



**Cambridge Assessment  
International Education**

Example Candidate Responses – Paper 1

**Cambridge International AS & A Level  
Sociology 9699**

For examination from 2024



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## Introduction

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The main aim of this booklet is to exemplify standards for those teaching Cambridge International AS & A Level Sociology, and to show how different levels of candidates' performance (high, middle and low) relate to the syllabus requirements. This document helps teachers to assess the standards required to achieve marks beyond the guidance of the mark scheme.

In this booklet, candidate responses have been chosen from the June 2024 exam series to exemplify a range of answers.

For each question, the response is annotated with examiner comments about where and why marks were awarded or omitted. This is followed by comments on how the answer could be improved. There is also a list of common mistakes and guidance for candidates for each question.

Please refer to the June 2024 Examiner Report for further details and guidance.

The mark scheme is available on the [School Support Hub](#)

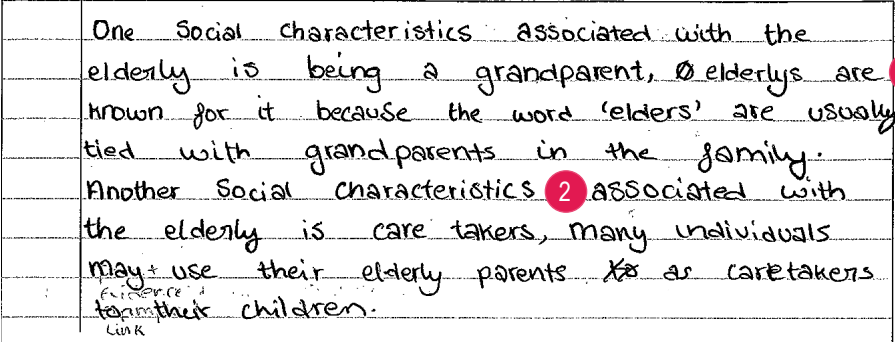
**9699 June 2024 Question Paper 12**

**9699 June 2024 Mark Scheme 12**

Past exam resources and other teaching and learning resources are available on the [School Support Hub](#)

## How to use this booklet

This booklet goes through the paper one question at a time, showing you the high-, middle- and low level response for each question. In the left-hand column are the candidate responses, and in the right-hand column are the examiner comments.

Example Candidate Response – high	Examiner comments
	<p>1 An identification mark is awarded for 'being a grandparent' but the description does not develop the point, so only 1 mark is awarded.</p> <p>2 An identification mark is awarded for 'care takers' and, in this case, the reference to children is enough to show that the candidate understands the example.</p>
<p><b>Responses</b> are written by real candidates in exam conditions, demonstrating the types of answers for each level. These could be used to discuss and analyse the answers with learners in the classroom to improve their skills.</p>	<p><b>Examiner comments</b> explain where and why marks were awarded. These help to interpret the standard of Cambridge exams to help learners refine their exam technique.</p>

## How the candidate could improve their answer

Two clear developed points describing the term were needed to obtain full marks. In this answer, only the 'care taker' point was developed. A different second developed point such as financial support was required.

This section explains how the candidate could improve each response. It helps learners to improve their exam technique.

## Common mistakes and guidance for candidates

- Candidates are only required to describe in this question, there is no need to explain or define the term.
- Responses to this question do not require great depth or any significant detail.

This section lists common mistakes as well as helpful guidance from the examiner. This will help your learners to avoid these mistakes. You can use this alongside the relevant Examiner Report to guide your learners.

## Question 1

### Example Candidate Response – high

### Examiner comments

One social characteristics associated with the elderly is being a grandparent, ~~elderlys~~ are known for it because the word 'elders' are usually tied with grandparents in the family. Another social characteristics associated with the elderly is care takers, many individuals may use their elderly parents ~~to~~ as caretakers <sup>to care for</sup> ~~to~~ <sup>link</sup> their children.

1 An identification mark is awarded for 'being a grandparent' but the description does not develop the point, so only 1 mark is awarded.

2 An identification mark is awarded for 'care takers' and, in this case, the reference to children is enough to show that the candidate understands the example.

**Total mark awarded =  
3 out of 4**

### How the candidate could improve their answer

Two clear developed points describing the term were needed to obtain full marks. In this answer, only the 'care taker' point was developed. A different second developed point such as financial support was required.

### Example Candidate Response – middle

### Examiner comments

The elderly are taken care of or provided for by their children.

The elderly in <sup>some</sup> societies are ~~the~~ considered the ones to be in charge of the households ~~the~~ especially in Asian ~~comm~~ communities.

1 An identification mark is awarded for 'taken care of' (implying dependency) but there is no description.

2 An identification mark is awarded for 'in charge of households' but there is insufficient description for a second mark.

**Total mark awarded =  
2 out of 4**

### How the candidate could improve their answer

Two clear descriptions that developed the identification points were needed to obtain full marks. For example, the first point could have shown what form care might take or who might perform the role. In this case, they were absent.

