



GSOC.ST9 Explanations of and Solutions to Poverty

AQA 8192 · Calculators not allowed · about 60 minutes

Total Marks

Name: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Answer ALL questions. In extended questions write full sentences. Spend about 60 minutes on this pack.

- 1** Which sociological explanation links poverty to low pay, unemployment and the structure of the economy in the UK?

- ☐ A) Cultural explanation
☐ B) Interactionist explanation
☐ C) Structural explanation
☐ D) Labeling explanation

(Total for Question 1 is 1 mark)

- 2** Define the 'culture of poverty' thesis as used by sociologists studying why poverty persists in society.

(Total for Question 2 is 2 marks)

- 3** Outline one way Marxist critics challenge the cultural explanation of poverty in contemporary UK society.

(Total for Question 3 is 2 marks)

- 4** Explain one part of Oscar Lewis's cycle of deprivation idea about how poverty and related attitudes are passed between generations in poor communities.

(Total for Question 4 is 4 marks)

- 5 State one policy that is an example of a universal benefit in the UK and name its main purpose in reducing hardship.

(Total for Question 5 is 2 marks)

- 6 State one example of a means-tested benefit in the UK, name it, and explain its defining feature in relation to income.

(Total for Question 6 is 2 marks)

- 7 Explain the New Right argument that generous welfare benefits can create a 'dependency culture' and thereby help perpetuate poverty in society.

(Total for Question 7 is 4 marks)

- 8 State one criticism that sociologists make of the cultural explanation of poverty, focusing on UK evidence.

(Total for Question 8 is 2 marks)

- 9 Explain the main idea of the structural explanation of poverty, describing how economic and social structures maintain poverty in modern economies.

(Total for Question 9 is 4 marks)

- 10** Identify one policy or approach that represents redistribution to reduce poverty and state briefly how it redistributes resources.

(Total for Question 10 is 2 marks)

- 11** Item B: A local council report shows that in District X 40 percent of working-age adults are in low-paid, insecure jobs, while 18 percent are long-term unemployed. The council is deciding whether to expand local training and childcare subsidies, or to campaign for higher national minimum wages. Using Item B and your own knowledge, explain two ways these kinds of structural measures could reduce poverty in District X.

(Total for Question 11 is 4 marks)

- 12** Describe one problem that critics say is caused by means-tested benefits in the UK when trying to reduce poverty.

(Total for Question 12 is 3 marks)

- 13** Describe one advantage of universal benefits, such as Child Benefit, when used as a policy to reduce poverty among families with children in the UK.

(Total for Question 13 is 3 marks)

- 14** State one way that high local unemployment rates can directly contribute to higher levels of poverty in a UK neighbourhood.

(Total for Question 14 is 2 marks)

- 15** Explain two ways Marxist sociologists argue redistribution and stronger public services could reduce poverty more effectively than policies focused on changing poor people's attitudes.

(Total for Question 15 is 4 marks)

- 16** Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the welfare state solves poverty in the UK. In your answer, outline at least two different sociological perspectives, offer supporting points and counter-arguments, and reach a supported conclusion.

Discuss how far sociologists would agree that the welfare state solves poverty in the UK.

(Total for Question 16 is 12 marks)

Mark scheme · GSOC.ST9 Explanations of and Solutions to Poverty

Question 1

- **B1** C (Structural explanation)
- **Answer: C**

Question 2

- **B1** identifies that the culture of poverty thesis argues poverty generates distinctive attitudes and behaviours that help people survive but can perpetuate poverty (oe)
- **B1** development, e.g. these attitudes and behaviours can be passed between generations, creating a cycle of deprivation
- **Answer: The culture of poverty thesis argues poverty produces attitudes and behaviours that help people cope but can also perpetuate poverty, and these patterns can be passed between generations, creating a cycle of deprivation.**

