1 – Culture, norms, values, roles, status, and beliefs as social constructions; relativity

Culture = a group of people's way of life

Norms are the specific unwritten rules of social behaviour that tell us what is appropriate and acceptable in certain situations. **Elias** argued that in the Middle Ages there were fewer constraints on individual behaviour than today, as there are now more norms. The two types of norms are 'mores' and 'folkways'.

'Mores' embody the moral views of the group – such as the more against stealing, which violates the values aligned against greed, for example.
'Folkways' are norms for routine, casual interaction – such as whether to shake hands or bow when greeting someone.
Values are the core beliefs that guide people's actions – such as values of justice.

A few key terms to note:

Customs = norms that are accepted and continue over time.

Laws = rules that have been formalised and are enforced by governments.

Status = position one has in a society; this can be ascribed (given at birth) or achieved (earned).

Role = patterns of behaviour expected of someone because of their social status.

Beliefs = the statements that people hold to be true.

Norms are relative because they differ depending on the social group, the society the group belongs to and the era. A good example is dress codes.

2 – Conformity and non-conformity; the agencies and processes of social control

Social institutions are the parts of society that have their own sets of norms and values eg. the family or the school system, and they use social control to make individuals conform to these.
Rewards are positive sanctions, so that behaviour is encouraged – and sanctions are punishing unacceptable behaviour. "Conformity" is when individuals act in accordance with social expectations.

There are two ways in which this is exerted:
Informal = ways of controlling behaviour imposed by those without a formal role to do so, such as a peer group who may use ostracism as a means of making an individual act in a certain way
Formal = social control imposed by an organisation, such as the police, who have the authority to implement rules and laws.

Past exam question: "Explain how individuals are encouraged to conform to the norms and values of society."
through positive sanctions such as rewards e.g. within school teachers send emails home, stickers, certificates etc.;
through informal negative sanctions or punishments e.g. in the use of the 'naughty step' or removal of possessions;
through formal sanctions e.g. the threat of a criminal record or prison sentence will be

enough to make most people conform;

peer pressure ensures that individuals confirm to group expectations;

through the primary socialisation process – most people conform to norms and values if they have been taught them well by parents;

Marxists would argue that the hidden curriculum ensures that students become conformist pupils and then conformist workers;

role models can encourage conformity e.g. religious leaders teach by example;

through the fear of the consequences e.g. in the media everyone can see what happens to norm and law breakers;

workers are encouraged to conform with a mixture of positive sanctions (praise and bonuses) and negative sanctions (warnings, being dismissed).

3 – The formation and existences of sub-cultures

Subcultures are groups within larger cultures, which have their own distinctive norms and values. The main culture doesn't accept them – such as being kicked out of class for informal dressing (deviance).

Functionalists view them as positive and a part of growing up. The main society doesn't accept them, and so they are able to still feel a sense of belonging. This alternative opportunity structure leads to higher status.

Marxists, on the other hand, see these groups being formed because of the economic conditions that capitalism has left them with. **Cohen's** study on the skinheads highlighted a certain rebellion against capitalism – working-class youth expressing their identity through leather boots and rigid masculine symbols.

He also investigated counter-school subcultures where the members have been ostracised by society and labelled as 'losers'.

Cloward and Ohlin argued that there is an illegitimate opportunity structure in MIS, one of which is through a criminal subculture (as a career option), as a conflict subculture (gang warfare) and a retreatist subculture (drugs as an escape).

Feminists note that girls are less likely to form subcultures, or are only members because of their partners. This is because parents tend to keep more control over girls; a byproduct of patriarchal authority where 'freedom' is only granted to boys. The media has therefore often thought of girls as being less deviant – however **McRobbie** argues that girls are also involved in these expressions of deviance, such as the emergence of a 'bedroom subculture' against sexual subordination.

Sub-cultures are generally a minority, and later in life most of them conform to the main culture's norms.

Past exam question: "Explain two examples of subcultures".

Skinheads – shave their heads, and wear leather boots as symbols of working-class masculinity

Goths – wear sombre colours with exotic hair, to express their liking of gothic rock.

4- Diversity and cultural variation in human behaviour and issues related to multiculturalism

Cultures vary in their food, languages and dress. Multicultural societies, such as the UK, are ones in which many different cultures and subcultures coexist. However, some argue that this is too idealistic – as the minority communities often stay away from the main cultures due to insufficient integration. Areas of London are segregated by ethnic group – and some sociologists fear this may lead to conflict.