### Example Candidate Response – low

### Examiner comments

Two social characteristics associated with the elderly are that they don't contribute to society and that they are just burdens to society.

1 An identification mark is awarded for 'they don't contribute to society' but there is no description. For example, the candidate could have pointed to the elderly being economically inactive.

2 The identification refers to the elderly as a 'burden' but this is deemed to be a repetition of the first point and does not receive any marks.

**Total mark awarded =  
1 out of 4**

### How the candidate could improve their answer

The candidate needed to ensure that there was no overlap between the points given.

### Common mistakes and guidance for candidates

- Candidates are only required to describe in this question, there is no need to explain or define the term.
- Responses to this question do not require great depth or any significant detail.

## Question 2(a)

Example Candidate Response – high	Examiner comments
<p>(a) Positivists are researchers that prefer quantitative data and methods over qualitative ones. <del>Positiv</del> Questionnaires are written or typed questions in textual form for respondents to answer. Positivists favour questionnaires as they can be replicated since the questions are fixed and thus, more reliable. <del>Questionnaires</del> Whether the questionnaire be open-ended or close-ended, the questions will be the same for all participants allowing for easy comparison and rechecking.</p> <p>Positivists also favour the use of questionnaires as <del>the open-ended are</del> close ended questionnaires are pre-coded, while open-ended are coded afterwards. Coding and operationalisation is <del>beneficial</del> quantifying abstract ideas. After operationalisation and/or coding, the <del>quantified</del> data can easily be checked for accuracy and validity and be tested to see if the answers provide some sort of objectivity. Since questionnaires are easier <del>and</del> to fill online, the sample size may be high, thus more representative data. And positivists prefer this kind of scientific data.</p>	<p>1 The candidate identifies the first reason 'positivists favour questionnaires as they can be replicated' and explains in terms of how they facilitate 'easy comparison and rechecking'.</p> <p>2 The candidate selects relevant sociological material 'reliable' but it is not used to explain how it supports the original point.</p> <p>3 The candidate clearly identifies and explains the second reason 'close-ended/pre-coded' by stating that this method allows 'abstract ideas to be operationalised and quantified'.</p> <p>4 The candidate selects relevant sociological material 'objectivity' and uses this to support the original point effectively.</p> <p><b>Total mark awarded = 7 out of 8</b></p>

### How the candidate could improve their answer

- The candidate should have ensured the selected relevant sociological material provided supported the original point to secure the fourth part mark.
- The candidate could have explained that another researcher would have been able to gain the same results if they had repeated the research at a different time.



## Example Candidate Response – middle

## Examiner comments

9  
1 One reason is because questionnaires can be done without the researchers presence.

Because they are given questions with options and can be done without the researchers presence which means there is no biasness of the researcher making the results valid.

2 Another reason is because questionnaires are quantitative, which means they do not require interpretation of the data and are easy to replicate. The data can be replicated to further confirm the results make it high in reliability.

1 The candidate correctly identifies 'done without researcher presence' as a reason and explains this as meaning there will be no bias. There is no sociological material selected for this reason, so only 2 marks out of the available 4 marks are awarded.

2 The candidate correctly identifies 'quantitative' as a reason and explains this well in terms of being 'easy to replicate'. The candidate selects 'reliable' as relevant sociological material, but this is not used to explain the original point.

**Total mark awarded =  
5 out of 8**

## How the candidate could improve their answer

The response was a little too brief and needed a greater depth of explanation with regard to choice and use of relevant sociological material.

Example Candidate Response – low	Examiner comments
<p>a) One reason why positivists favour the use of questionnaires is because they provide easily comparable quantifiable data. In a research where there are multiple participants, their responses related to different topics can be recorded by using <del>the</del> questionnaires and maybe including Likert scales. All the responses can be then analysed and compared, not needing to be interpreted, giving the researchers quantifiable data that can be turned easily into percentages. The level of effort and time saved is an advantage of using questionnaires for positivists.</p> <p>Another reason why positivists favour the use of questionnaires is that it is a cheaper and easier way of getting the data needed. For example, if the research implies a larger sample, questionnaires makes it easier to collect the data, whether that is because you can get it through email, or mailed to your home or in a magazine. Also, it is cheaper than having <del>an</del> multiple experimenters analysing and interpreting the data from the large</p>	<p>1 The candidate accurately identifies the first reason 'quantitative data' and explains 'can be analysed and compared' well.</p> <p>2 The reference to 'Likert scales' qualifies as relevant sociological evidence but the candidate makes no attempt to link this back to the original point.</p> <p>3 The second point made 'large scale' is not credited as there is no linkage to positivism. In other words, the response focuses on questionnaires alone. The reference to 'allocated budget' is also deemed to be too vague. No marks are awarded.</p>
<p>sample. The allocated budget can be used for multiple researches rather than just one and also you can get in touch and collect the data from more people by using a questionnaire, making it an advantage.</p>	<p><b>Total mark awarded = 3 out of 8</b></p>

### How the candidate could improve their answer

The question specifically asked for reasons that positivists would use. The answer was insufficient on this aspect which is why it did not receive credit for the second reason.

