



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Anthropology

ANTH2

(Specification 1111)

**Unit 2: Becoming a Person: Identity and
Belonging**

Report on the Examination

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Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

ANTH2

General

Overall, the majority of students performed well, with some centres and students performing particularly well. Students were able to manage the time effectively and to complete all questions. Answers were largely of sufficient length, although some students still wrote a disproportionately small amount for Questions 05 and 06. Question 04 appeared to challenge students in some centres but not others. The responses to this paper showed that centres and students had responded to the feedback from the previous series.

Positive features:

- Almost all students attempted every question.
- There was a greater awareness of the need to address theoretical interpretations of the debates.
- There was an increased awareness of the need to use concepts and demonstrate understanding of them to meet the specific demands of the question.
- Students showed awareness of the specific demands of Unit 2, particularly the process of becoming a person, which was referred to in many of the responses.
- Students made use of detailed, well contextualised ethnographic studies (many students drew on studies encountered in Unit 1 and applied them successfully to Unit 2).
- Many answers showed knowledge (both ethnographic and theoretical) of the work of specific anthropologists.
- A wide range of material was present, both between and within schools/colleges, and students were confident enough to draw on different areas of the specification.
- Anthropology is a broad subject and examiners saw considerable variation in the ethnographic material presented. Better answers applied a range of perspectives and concepts in order to develop their analysis and discussion of the ethnographic examples.

Key Issues:

- Many students were unable to define identity although they were able to provide some good examples of identity grounded in ethnographic research.
- There was a disappointing lack of use of anthropological theories in some students' work, especially in the longer essays.
- There was a lack of analysis and evaluation in some work, with some answers being overly descriptive and quasi-commonsensual, especially in Question 03.
- There were too many references only to western societies and Britain, with the odd reference to an unidentified 'tribe', especially in weaker answers.
- There was a tendency to over-generalise rather than to point out the complexities in cultural differences and similarities. A greater sensitivity in discussing other cultures through ethnographic detail is required to achieve the very best marks.
- Although the mark scheme does allow for examples that are not specifically anthropological, some students relied on commonsense and on over-generalised examples, possibly from other subjects. Where students did explain the concepts and ideas in general terms, their answers were often lacking in ethnographic examples.
- There was not enough explicit comparison – in many cases, answers were simply a juxtaposition of descriptions of two cultures.

Question 01

Many students were successful in explaining what is meant by identity and in providing an example. Some students, however, failed to explain the term satisfactorily or merely used an example or a characteristic of identity (for example, saying that identity is shaped by society rather than defining the concept).

Some candidates failed to develop the example; for instance simply stating a form of identity without explaining how that specific attribute contributed to a person's identity. Therefore a significant number of students failed to gain the full four marks available. Students who gained full marks were more likely to use examples drawn from ethnographic studies than those who did not gain full marks. Students should be encouraged, where possible, to use anthropological examples because their meaning will be clearer in relation to anthropological concepts and issues. Most students wrote the right amount for this question and the better answers generally received full marks in about 5-6 lines.

Question 02

This question continues to challenge students in terms of layout. Students are far more likely to gain the full 6 marks available if they set out their responses clearly, ie if their identifier is distinct from the explanation. Many students referred to biological differences between men and women rather than cultural processes. In some cases the students came up with one identifier but then gave two examples of the same identifier, which meant they were not able to gain full marks. However, many students were able to come up with two separate ways in which people become gendered persons, such as through rituals, socialisation or as a consequence of living in a patriarchal society.

Students need to be aware of the structure of the marks: one for identifying and a further two for unpacking and offering examples. Again, ethnographic studies, where used to support a difference, often produced highly successful responses.

Question 03

This question prompted some strong responses, although there was a range in the quality within and between centres. Students were generally able to discuss two or three examples of ways in which cyborgs challenge concepts of personhood. However, some responses were focused on general discussions of concerns over the increased role of technology, for example through the use of social networking sites. There was a tendency to be descriptive rather than analytical, listing characteristics of cyborgs rather than comparing them with the concept of personhood or drawing out similarities.

Stronger responses referred to the differences between specific concepts of personhood and cyborgs using ethnographic detail to illustrate the points made. In stronger answers, concepts such as personhood, transhumanism, and boundary paranoia and were frequently used. This question elicited some impressive analytical and well-organised responses.

Question 04

It was clear that some students were not adequately prepared for this question. There were some successful attempts to explore how place shapes identity, but more often the resource of space was avoided, or literal examples such as ‘the classroom’ were used. Some students recycled the views put forward in the Item but did not go far beyond them, which was disappointing. There was a tendency for students to recount knowledge and understanding of general facts, for example of a site of ethnic conflict, often linked vaguely to nationalism, or, for example, the Rwandan genocide, without exploring the ethnographic and anthropological interpretations of the example as found in anthropologists such as Maalki. Weaker answers simply listed places that had conflict associated with them, for example the Berlin Wall, without any ethnographic study or anthropological concepts.

Very few students took the opportunity to highlight ethnographic studies that have focused on the role of place. Students frequently understood the question but did not have the ethnographic examples to support an informed discussion about the role of place in shaping identity. However, in some centres, students used Hall’s work on young British Sikhs and the conflict felt according to where they are in terms of place and ethnicity.

Question 05

Just under half of the students chose this question and there was a very wide range in the quality of responses. Weaker answers focused on ethnic conflict in a quasi-commonsensical way; these answers lacked depth on the nature of boundaries, physical or imagined, as well as lacking ethnographic detail. Alternatively, some weaker answers tended to limit their discussion to describing the ways in which boundaries do not necessarily lead to conflict, with limited evidence for this. Some students answered in a list-like way, describing different cases of conflict without sufficient discussion and interpretation of material. This meant that their responses were not sufficiently analytical or evaluative to meet the AO2 demands of an ‘assess’ question satisfactorily.

Stronger responses discussed a number of different aspects of boundaries, both small and large scale, using referenced evidence and ethnographic detail, drawing out the differences and similarities between their different examples of boundaries. For example, students discussed different types of boundaries (ethnic, national, geographic, imagined) and were able to discuss the dynamic nature of boundaries; this was backed up with specific anthropological concepts and research. Stronger answers were also often able to cite examples where boundaries do not cause conflict but provide stability.

Question 06

This question elicited some strong responses. Many students discussed Van Gennep's three stages of rites of passage as well as explaining what a rite of passage is and offering some examples of rites of passage using relevant ethnographic studies. However, some responses tended to lack interpretation and evaluation. Weaker responses often simply listed examples of rites of passage without focusing on their meaning or comparing them with other rites of passage. Many of the weaker responses tended to focus on one stage of life in discussing rites of passage, for example puberty rites among the Masai, the Ndembu, etc. Weaker students also tended to assume that rites of passage were 'less important', or even absent, in the West.

Stronger responses focused on ethnographic studies of rites of passage, with a focus on the meanings of these events. Some students effectively discussed the ways in which rites of passage can have multiple and changing meanings. Alternatively, students were able to demonstrate the differences between rites of passage in different social and cultural contexts. These ethnographic studies were often very well-linked to the question. Concepts were more numerous and integrated, and were explained clearly and applied appropriately to the question.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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