Generally, the host culture provides the values that hold society together, and some societies place more emphasis on assimilation over multiculturalism. Some societies, where nationalism is on the rise, go so far as to ban certain elements of clothing (such as the Niqab in France), therefore acting against the expression of minority cultures. Citizenship tests exist to increase the knowledge of minority groups about their host country.

Globalisation has meant that cultures have become more interconnected, and the internet has allowed for a transmission of ideas. Advances in technology have made travel much easier, therefore increasing education about people's ways of life. Some even argue that the world is developing its own 'monoculture': given that gradually some aspects of tradition are eroding. Food is increasingly consumed at global fast-food chains such as McDonalds – creating a certain uniformity in this element of culture. Our clothing and appearance in most cultures is relatively Western, with the majority in T-shirts. Furthermore, global mass media films and music are also dominated by Hollywood studios – leading to a greater shared culture of media consumption, too.

However, some societies tend to be more 'nativist'. North Korea is able to use censorship to ban elements of other cultures, and uses indoctrination to influence the value consensus that their own culture is at risk of being 'corrupted'.
Although it could be argued that another element of culture – language, is gradually being replaced by English, it can still be seen that thousands of languages are used in society. Some groups use it as a protective measure against outside influence. The Roma community tend to be very close-knitted, and their language is relatively unknown.
Ethnic designs still tend to be worn, although less on everyday occasions and more for religious or national celebrations.
In terms of all around the world, Bollywood films are also widely popular around the world, and the Internet has made certain artists' music more popular. Furthermore, other cultures' restaurants have opened all over the world – with Asian food being consumed in all major cities too.

For a 'to what extent?' one could conclude that some elements have been changed but that most societies find themselves in a sort of 'hybrid' culture state (elements of one culture blend with another to establish certain norms). This could therefore be linked to **Stuart Hall's** theory that there are three reactions to globalisation: cultural homogenisation (acceptance), cultural hybridity (part-acceptance) and cultural resistance (no acceptance).

Past exam question: "To what extent does a global culture exist?"

Arguments for:
Facebook – as a social media platform it allows people to feel connected all around the globe; fashion – market leading brands such as Nike and Adidas are worn and advertised in all parts of the world;
globalisation has meant the spread of westernisation, with its norms and values, which is a form of cultural imperialism;
globalisation encouraging a single global culture via better transportation and communication across the globe via digital platforms;
English is the global language of the internet and this may lead to some languages becoming weaker or even dying out;
increased migration of people from the developing to the developed world means that people assimilate to often western global norms and values and lifestyle;
western lifestyles, food and drink have become popular through marketing and greater availability e.g. fast-food chains such as McDonalds and Pizza Hut;
there are now global sports events such as the soccer world cup, Olympic games etc. which

bring together competitors from all over the world under a common ethos and set of values;
there are now global political and economic institutions which aim to foster common human
values and prosperity e.g. the World Bank, The United Nations etc.;
the films and music industries continue to be dominated by western English language
products emerging from Hollywood and major western music labels which glorify their culture
and values;

Arguments against:
the mixing of people and cultures from all over the world enables the sharing of ideas and
lifestyles, creating vibrant cultural diversity rather than a single global culture;
each culture tends to have its own traditional foods which may not be shared across the
world; traditional dress still maintained in certain cultures e.g. in Asia and the Middle East
where female modesty is a core value this is reflected in norms of dress e.g. hijab or burqa
which is not a global norm;
the internet is democratic and musical artists from different cultures can now post videos and
songs in their own language for their own culture's appreciation;
some remote cultures with little communication and access to technology are far removed
from this global culture and in such an environment tradition and religion may be the driving
forces of culture.

5- Age as an example of social construction

Childhood is socially constructed, because of the way that children are treated. Expectations
vary between different points of time in society. **Ariès,** a medieval historian, argued that
childhood in today's terms was not recognised as a social category before the 20th century.
In pre-industrial societies, children acted as 'little adults' taking part in economic activity.
Their distinctive small bodies meant they were seen as assets (eg. chimney sweeps),
instead of symbols of love. The 20th century had seen the UK become more child-centred,
with higher living standards meaning that children dying was a less frequent occurrence, and
there was therefore more investment by parents into expressing love, time, socialisation, and
protection.