### Common mistakes and guidance for candidates

- Candidates do not always clearly explain two separate reasons.
- Candidates often do not explain the concepts used in their answer or simply repeat the same point in both explanations.

## Question 2(b)

### Example Candidate Response – high

### Examiner comments

(b)	One limitation of field experiments as a research method is the lack of reliability.
1	
2	In a field experiment, the researcher has little to no control over the variables, which
3	limits the chances of the results being reliable, meaning they are highly unlikely of being repeatable.
4	Another limitation of field experiments are the ethical concerns surrounding them, especially consent. In a field experiment, the participants don't know that they're being studied, so they're
5	unable to give consent.

1 The candidate gives all three elements for the first limitation so all available marks are awarded. The candidate gives 'lack of reliability' as the first limitation.

2 The candidate then explains why this method has this limitation – it 'cannot control variables'.

3 The candidate then explains why this is a limitation 'unlikely to be repeatable'.

4 The candidate correctly identifies 'ethical concerns' for the second limitation.

5 The candidate explains why field experiments have the limitation 'consent not given', but they do not go on to explain why this is a limitation.

**Total mark awarded =  
5 out of 6**

### How the candidate could improve their answer

This was a good response but was not awarded full marks because the second limitation did not explain why ethical issues were a limitation of this method, for example, by outlining how lack of consent may have potentially resulted in the psychological harm of participants.

## Example Candidate Response – middle

## Examiner comments

one limitation of field experiments arises from practical issues that ~~come~~ <sup>come</sup> with them. This includes things such as funding and time needed as there is background work like pilot studies ~~and~~ and tools needed before a researcher can be put into and analyse a live situations which ~~isn't~~ <sup>isn't</sup> always a fully controlled environment. This is usually quite expensive and time-consuming so obtaining funding for this can be an issue for the researcher who has to find other willing to dedicate time and money to a small sample size whose data most likely also won't be generalisable.

Another limitation incurred by field experiments are ethical concerns that can occur which ~~can~~ <sup>can</sup> if fixed could as a consequence reduce validity. For example, if the issue of informed consent is dealt with it risks introducing issues like the Hawthorne effect where participants will act different knowing their being studied. Alternatively, this comes with opportunity cost of ethical issues as real environments and people are being studied with the researcher present so they could become involved with actions that cause things like trauma to the participants.

1 The candidate discusses practical issues at the beginning of the answer 'funding, time' but these are not deemed relevant as the limitation is not made specific to field experiments.

2 The candidate states an accurate limitation 'can't always be a fully controlled environment' but there is no further explanation provided.

3 The candidate explains the second limitation 'ethical issues' by showing why this method has the limitation 'issue of consent' but the remainder of the response is not directly linked to field experiments or the limitation.

**Total mark awarded =  
3 out of 6**

## How the candidate could improve their answer

- The candidate provided two accurate limitations, but neither were fully developed. For each identification made, two further points were required in order to be awarded full marks.
- For the first point, the candidate needs to explain that this happens in a natural setting so, unlike a laboratory, the variables cannot be controlled.
- The candidate then needed to explain that this may affect/decrease the validity of the findings.

## Example Candidate Response – low

## Examiner comments

⑥ Field Experiment is when the study is taking place ~~in~~ outside the lab with a more real life setting ~~and~~ and the two limitations of this research method is that

1 Firstly, on the case of field Experiment ~~this is a~~ ~~research~~ it requires more funding as field Experiment can be expensive and this would put pressure on the researcher because of this their will be research bias in the study this can decrease the validity & reliability of the study. Secondly, <sup>in</sup> field Experiment there are more chances of breaking ~~up~~ an ethical guideline and as if the ethical guideline breaks then the study might not be considered valid or this may decrease the validity of the study.

2

3

In conclusion, the two limitations of field Experiment as a research method is research bias and ethical ~~of~~ guidelines.

1 An introduction is unnecessary for this question.

2 The candidate raises points that are not specific to field experiments so no credit is given for this section.

3 The candidate does not explain why 'breaking ethical guidelines' is a correct limitation, so only 1 mark is awarded.

Total mark awarded =  
1 out of 6

## How the candidate could improve their answer

- The candidate used a general point about funding but this would need to have been made relevant to the method in question for it to be rewarded.
- In the identified point, the candidate mentioned 'validity' and this could have been developed but greater clarity was needed as to how this might have related to the question.

## Common mistakes and guidance for candidates

- Responses did not follow all three steps of the rubric as set out in the mark scheme, i.e. identify and explain a limitation or strength, explain why the given method has this limitation or strength and then why it is a limitation or strength.
- There was also a common tendency for candidates to mix points together using the same material to support each limitation or strength.