Question 3

- **B1** identifies a Marxist criticism, e.g. Marxists argue poverty is caused by capitalism and exploitation rather than the poor's culture
- **B1** development, e.g. they point to low wages, unemployment and the reserve army of labour as structural causes that cultural explanations ignore
- **Answer: A Marxist critic would say poverty results from capitalism and exploitation, for example through low wages and unemployment, and that cultural explanations wrongly blame the poor instead of examining economic structures.**

Question 4

- **B1** identifies a relevant element, e.g. parents with limited resources model coping behaviours to their children
- **B1** development, e.g. children learn attitudes such as fatalism or short-term planning
- **B1** further development, e.g. these attitudes reduce chances of educational or occupational mobility
- **B1** links this chain to the idea that poverty continues across generations
- **Answer: Lewis argued that parents in poverty model coping behaviours to their children, who then adopt attitudes such as fatalism or short-term planning; these attitudes limit educational and occupational mobility, helping to reproduce poverty across generations.**

Question 5

- **B1** identifies a universal benefit, e.g. Child Benefit
- **B1** brief development, e.g. to provide financial support for families with children regardless of income
- **Answer: An example is Child Benefit, which provides financial support to families with children regardless of household income.**

Question 6

- **B1** identifies a means-tested benefit, e.g. Universal Credit
- **B1** development, e.g. it is paid only to people whose income and savings fall below set thresholds
- **Answer: An example is Universal Credit, which is means-tested and paid only to people whose income and savings fall below set thresholds.**

Question 7

- **B1** identifies the New Right claim that high or long-term benefits reduce incentives to work
- **B1** development, e.g. people may come to rely on benefits rather than seeking employment
- **B1** further development, e.g. this can be argued to pass dependency across generations as children learn reliance rather than work incentives
- **B1** links this argument to the claim that benefits can thus help to perpetuate poverty rather than solve it
- **Answer: The New Right argue that high or long-term welfare benefits reduce incentives to work, so people may rely on benefits instead of seeking employment; they claim this reliance can be transmitted across generations and therefore help to perpetuate poverty rather than solve it.**

Question 8

- **B1** identifies a recognised criticism, e.g. it blames the victims and ignores structural causes like low pay or unemployment
- **B1** brief development, e.g. critics point to evidence that many people in poverty work but still have low incomes due to labour market conditions
- **Answer: A common criticism is that the cultural explanation blames the victims and ignores structural causes such as low pay and unemployment; critics note many people work yet remain in poverty because of labour market conditions.**

Question 9

- **B1** identifies a core idea, e.g. poverty results from structural factors such as unemployment, low wages and insecure work
- **B1** development, e.g. unequal distribution of resources and power in the economy limits life chances for some groups
- **B1** further development, e.g. welfare provision, labour market policies and employer power can all contribute to persistent poverty
- **B1** links these structural features to how poverty can persist over time despite individual effort
- **Answer: Structural explanations see poverty as the result of unemployment, low wages, insecure work and unequal distribution of resources; economic and social structures, including labour market and employer power, limit life chances and so help poverty persist despite individual effort.**

Question 10

- **B1** identifies a redistribution policy, e.g. progressive taxation and increased spending on welfare services
- **B1** brief development, e.g. progressive taxes take a higher proportion from the better off and finance benefits or services for the less well off
- **Answer: Progressive taxation combined with increased spending on welfare and public services is redistribution, since higher earners pay proportionally more tax which is then used to fund benefits and services for lower income groups.**

Question 11

- **B1** identifies one way, e.g. local training could improve skills and help people move into higher paid work
- **B1** explains how this reduces poverty, e.g. higher skills increase employability and wages, reducing reliance on benefits
- **B1** identifies a second way, e.g. higher national minimum wages would raise incomes for low-paid workers
- **B1** explains how this reduces poverty, e.g. increasing take-home pay reduces in-work poverty and may reduce long-term dependence on benefits
- **Answer: Local training could improve residents skills and employability so they move into better-paid jobs, reducing reliance on benefits; higher national minimum wages would raise incomes for currently low-paid, insecure workers, reducing in-work poverty and pressure on local services.**