Some societies, such as the **Ik tribe**, however, view children as a drain on their resources
because of famines – and leave them to fend for themselves. In MIS there are structures in
place, such as the Children's Act, which makes it so that courts always ensure that a child's
welfare is the most important thing considered in a case, such as legal decisions about who
they will live with following a divorce (where applicable).

Neil Postman argued that there will be a 'disappearance of childhood' in the long-term
because the use of technology with less parental supervision exposes children to the adult
word too early.

6- Processes through which children learn social expectations

Oakley argues that there are two ways in which children are taught these, and her research
looks specifically at gender roles.
Manipulation is the differential valuing given to boys and girls, for example by 'cooing' more
tenderly to girls. This can also involve certain colours of clothes for boys.
Canalisation also exists to channel children towards different activities, such as boys playing
football and girls helping in the kitchen.

Barrie Thorne also found it difficult to bring up her children in a 'gender-neutral' way,
because of the other forms of socialisation that exist. The hidden curriculum in school mean
that boys and girls are automatically separated for activities such as PE, the children tended

to form single-gendered peer groups – reinforcing certain gender roles, and the mass media also meant that children were exposed to gendered advertisement – with certain colours associating products with boys or girls.

Past exam question: "Explain how males are socialised into masculinity"
canalisation – parents use toys to socialise boys into masculinity e.g. toy soldiers encourage boys to think of themselves as tough, protectors etc.;
manipulation – parents encourage gender appropriate behaviours and discourage inappropriate ones e.g. being encouraged to play contact sports to display their physicality and competitiveness;
role models and representations in the media promote idealised forms of masculinity e.g. Vin Diesel or Daniel Craig promote a tough guy, macho image that young boys may aspire to;
in school, teacher expectations and labelling may reinforce stereotyped gender ideas e.g. asking boys to carry heavy boxes or expecting boys to push the behavioural boundaries more than girls;
male peer groups may peer pressure boys into hegemonic masculine norms e.g. adopting laddish behaviours and ridiculing femininity;
religions present a view of males as leaders e.g. priests and imams – even God is represented as a 'male' figure reinforcing the naturalness of male authority.

7 – Main agencies of socialisation and their impact on the individual, including the consequences of inadequate socialisation

Socialisation is the process through which individuals learn and internalise the norms and values of their society. This starts out with the formative role of mothers, fathers, and siblings in *primary socialisation,* but this then moves on to other so-called 'agents' such as friends, peers, teachers and even the mass media in *secondary socialisation*.

Families: In primary socialisation, norms, such as smiling, are taught – and down the line cultural norms and values are instilled. In the long-term, they tend to stabilise adult personalities, and provide emotional support to reduce stress in secondary socialisation. **Oakley** would argue that they are most effective in teaching us gendered behaviours, too. **Bourdieu** takes a Marxist approach in arguing that this involves the transmission of cultural capital from one generation to the next, ensuring that inequality is maintained because the working class have very little.

Education: Aside from the formal rules and sanctions such as positive 'merits' and negative ones such as the threat of expulsion – individuals are subject to what **Jackson** called the 'hidden curriculum' – which is what people learn in schools apart from the content of their lessons, such as the importance of following rules.

Peer relationships: Peers are turned to for guidance, validation, and identity formation. Their pressure can shape behaviour; either reinforcing societal norms or promoting deviance. This process is crucial for adolescents, as they develop an identity separate from their parents and exert independence. **Asch**'s experiment on group conformity (which was when participants had to match line lengths on cards; and one had an obvious answer). Each participant was in a group of confederates, who gave the incorrect answer. Many times, the participants conformed.

The media: Presentations of males and females tend to influence the formation of gender identity. Cultural feminists argue that features such as the 'male gaze' influences views that women are less competent and powerful than men. **Gillespie** found that this is very important for ethnic minorities, given that this helps them reinforce a sense of identity (eg.

Bollywood videos amongst Sikhs in Southall). The **Hypodermic Syringe Model** shows that media acts as a drug directly injected into their minds and therefore affecting their beliefs.

Religion: Moral values are instilled from hearing holy teachings in churches, synagogues etc. **Marx**, however, argued that this is the 'opioid of the masses' because it presents people with pleasant illusions to blind them from their suffering. **Durkheim** argued that it promoted social cohesion and helped to promote the value consensus in society.