## Question 3(a)

### Example Candidate Response – high

### Examiner comments

a) Cultural deprivation is when individuals receive inadequate cultural exposure and socialisation that provides them the appropriate norms and values to function in society. One way cultural deprivation is the main cause of deviance is because ~~there are~~ individuals lack cultural capital to integrate into society. Bourdieu suggested that different social classes have different habitus, and these differences affect the level of cultural capital and cultural exposure a person receives. ~~For~~ For example, working class individuals are less likely to be exposed to different cultures and societies, either through education or lack of means to interact with other cultures. This means that they would be less likely to internalise views and values that appropriate in society, ~~which~~ ~~causing~~ causing them to act deviant, such as being racist or xenophobic because they were not socialised of the values and beliefs.

Another way cultural deprivation is the main cause of deviance is because <sup>some</sup> families see little importance in teaching their children cultural norms and values. This is more prominent in working class families, whose children are often taught by their family to value immediate gratification, whereas those who are more successful in societies such as those in middle and upper class would value further education to earn jobs for an income. This creates deviant behaviour in working class individuals because they did not receive adequate education that could land them a stable career, resorting to ~~rob~~ <sup>theft</sup> and fraudery to earn an income. Furthermore, those in lower working class, as suggested by Murray, could teach children to not value employment and rely on the over generous state that would provide for them, prompting them to reject values of work life.

1 The candidate explains the first point in terms of 'inadequate socialisation' and uses sociological material to support this 'cultural capital', 'Bourdieu'.

2 The candidate's point is fully developed by showing with examples how this may result in deviant behaviour.

3 The candidate's second point directly focuses on social class, in particular, the view that working class culture places little importance on education, instead focusing on 'immediate gratification'.

4 The candidate fully develops a link made to Murray's view that a class-based identity that does not value work and employment may encourage deviant behaviour.

**Total mark awarded =  
10 out of 10**

### How the candidate could improve their answer

The answer contained two clear and fully developed points with good knowledge and understanding of the view. The sociological material used was appropriate and fully focused on the question.

## Example Candidate Response – middle

## Examiner comments

a) On one hand it's argued that cultural deprivation: the understanding that working-class subcultures doesn't adequately provide the hard-working ideology found in wider society, explains why individuals are deviant. As Sugarman (1970) stated, there are two main ideas supported by working-class society that causes them to deviate: the first being immediate gratification. As working-class children are not encouraged to work hard and gain ~~good~~ qualifications they ultimately do anything to gain quick money, this provides an explanation for the presence of petty theft amongst working-class society. The second 'idea' is that of collectivism - working-class individuals are socialized to stay loyal to their community

1 The candidate supports this near the beginning of the answer with the references to Sugarman and 'immediate gratification', and then develops this through a link made to deviance via 'petty theft'.

2 Although the candidate puts forward their second idea at the end of the page, in fact, it is the first clear point they make that explains the view 'working class individuals are socialised to stay loyal'.

- instead on focusing on personal needs. Causing individuals to not have aspirations of a better life as they believe they will spend their lives in the same environment which they are raised.

Additionally, the legal system ~~and~~ <sup>attempts</sup> to aid those who are culturally deprived. As Murray noted, there's a growing ~~underclass~~ <sup>underclass</sup> of individuals who are content with their box of personal, educational and intellectual fulfillment due to an overgenerous welfare system. To conclude all of these factors, from primary socialization of the family to legal policies ensure working-class society does not ~~become upwardly~~ <sup>become upwardly</sup> gain social mobility - causing them to deviate from the norms and values of wider society

3 The second point explains the view in terms of the concept of 'underclass'.

4 The candidate shows how this might contribute to a value system that results in deviant behaviour, but this is underdeveloped.

**Total mark awarded =  
6 out of 10**

## How the candidate could improve their answer

The answer contained one clear and developed point and one relevant but underdeveloped point. A clearer link in the second point to the how cultural deprivation can cause deviant behaviour could have been made.

## Example Candidate Response – low

## Examiner comments

a Cultural deprivation is the main cause of deviant behaviour, because ~~if~~<sup>when</sup> people lack the resources to succeed in society

1 they turn to deviancy as a way to express their anger. Putnam argues that classes have 'norms of reciprocity' and that working class people do not have the same norms of reciprocity as the middle and upper class, which can limit their success. Bordeni also found that working class individuals lack the social and cultural capital for success ~~this~~ meaning that they lack the connections and experiences that the middle class have which is essential for their success. Sugarman

2 As a result, a status frustration emerged, as well as this, the lack of material and resources contributes to this sense of inadequacy. Sugarman found that working class idea consisted of the characteristics of fatalism, ~~so the acceptance of low position within society,~~ and collectivism which is an emphasis on group loyalty rather than individual needs. In turn, ~~this led to dev~~ ~~is~~ ~~partially~~ responsible

3 for deviant behaviour within society, as working class people feel as though they are at a significant disadvantage to others and resent the upper classes for being of a higher status undeservingly. As a result, their ~~lack~~

4 cultural deprivation leads them to act in deviant ways as they feel that ~~the~~ others are to blame for their lack of status and position in society and resort to crime as a form

1 The candidate does not directly focus on the question and the first part of this answer is general.

2 The candidate makes a clear point regarding the lack of 'social and cultural capital' as well as material resources experienced by some groups.

