cannot control; critics of purely structural explanations argue they can understate the role of how policy is designed, such as how benefits are structured.
- Evaluation of Murray's underclass thesis: many sociologists have strongly criticised it for lacking clear evidence of a distinct 'underclass culture', and for risking blame on individuals for problems such as unemployment or low pay that are largely outside their control; supporters of Murray's position argue policy should consider incentives and behaviour as well as structural circumstances.
- A balanced conclusion should recognise that the weight of sociological evidence favours structural explanations of poverty as the primary cause, while acknowledging that this remains a genuinely debated area, and that framing poverty mainly in terms of the behaviour of people experiencing it risks confusing a symptom of hardship with its cause.

Question 2

identifies a genuine similarity, e.g. both describe unequal distribution of economic resources across society, and both can affect a person's life chances **B1**

development, e.g. though income is about money received regularly while wealth is about the value of assets owned **B1**

Answer: Both describe unequal distribution of economic resources and can affect life chances, though income is money received regularly while wealth is the value of assets owned.

Question 3

identifies, e.g. poverty is about not having enough resources to reach a minimum or customary standard of living, while low income is simply a measure of how much money a household receives **B1**

development, e.g. a household could have low income but not be in poverty if it has other resources, such as savings or owning its home outright, or vice versa **B1**

Answer: Poverty is about not having enough resources to reach a minimum or customary standard of living, while low income simply measures money received; a household could have low income but not be in poverty if it has other resources.

Question 4

identifies that Rowntree studied poverty in York around the turn of the twentieth century **B1**

identifies he calculated a poverty line based on the minimum income needed for physical efficiency, e.g. food, shelter and clothing **B1**

development, e.g. households below this line were classed as being in 'primary poverty' **B1**

further development, e.g. Rowntree's approach is an example of measuring absolute poverty, a fixed minimum standard rather than one relative to others in society **B1**

Answer: Rowntree studied poverty in York, calculating a poverty line based on the minimum income needed for physical survival; households below it were in 'primary poverty', an example of measuring absolute poverty.

Question 5

identifies that Rowntree's approach was absolute, based on a fixed minimum standard needed for physical survival **B1**

identifies that Townsend's approach was relative, based on the standard of living customary in society at the time **B1**

development, e.g. this means Townsend's poverty line would rise as the general standard of living in society rises, while Rowntree's would not **B1**

further development, e.g. critics of relative measures argue they mean poverty could never be eliminated even if everyone's absolute living standards improved **B1**

Answer: Rowntree's measure was absolute (a fixed survival minimum) while Townsend's was relative (tied to customary living standards, so it rises as society's standards rise); critics argue relative poverty could never be eliminated on this basis.

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Question 6

identifies a genuine reason, e.g. wealth such as property and savings tends to be passed down through inheritance, so existing inequalities can persist across generations **B1**

brief development **B1**

Answer: Wealth such as property and savings tends to be passed down through inheritance, so existing inequalities can persist across generations.

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