Workplaces: Marxists see this as the most effective, given that there are many rules and regulations. This enforces a system where the proletariat is dependent on the bourgeoisie for their livelihood. This means that individuals are subject to discipline and control, becoming only a part of the capitalist production process. This alienates people from their creative potential.

Functionalists view socialisation as positive because it brings people together in a value consensus (the general agreement across a society on a set of values). **Durkheim** believed that this instilled the values needed for collective consciousness to be achieved, and that this transmitted authority to individuals. **Althusser**, however, argued that this was a process of ideological control; instilling the bourgeoisie's norms and values within individuals to prevent a class consciousness – therefore legitimising the power of the ruling class, and justifying the proletariat's oppression. **Feminists** have a similar view; whereby the patriarchy uses this to control society and oppress women, shaping gendered behaviour through roles, such as male dominance and females' expected subservience.

Feral children:
For ethical reasons, sociologists cannot subject individuals to isolation – however there are cases of abused children such as **Suchet Kumar**, the 'bird boy' of Fiji who is unable to smile, eat or walk (he roosts on a chair). Social integration is incredibly difficult; however, it depends on the society's capacity to deal with the issue. Whilst Fijian authorities tied Suchet to his bed, some cases such as **Marina Chapman** were able to become members of society (having been adopted by a neighbour).

Past exam question: "Explain why feral children find it difficult to fit in to society."
feral children have been inadequately socialised and therefore lack the basic norms and values needed to live in society;
feral children may have been isolated from a young age and thus have missed the vital primary socialisation in which children learn all the basic skills such as talking – they are thus unable to live normal lives with others in society e.g. Genie Wylie;
feral children may have been socialised by animals and have thus developed different norms which can be hard to break e.g. walking on all fours and barking – like Oxana Malaya;
feral children find it hard to adapt to cooked food and prefer raw meat which some cultures would find distasteful;
some feral children may receive primary socialisation but miss secondary e.g. Rochom P'ngnieng who preferred to crawl and had lost her ability to speak thus making her incapable of social interaction.

8 – The nature/nurture debate

The nature argument notes that behaviour is a product of genetics. The sociobiologist **Wilson** argued that natural selection meant that survival traits mean that certain individuals can outcompete others; and these are passed on to the next generation. As a result, we as humans are subject to natural instincts and biological drives. Evidence suggests that there

are genetic components to aggression, intelligence (**Murray's** controversial 'The Bell Curve') and sexual orientation. **Murdock** believed that the difference between men and women's different social roles are because of biological factors such as muscle mass. Furthermore, men are more likely to act aggressively, because of their natural role in attracting women.

However, as sociology has progressed into the 20th century, sociologists became wearier of the naturalistic explanations of human behaviour. **Watson,** a psychologist, devised a theory called behaviourism, which held that "specific behaviour patterns are not instinctive but learned". The nurture argument, on the other hand, states that people have agency and can make decisions. Socialisation itself could lead to impulsive behaviour. Although aggression seems to be an expected norm for men, people seem to have different responses to natural drives – monks can contain their sex drives with celibacy. Feral children are only further evidence of the nurture argument.

For a 'two what extent?' it can be concluded that we live in society, so our genes can only be expressed in social situations. Perhaps it is a mistake to separate the two?

9 – Role, age, gender, ethnic group and class as influences on social identity

Social identity are individuals' perceptions of themselves, based partly on ideas about how others see them. **Stuart Hall** notes that in the 21st century, people are growingly uncertain about their identities, given the rise in mixed backgrounds.

Role:
Individuals have several statuses and roles – based on one's relationships with others. Eg. one may be a teacher, patient, customer, son etc. Each role makes up part of an identity (although some are more important than others). This relative importance of the identity's aspect changes over time, and in MIS role conflict exists, which is when someone finds that the demands of two or more of their roles clash with each other.

Age:
Traditional African societies used to place high emphasis on age, with the elders having the most respect and often, positions of power. In MIS age is also important – however the generation gap leads to problems. As people age, they experience changes in their social roles and status, carrying different social expectations and identities over time. Teenagers think of adults as old fashioned, and children today have grown up with technology. A birth cohort is when children grow up at the same time in history. Many baby boomers today have experienced many social changes, such as the Cold War and greater technology.