3 The candidate presents relevant sociological material in this section, but the point is underdeveloped in relation to deviance.

4 This section is general and lacks relevance to the question.



## Example Candidate Response – low, continued

## Examiner comments

5

In addition, cultural deprivation is the main cause of deviant behaviour because ~~the~~ working class parents lack the adequate physical and social resources to help their children succeed. King and Raynor found that middle class parents had a more 'deliberate' parenting style and have more time to spend socialising their children and facilitating their growth, while working class parents lack the time and material resources to aid their children's success. In turn, this lack ~~of~~ this facilitated middle class children to be able to succeed in education, as there was more help at home to enable this success, and then also had greater material resources like technology and books to add to this. As a result of this, status frustration emerged as working class people ~~then~~ lack the resources that middle class pupils have. Albert Cohen found that deviancy occurred when working class pupils tried to emulate the middle class pupils but failed, resulting in feelings of inadequacy. In turn, this led to the formation of deviant subcultures as a way to gain their own status within society, that they could not acquire otherwise due to ~~lack~~ ~~of~~ cultural deprivation. Cohen found that the subcultures offered status to those who were the most deviant. Therefore, cultural deprivation and a lack of

5

The candidate's point has a more direct focus on parenting styles between class groups (King and Raynor) and the social resources available to them.

6

Adequate resources can lead to deviance, as ~~when~~ people lack the necessities for success, because

they act in deviant ways as a response to their disadvantaged position within society.

★ of opposing the system that oppresses them.

6

The candidate's original point is underdeveloped in relation to deviant behaviour with some less relevant material and only a brief reference to it at the end of the question.

**Total mark awarded =**  
**4 out of 10**

## How the candidate could improve their answer

The response was good in terms of one aspect of the view (cultural deprivation) and contained some good use of sociological material, but it lacked development in relation to the second aspect of the question, deviant behaviour, which limited the marks it could be awarded.

## Common mistakes and guidance for candidates

- Often candidates did not provide two clear and developed points. If two clearly developed points were made with good reference to concepts, theories and evidence that were directed towards the question, a response could achieve 10 marks.
- Responses often lacked sufficient use of relevant sociological material.

## Question 3(b)

### Example Candidate Response – high

### Examiner comments

b	One argument against this view is the fact that
1	biology plays a part in explaining deviance. Many
	sociologists, including Lombroso, believe that there
	are biological determinants that lead to individuals
	becoming deviant.
2	Lombroso conducted a study looking at criminals
	and found that they often share physical
	characteristics such as a low forehead.
	This shows that biology has to have a role in
	deviant behaviours and that, therefore, cultural
3	deprivation cannot be the most important or
	main cause of deviant behaviours.

1 The candidate identifies biology as an argument against the view.

2 The candidate supports the point by reference to some sociological material (Lombroso) and the idea that there may be a biological component in explaining deviant behaviour.

3 The candidate makes a weak connection to the argument being countered 'cultural deprivation' which just elevates the response into Level three.

**Total mark awarded =  
5 out of 6**

### How the candidate could improve their answer

The answer contained one clear point against the view in the question with appropriate supporting evidence. More development of the view that biology is more important than cultural deprivation would be needed for full marks.

Example Candidate Response – middle	Examiner comments
<p>(b) The education system can be a cause of deviant behaviour. If children are not achieving as well as others in their classes, they can be overlooked by teachers. Sociologists</p> <p>argue the education system has a 'hidden curriculum'. This is when teachers provide more help and attention towards the children who achieve better grades. Furthermore, schools provide a variety of positive and negative sanctions. For students who do not perform as well as others, they may be given detentions which will further demotivate them. With this lack of care, children can feel as though they need to rebel and be deviant to gain the attention they lack. Linking back, this shows that cultural deprivation is not the main cause of deviant behaviour.</p>	<p>1 The candidate identifies education as a contrary source of deviance.</p> <p>2 The candidate outlines this in terms of the role played by teacher expectations and sanctions resulting in 'demotivation' and 'rebel' students.</p> <p>3 The candidate shows how this might contribute to a value system that results in deviant behaviour, but this is underdeveloped.</p> <p><b>Total mark awarded = 3 out of 6</b></p>

### How the candidate could improve their answer

The answer contained one clear but underdeveloped point. The sociological material used was appropriate but its relevance to the argument was not made clear. The argument put forward needed to outline the connection to deviance and make a link back to cultural deprivation.

