



MARKSCHEME

November 2011

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY

Higher Level

Paper 1

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1. Describe the decisions that women make when choosing an egg donor. [6 marks]

This question requires a primarily descriptive answer and much of the material can be found in the text itself. In essence, the question asks candidates to make clear their understanding of how a woman such as Giovanna can give birth to a child she will carry and be the social mother of through the donation of an egg from her friend. A key point to note here is that Giovanna will have no genetic connection to the child.

In Flora's case the biological connection between the child she hopes to conceive with her new husband is one that links her genetic material indirectly through her daughter and a younger generation to herself. Flora's own genetic material is, in part, to be found in the egg her daughter will provide. However, this genetic material also contains some elements of Flora's first husband (with whom she conceived her now adult daughter and whose egg she is going to use to have a child with her second husband). This means that if Flora is successful and conceives a child using her daughter's egg and her second husband's sperm then the child will also have some genetic material from Flora's first husband. In this case some genetic connections are expressed and others suppressed in the desire to produce a child.

Some candidates may compare the cases of Giovanna and Flora and note that Flora makes use of a resource (her daughter's eggs) that is not available to Giovanna (who is not someone who appears to have children with suitable genetic material to offer her). In the absence of a biological link to a donor Giovanna has chosen a friend and so the decision in her case is mediated through a social relation. There may well be a hint of "genetic hierarchy" at work here as the first choice may be for a woman to seek an egg with a genetic link to herself and in the absence of this to then seek an egg donor with some other form of connection to the woman.

In short, both women make use of what is available to them from their own social or familial networks when deciding who to use as an egg donor. Both women also rationalize and justify their decisions in terms that make sense to them and which serve to minimize the differences between themselves and the egg donor in each case. As far as possible, therefore, each woman seeks to eliminate differences between herself and her egg donor and to emphasize similarities.

Both women also choose to know who their egg donor is rather than opt for an anonymous donor as is made clear in the case of Giovanna. In this respect both women also make the decision to be in control of as much as they can in the process of becoming mothers using new reproductive technologies.

Some candidates may also consider generalizing to discuss some possible ethical issues that may arise in the considerations of the genetic transfers that take place in fertility clinics and the scope that individuals have (or should have) to decide what is acceptable to them. However, any such discussion must be closely related to the material in the text itself and refer to the cases of Giovanna and Flora.

Candidates do not need to cover all the points above (and they may choose alternative equally valid ways of approaching the question) but the answer does have to be focused and in the candidate's own words to obtain full marks.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	There is an attempt to organize the response and identify relevant points or examples, but the response relies too heavily on quotations from the text <i>and/or</i> limited generalizations are offered.
3–4	The response is organized, identifies and explains some relevant points or examples, and offers generalizations.
5–6	The response is organized, identifies and explains detailed relevant points or examples, and links them to generalizations, demonstrating good anthropological understanding.

2. Incorporating theoretical perspectives in your answer, explain how the women’s decisions make kinship “natural” and biology “social”. [6 marks]

This question moves the candidates from a primarily descriptive answer to one that requires more by way of analysis. It also offers scope for candidates to demonstrate their detailed, relevant, knowledge of social and cultural anthropology from the curriculum.

The answer to this question requires candidates to analyse and interpret the understandings and rationalizations of Giovanna and Flora for their choices when selecting egg donors for themselves and their fertility treatments. In Giovanna’s case the “naturalizing” strategy is one of eliding ethnic and biological categories by suggesting that a woman who has a shared ethnic background (an Italian American) and has a shared cultural upbringing is sufficiently “genetically” alike to Giovanna to constitute a suitable egg donor. While this may be a rationalization that Giovanna makes for herself it is clearly biologically not possible for a shared culture to be “genetically encoded” in this way. This is what the author of the text means by stating that Giovanna has “socialized genetics”. Further, Giovanna makes clear that as she will be the one gestating the baby, her role in the “creation” of the child is a biological one and thus that she will be the child’s mother in this (limited) biological way as well as the child’s social mother.