Question 12

- **B1** identifies a problem, e.g. means-testing can create a poverty trap where people lose more in benefits than they gain from low-paid work
- **B1** development, e.g. benefit withdrawal rates can make moving into paid work financially unattractive
- **B1** further development, e.g. means-testing can stigmatise recipients and create administrative complexity that excludes some in need
- **Answer: One problem is the poverty trap, where means-tested benefit withdrawal rates mean people can lose more in benefits than they gain from low-paid work, making employment financially unattractive; means-testing can also stigmatise recipients and create administrative barriers.**

Question 13

- **B1** identifies an advantage, e.g. universality avoids stigma since everyone in the eligible group receives it
- **B1** development, e.g. universality can encourage take-up and simpler administration
- **B1** further development, e.g. universal benefits provide stable support that can prevent families slipping into deeper poverty
- **Answer: An advantage is universality avoids stigma because all eligible families receive the payment, encouraging take-up and simplifying administration; universal benefits also provide stable support that can prevent families slipping into deeper poverty.**

Question 14

- **B1** identifies a direct way, e.g. unemployment reduces household income
- **B1** brief development, e.g. sustained unemployment increases reliance on benefits and reduces ability to afford basics
- **Answer: High unemployment reduces household incomes, and sustained joblessness increases reliance on benefits and reduces households ability to afford basic needs, raising local poverty levels.**

Question 15

- **B1** identifies the first way, e.g. redistribution can reduce inequalities in income and wealth
- **B1** develops the first way, e.g. reducing income inequality raises living standards for the poorest and tackles material causes of poverty
- **B1** identifies the second way, e.g. stronger public services such as housing, health and education improve life chances
- **B1** develops the second way, e.g. better services reduce the barriers that stop people escaping poverty, rather than blaming cultural attitudes
- **Answer: Marxists argue redistribution reduces income and wealth inequalities so the poorest gain higher living standards, and stronger public services in housing, health and education improve life chances and remove barriers to escaping poverty, addressing structural causes rather than blaming attitudes.**

Question 16

- **Level 1** (1-3): Basic statements about the welfare state with little sociological detail or undeveloped assertions about whether it solves poverty, limited use of perspectives and no clear conclusion.
- **Level 2** (4-6): Some correct sociological points about how the welfare state helps reduce poverty, with reference to one or two perspectives and some supporting evidence, but limited evaluation or an unbalanced conclusion.
- **Level 3** (7-9): Clear explanation of ways the welfare state can reduce poverty and why it may fail, with at least two perspectives used to support analysis and some evaluation, producing a sustained judgement.
- **Level 4** (10-12): A well-developed, balanced discussion drawing on several sociological perspectives, including competing arguments and evidence, critically evaluating the welfare state's effectiveness and reaching a supported, clear conclusion.
- **Indicative content:**
 - Functionalist or social democratic views that the welfare state provides essential support, reduces absolute poverty through benefits and services and helps social cohesion
 - New Right view that generous benefits can create dependency culture and reduce work incentives, limiting poverty reduction
 - Marxist critique that the welfare state cushions but does not remove inequalities produced by capitalism, and that redistribution is limited by ruling class interests
 - Feminist points about who benefits, for example how welfare and childcare provision affect mothers and gendered poverty
 - Discussion of means-tested versus universal benefits: means-tested target resources but can stigmatise and create poverty traps, universal benefits reduce stigma and have higher take-up
 - Practical limits: benefit levels, conditionality, administrative delays and insufficiently funded public services can mean the welfare state does not eliminate poverty
 - Evidence that welfare reduces absolute poverty for some but relative poverty and in-work poverty persist due to low wages, insecure work and rising living costs
 - A supported conclusion that while the welfare state reduces some forms of poverty, sociologists disagree about whether it can solve poverty entirely without wider structural economic changes