## Example Candidate Response – low

## Examiner comments

(b) While cultural deprivation ~~is~~ is a cause of deviant behaviour it is not a risk factor. Many other things like ~~class~~ class or socialization or peers can effect this too. For example undersocialization can be a big ~~factor~~ factor in causing deviant behaviour. If a person is undersocialized and neglected growing up, they wouldn't have been properly taught ~~social~~ social norms and values of society. It could also lead them to deviant behaviours in an act of rebellion or resistance. ~~to~~

1 There is little to reward in this answer except the rather vague assertion at the end that a lack of norms and values leads to deviance in the form of 'acts of rebellion'.

Total mark awarded =  
1 out of 6

## How the candidate could improve their answer

- The answer contained a point disagreeing with the view but it was not clear and there is no sociological material or development.
- The response was more appropriate to Q3(a) than to Q3(b).

## Common mistakes and guidance for candidates

- Many responses give more than one argument in their answer. Only one argument can be rewarded.
- Points made did not always link back to the focus of the question, which means a response is lacking development and cannot enter the top level.

## Question 4

### Example Candidate Response – high

### Examiner comments

This essay will be looking at points that support or disprove the view that peers are the most important agent in shaping an individual's identity.

One explanation for the view that peers are the most important agent in shaping identity is the control they have over each other, especially when a subculture is formed. Paul Willis looked at "the lads," a group of working class boys who formed an anti school subculture based on disrupting class, non conformity, and resisting the socialization/control of the school on them. The lads stayed in line with their norms and values (going against the school) mainly to please each other and for informal positive sanctions, like words of praise or positive non verbal reactions such as laughter, and also out of the fear of ostracism, or being rejected from the group. However, it may be

1 The candidate shows how peers exert control over each other by exercising informal sanctions in subcultural settings. The point is supported by the use of concepts and studies (Willis) earning AO1 and AO2 marks.

## Example Candidate Response – high, continued

## Examiner comments

argued that the lads didn't actually care about each other, or the peer group, but kept going out of resentment for the education system, and they only befriended each other based on their mutual disdain for the school system.

2 The candidate uses a brief evaluation of the first point using the cited study (Willis) to suggest that their 'resentment' for education is a greater influence than peers (AO3).

One point that disproves this view is that media is actually the most important agent in shaping an individual's identity. Neil Postman said that, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and with the gradual decline in printed media like books and newspapers, media largely replaced the family as the main institution of socialization. Potter adds onto this by talking about imitation and social learning, through which children and even early adolescents pick up things like language, vocabulary, mannerisms, and more. This makes up a huge amount of a person's identity. Finally, Jack Xiang talks about the bulimic society, where media has introduced a culture of "get rich or die trying" into our society, making individuals put an exaggerated value on consumerism and making it a huge part of their identity, showing us that peers are not the most important agent in shaping an individual's identity but media.

3 The candidate centres on the role of media in influencing identity, making the argument against the view that it is the most important agent (AO3). The candidate makes good use of sociological material that is well interpreted in terms of the question. The final sentence makes a link back to the question but could have been more sharply focused on it.

Another explanation for the view that peers are the most important agent in shaping an individual's identity is that peers often look to each other in times of hardship/discrimination to reaffirm and strengthen their collectivist identity. Jacobson looked at British Asian (Pakistani, Bangladeshi, etc.) second generation immigrants and found that in response to the racism from the native white folk, they had formed a stronger muslim identity with each other, going to the mosque together and forming friendships with other muslim immigrants, creating a community. However, this could be evaluated by saying they only came together

4 The argument supporting the view in this paragraph is well developed and effective. The candidate uses a study to demonstrate the role played by peers in supporting each other and this is linked to identity. All of the material is directly focused on the question (AO1 and AO2). The final sentence provides a point of evaluation but it is undeveloped.

## Example Candidate Response – high, continued

## Examiner comments

because they were geographically close, known as residential nationalism.

~~One~~ Another point that disagrees that peers are the most important agent in shaping identity is that education is in fact the most important agent. Bowles and Gintis went into a school and found that the hidden curriculum (unspoken things like uniforms and asking for permission to use the bathroom) had socialized kids into obedience and subservience, which would carry over into the workplace (this was called the correspondence principle). As well as this, Becker says school promotes the idea of an ideal pupil, which students are rewarded for imitating and negatively sanctioned for straying ~~far~~ from (and this shapes their identity by training them to be obedient, showing that education is the most important agent).

One final explanation for the view that peers are the most important agent in shaping identity is cultural comfort groups, where similar people can come together for 'cultural comfort'. Sewell said students of the same ethnicity (black) often hung out together outside of the class room because they were peers with similar characteristics, therefore providing comfort and an ease in socialising/talking to each other. These peers provided emotional stability to each other, showing that peers are the most important agent in shaping identity.

However,

5 The approach again is to take a different agent (education) and unpack its impact on identity. This is done with reference to a range of studies and concepts. The candidate's argument is not as well linked to peers or identity as previously shown.

6 The last point briefly looks at the role of 'cultural comfort' in forging peer identity in an ethnic context but it is not fully developed.