In Flora’s case the intergenerational complexities and the shared genetic material between herself and her daughter require some careful consideration. Flora will be giving birth to her own genetic grandchild (a child produced with her daughter’s egg and her second husband’s sperm), but this child will be Flora’s child and a step-sibling to her daughter (the egg donor) in social terms, even though the child is Flora’s grandchild and her daughter’s child in biological terms. Flora’s daughter will not consider herself the mother of this child, she will be the child’s half-sister.

Some candidates may note that this social understanding of the child Flora hopes to have using her daughter’s egg and husband’s sperm is necessary to avoid any possible hint of inappropriate step-father and step-daughter relations, as the child that will be produced is in fact biologically that of the step-father and step-daughter. This situation is avoided by prioritizing the understanding of the egg Flora will use from her daughter as really her own (as the adult daughter and egg donor was Flora’s child), just one that is coming to her via a “generational detour”. Further, Flora can make sense of this relationship by referring to her own cultural background where grandparents often take on the role of parenting their grandchildren. In this sense, if Flora gives birth to her own biological grandchild she is simply taking an already established social practice (grandparents caring for grandchildren) one logical and technologically possible step further. In this way too, Flora can argue that she is not doing something odd or unusual but something that in some ways is already common practice.

Candidates should note that the author does not express a moral position on the practices and choices of Giovanna and Flora. She simply notes what the women are doing and how the women explain and justify their actions in terms that derive from their social contexts and their “folk” understandings of genetics.

In terms of kinship studies candidates may note that the terms in common usage “mother”, “father”, “daughter” *etc.* are not the same and unchanging everywhere. There is no reason to assume any biological essentialism and it is clear from this text that individuals can and do invest these terms with the meanings and significance that makes sense to them about their circumstances and crucially, helps them to justify their desires.

The interrelationships between the biological and the social are key to the understanding of this passage. Stronger candidates may reflect on the assumptions of the biological given on which the social understanding of kinship is constructed and yet note that the biological is invested with social meanings. This suggests that there is no essential biological given either and that the social and biological understandings of kin and kinship make each other and are equally open to reinterpretation and reconfiguration over time and as technological advances make possible.

This knowledge should clearly refer to relevant theoretical works or perspectives.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	The response is mainly descriptive and relies on quotations, but may demonstrate limited understanding of relevant anthropological issues and concepts.
3–4	The response demonstrates some understanding of relevant anthropological issues and concepts or theory, <i>or</i> the response recognizes the viewpoint of the anthropologist, <i>but</i> not all of these.
5–6	The response demonstrates a critical understanding of relevant anthropological issues, concepts and theory, and recognizes the viewpoint of the anthropologist.

3. **Compare and contrast the social and cultural changes discussed in the text with social and cultural changes in *one* society you have studied in detail.** [8 marks]

Candidates may choose any social group where social and cultural change has taken place in some clearly defined way thus making possible discussion of both similarities and differences with the case presented in the text. The candidates do not have to choose a social group where there has been a focus on changes in kinship understandings or practices, but may choose a group where any form of carefully described social and cultural change has led to new ways of understanding the social realm and/or new forms of social relations.

Marks	Level descriptor
0	The work does not reach a standard described by the descriptors below.
1–2	Comparative ethnography is presented in limited detail and its relevance is only partly established. It is not identified in terms of place, author or historical context. The response may not be structured as a comparison.
3–4	Comparative ethnography is presented in limited detail but its relevance is established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, <i>or</i> the response is clearly structured as a comparison.
5–6	Comparative ethnography is presented and its relevance is successfully established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, <i>and</i> the response is clearly structured as a comparison. Either similarities <i>or</i> differences are discussed in detail, <i>but</i> not both.
7–8	Comparative ethnography is presented and its relevance is successfully established. The comparative ethnography is identified in terms of place, author and historical context, <i>and</i> the response is clearly structured as a comparison. Similarities <i>and</i> differences are discussed in detail. The response demonstrates good anthropological understanding.