Gender:

In traditional societies there was variations in gender roles. Sex is our biological features; however "gender" is how one's biological makeup affects their social life. Nurture becomes important in this particular aspect – according to functionalists, men took the instrumental role (economics) and women took a more domestic role. Masculinity has meant that men strive to be strong, competitive, and aggressive – and femininity is associated with more weak, emotional, and passive behaviour. The past 50 years, however, have changed this – with women taking up senior positions in politics and work. Now some men are also more feminine: showing their emotions publicly and taking care of their appearance. These so-called 'metrosexuals' go against hegemonic masculinity.

Ethnicity:
Ethnicity = the state of belonging to a social group that has a common national or cultural

tradition.

Not to be confused with race, which is the biological differences between a group

Ethnicity is a social construct. We now have multiple ethnicities, such as a person born in the UK with a Bangladeshi background. Globalisation has been unable to end ethnic nationality; and nationalism has emerged for unity, such as the UK with a full union. Creating national identity is important when there are many groups, sub-groups, religions, and ethnicities in a single area. Globalisation has meant that national boundaries now seem more artificial – so national identity has become ever more important. This is enforced through flags, postage stamps, football teams etc.

However, **Back** argues that the lack of integration leads to more of a sense of "neighbourhood nationalism" than a full identification with the country at large.

Social class:

Our social class tends to determine our life chances. The rich often like to think of themselves as part of an exclusive echelon that involves spending conspicuously. The middle class has grown throughout the past years – with rising living standards allowing such people to demonstrate their class status, often mirroring the upper classes. Working class people have had a powerful source of identity during the 20th century. Trade unions and a collective suffering made a more distinct identity and allowed for working-class people to place a strong positive value on their way of life. Now, these identities have been weakened through deindustrialisation. Media representations now serve to demonise them, with such so-called 'chavs' being stereotyped as scrounging off benefits.

Past exam question: "To what extent is gender the most important aspect of social identity?"

Arguments for:

in some societies gender roles are fixed and there is little individuals can do to negotiate them and so they may seem fixed and 'natural' e.g. traditional notions of males as breadwinners and women as child−carers and housewives;

in many societies males adopt an instrumental role looking after the economic and practical needs of the family and women adopt the expressive role of cooking, looking after the home and the emotional needs of the family − these roles are seen as fundamental to social stability; children are socialised into gender stereotyped identities via processes such as canalisation, manipulation and verbal appellation (Oakley) and such processes can be extremely hard to resist or rebel against e.g. Barrie Thorne's work;

gender determines life chances − gender−based inequalities such as those in the workplace show that gender remains key to an individual's chances for wealth, status and well−being;

gender stereotypes still abound in the media − women are depicted as inferior, weak sex objects and men are shown as protectors and heroes and this shows that both men and women are still seen in terms of traditional roles;

gender expectations in the workplace shape our sense of self e.g. norms of appearance for women and men are often different;

the gendered division of labour in the workplace influences how we see ourselves in relation to colleagues e.g. women often occupy lower positions due to vertical segregation;

social identity is influenced by gender norms and expectations in education such as subject choice, friendship groups, subcultures, dress codes and teacher expectations and labelling; peer groups are often formed along gender lines and subsequently shape the way we see ourselves in relation to the group e.g. single−sex friendship groups reinforce traditional gender; many religions have different expectations for different genders and within the leadership roles are segregated along gender lines e.g. in Catholicism women can still not become priests or the wearing of hijab or burka to preserve female modesty;

Arguments against:

according to postmodernists, gender is far more fluid these days as alternative and non−traditional role models are emerging and this ultimately minimises the effects of traditional gender stereotypes;

traditional notions of gender are breaking down, we now have multiple acceptable masculinities and femininities, gender convergence etc., and so traditional ideas of gender are a far less important factor in shaping our sense of self;

Marxists would argue that social class and access to social and cultural capital is more important in shaping our social identity as it determines who we interact with, our aspirations and our life chances;

for some groups race, ethnicity and religious background are more important influences upon social identity than gender e.g. nationalist groups or religious cults/sects;

social identity is not fixed and as we get older our age is important in shaping our sense of self; gender does not work in isolation and it is a combination of factors, such as age, ethnicity and gender that operate together to influence our social identity;

postmodernists would argue that we live in a consumer society and a media−saturated society and in such a reality we are free to choose our identity via our consumption patterns and lifestyle choices – traditional sources of identity such as gender have dwindled in importance.