Mark for AO1 = 7 out of 8  
Mark for AO2 = 8 out of 8  
Mark for AO3 = 7 out of 10

**Total mark awarded =  
22 out of 26**

## How the candidate could improve their answer

A very good response that was awarded high marks across the range of assessment objectives. The evaluative points, whilst valid, could have been more fully developed.



## Example Candidate Response – middle

## Examiner comments

The view that peers are the most important agent shaping an individual's identity can only be justifiable to a certain extent. This is because peers do have influence over gender identity, ethnic identity and social class identity. However, peers ~~are~~ are not the most important as other ~~peer~~ agents ~~are~~ including family, ~~media~~ and media play a just as significant role in shaping identity.

On the one hand, peer groups have impact over and individuals' gender identity. This is because ~~peer~~ individuals, particularly adolescence are highly influenced by those around them, ~~to~~ as they strive to feel a sense of belonging into a particular group. This can link to pressure to identify as a specific gender as it has become a "trend" among peer groups. Furthermore, peer groups influence ~~how~~ the perception of gender identity and put pressure on their peers to dress in a specific way or behave in a manner linked to their gender identity for example focusing on appearance for girls, and sports for boys. James Cote supports this view of peer groups having increasing pressure as he expresses how they become more important than family as people grow. This goes to show that pressure from peer groups can be largely affect our gender identity.

To extend on this, peer groups can be seen to have large influence over an individual's ethnic identity. Sociologist Hill argues that in Asian communities, children learn western views of work and marriage from their peers, which ~~changes how an it~~ goes to show that individuals learn different cultures from those around them.

1 The candidate makes a good opening point supporting the view that links gender identity to the role played by peer pressure. There is also a relevant supporting study. An effective, developed AO1 and AO2 point.

## Example Candidate Response – middle, continued

## Examiner comments

Furthermore, peer groups for younger age groups are highly associated with education, whereby individuals may pick up new languages from those around them who speak it. This reveals the fact that peer groups can change and influence our ethnic identity particularly as an adolescent.

An individual's social class identity can also be a result of peer groups. Work peer groups can dramatically affect political views, and work itself may cause one to identify in a specific social class.

For example, an individual may be exposed to working class values from their work peers, which also leads them to identify in the working class as a result of the nature of their work. As an individual is younger at a younger age, peer groups at school may expose you to behaviours, beliefs and values of a specific class which you may pick up. This illustrates that peer groups have high influence on an individual's social class identity.

On the other hand, agencies such as family have high influence over identity which can first be seen in the process of socialisation.

Ann Dowse argues that gender identity is exposed from childhood through gender role socialisation. This is where children are taught for example, domestic work is for girls and physical work is for boys. They further dress individuals according to gender with colours such as pink being used for girls and blue for boys. Hides also expresses that in homes, artefacts such as pictures and religious items help to reinforce ethnic identity, which many take on into older stages of their lives. As family takes high importance in the process of socialisation it has a significant impact on an individual's identity.

Additionally, the nature aspect of family plays a huge role in shaping gender and ethnic identity. In a nuclear family, Desmond Morris argues that genetics inherited from an individual's parents, shape culture,

2 The candidate makes two further supporting points (one on the contribution of peers to learning 'Western values' and a second that links the role played by education as a setting for peer identity) but both are undeveloped in terms of AO1 and AO2.

3 A more effective point supporting the view about work peers and their influence on the formation of political views and social class identity but it is still sociologically underdeveloped.

4 A juxtaposed evaluation (AO3) point reviewing the family's influence on identity as an alternative agent to peers, but there is no reference made to the question, which makes it undeveloped.

## Example Candidate Response – middle, continued

## Examiner comments

5 because culture is based on biology. Therefore beliefs, race, language and other aspects of ethnic identity derive from family who share genes. Furthermore, Robin Fox argues that gender roles are biologically determined, with men taking on instrumental roles and women engaging in empathy and expressive roles. The view that these features are inherited and identities are inherited shows a huge reliance on family in shaping gender identity.

Media, is yet another agent which arguably has an importance in shaping an individual's identity. Firstly, Naomi Wolf argues that media reveals an 'ideal image' of women and shows that women's bodies are in constant need of improvement. As for men, the view of a new feminised masculinity expressed by sociologist Collen is

6 seen to also derive from media which showcases that it is now okay for men to express emotion and vulnerability. Both of these have highly influenced the perception of gender identity. Secondly, age identity has been influenced by media through painting elderly as a 'burden', and younger age groups as 'deviant', to showcase what each age identity involves. Media has been seen to highly affect identity as it becomes more prominent with the large technological advancements of this century.

Ultimately, peer groups evidently have influence over the way in which an individual identifies, whether that be social class, gender, or ethnic identity. However, it is important, but not the 'most' important as other agencies such as family and media ~~play a high~~ also play a highly significant part in shaping an individual's identity.

5 This evaluation point (AO3) is distinct from the family one – the role of biology/nature – but it also makes no direct link to the question.

6 An evaluation (AO3) point reviewing the media's influence on identity as an alternative to peers, but it does not return to the question and whether or not these agents exert more or less influence than peers. This approach limits the AO3 marks available to 3 marks out of a possible 10 marks as all are undeveloped.

Mark for AO1 = 6 out of 8  
Mark for AO2 = 6 out of 8  
Mark for AO3 = 3 out of 10

**Total mark awarded =  
15 out of 26**

## How the candidate could improve their answer

A range of points were made in support of the view but only one of these (linking gender identity and peer pressure) was fully developed. In terms of evaluation, the candidate listed some points that may have been relevant but these needed to be clearly linked to the question and further developed.

Example Candidate Response – low

Examiner comments

Peers are ~~our friends~~ <sup>people</sup> that been with us since we are in schools, they ~~are~~ can be our classmates, online friends or friends with the same age. Peers can be the most important agent that shape individual's identity.

1 Firstly, Peers can highly shape a person's gender. ~~Peers~~ This means that peers can influence ~~people~~ <sup>other peers</sup>

about the way people talk, activities that people play for ~~example~~ <sup>like</sup> boys who play football or girls who use make-ups and gossiping. For example, People tend to split out and form groups based on their gender. ~~It can be consider to~~ If a boy playing with a group of girls, that boy might be segregated from the other boy groups. Therefore, gender identity can be influence by peers.

2 However, family is the most important agent shaping an individual their gender. According to Cornell, people are not born as boys and girls, they are made to be boys and girls. Family is the one who is responsible to teach the norms, roles, behaviours to their children during primary socialisation, therefore family are those who made their children a boy or a girl. ~~For~~ The family chose what to wear, what color are suitable for their children, what toys to play so it can ~~not~~ shape ~~on~~ the individual gender identity. Therefore, family ~~can be~~ are more influenced in shaping an individual's identity.

3 Secondly, peers can shape class identity. People tend to spent most of their time in schools and ~~there~~ might be different classes inside a classroom. ~~Peers who consumed in~~ ~~spend~~ There are different classes such as upper culture class ~~or~~, middle class or lower class. ~~For example, some~~ ~~that~~ ~~class~~ ~~we~~ ~~for~~ <sup>example,</sup> Peers who tends to have more leisure activities, going to private school, accessing to higher education are upper culture class while peers who have to work or ~~cannot~~ can't have to opportunities to access good education are considered as lower class. Therefore, peers can ~~have~~ shape an individual's identity by their education.

4 On the other hand, Crompton believes that ~~where~~ what people work and jobs define their class ~~people~~. It doesn't need to be peers who have influence in class but adult and jobs determines what class people are. For example, a miner can be lower class and a business can be

1 The candidate makes an undeveloped point supporting the view that links peers with gender identity. This gains limited AO1 marks.

2 An evaluation point (AO3) contrasting family with peers. There is some focus on the question but it is underdeveloped.

3 A confused undeveloped point supporting the view that conflates peers and education.

4 In this paragraph, the candidate identifies the workplace as an alternative setting for class identity formation. Not enough is said about the peer element which makes this an underdeveloped evaluation point.

## Example Candidate Response – low

## Examiner comments

defined as upper culture class. That is why, jobs has the higher influence in shaping individuals identity.

5 Lastly, peers are the most important agent shaping an individuals age identity. ~~the~~ ~~the~~ ~~ago~~ People with same age doing the same activities like each other, they might to the same job. For example, at the age of 20 people are working at a convenience store. Other people are who have the same age might ~~expected to~~ ~~to~~ expected to work ~~to~~ like people with same age.

However, ~~the media~~ ~~shop~~ ~~peer~~ cannot shape age identity because there are tradition and modern side. In the childhood, many children have to work in the traditional days while in modern days children are likely to go to school and hold less responsibilities ~~in~~ ~~at~~ ~~the~~. For elderly, in the modern days, ~~if~~ ~~the~~ elderly still have to work ~~compared to~~ ~~to~~ instead of resting.

In conclusion peers are not the most important agent to shaping individuals identity.

5 The candidate attempts to make a link between peers and age, but no argument is put forward.

Mark for AO1 = 2 out of 8  
Mark for AO2 = 2 out of 8  
Mark for AO3 = 5 out of 10

**Total mark awarded = 9 out of 26**

## How the candidate could improve their answer

The supporting arguments lacked any real range or depth. With evaluation, there was a little more substance to the points put forward but greater development needed to be made.

## Common mistakes and guidance for candidates

- In identity based questions, candidates often take a general approach focusing on an institution/agent but with little or no specific reference to the impact it may have upon identity.
- Similarly, evaluation often poses alternative agents as being more or less important and this approach is often juxtaposed leading to underdeveloped points.
- Linking evaluative points to the view in the question would make the evaluation more explicit as it will show how the counter argument disagrees with the view in the question.

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