

Culture and identity

This module covers three related areas – culture, socialisation and identity, with the bulk of the teaching and learning centred around the latter. Thinking about the module in these terms helps to organise the workload for what is a relatively crowded specification taught over something like 30 weeks. In terms of the Students' Book, therefore, you're looking at teaching one unit per week for 10 weeks.

Culture and socialisation

One way to save a little time is to take the opportunity provided by the specification to combine two tasks. Many teachers begin the AS course with a few 'Introduction to sociology' lessons, covering basic sociological concepts, an overview of the 'structure/action' debate and different 'sociological perspectives'. This is often a way of easing students who have not studied sociology before into the course but it can eat into the time available to teach this part of the specification.

However, you can save time (anything up to a couple of weeks) by introducing these core concepts (and their associated processes) in the context of the 'Culture and identity' module. By choosing to teach this module, you are effectively combining an 'introduction' with the teaching of a substantive area.

Identity

This concept will take up the majority of teaching time for the module and, although there's a lot of ground to cover, it does allow you to introduce significant general **concepts** (such as gender, class and ethnicity), **theories** and **research methodology/methods** as part of the general teaching process. There is a wide range of possible 'identity-related activities', but you might like to consider the following suggestions.

Introducing identity

The objective here is to get students to think about the different sources of identity raised in the Students' Book by asking them to construct a picture of their own 'identity'. A simple activity is to ask students to think about and make brief notes describing 'who I am' by focusing on the things they feel best describe and are important to them. (You can seed the ground by getting them to read Unit 3 in the Students' Book and/or by suggesting things they might like to think about – personal things like whether they see themselves as 'fun/dull', and so on, and wider social ideas like gender, class, family, ethnicity.) Ask for volunteers to

read out the notes they've made.

Students will normally draw on a range of personal and cultural factors (age, gender, class, region, ethnicity) to describe themselves, which provides an opportunity to discuss these sources of identity and how they shape 'who we are'. This can serve as a good grounding for thinking about the topics – types of identity – that make up the bulk of this module.

Researching identities

A follow-up activity to the above – and one that can be applied across the range of identities covered in the Students' Book – is to get students to research different types of identity in a visual way. The objective is to get students to think about things like different types of identity in our society (such as forms of masculinity and femininity), changing identities (comparisons with the past and present, for example) and identity construction (something that can be linked to the kinds of postmodern/late modern concepts and explanations outlined in the Students' Book).

The technique

The general technique, which can be applied right across the specification at different times, is a student-centred one involving three phases.

1. A **discovery** process. Using gender identity as an example, prepare the students in advance (or use class time if it's available) by asking them to discover as many images as possible (from magazines, the internet, and so on) of different types of masculinity and femininity in our society (these can be from the past or the present). This activity can be done individually, but works best if students are split into small groups because it encourages cooperation, team working and discussion about what to include/exclude.
2. A **discussion** process: This initially involves each group presenting their research to the class and talking for a short while about the identities they've discovered. This then leads into a (teacher-led) discussion about the meaning of the information – what, for example, does it tell us about gender identities in our society?
3. A **reflection** process: While it's important for students to research and 'know things' it's also important that they understand how this knowledge can be applied. They should reflect on the information received and locate it in a wider social context that deals, in this case, with such questions as how gender is socially constructed, the reasons why we have such gender identity diversity in our society, the relationship between identity diversity and globalisation, and so forth.

This can be carried out in a range of ways, but the **Students' Book activities** provide a ready-made lead into reflection by requiring students to relate their knowledge to a particular set of questions. In addition, the **worksheets** covering each type of identity can be used for a similar purpose.

Visualising identity

Another activity that works on a number of levels – as an ice-breaker and as a way of introducing/starting to explore identity in a 'hands-on' way – is to ask students to reveal something about themselves in a way that avoids asking 'direct questions' or observation.

The technique

1. Ask each student to draw a picture of someone they admire (such as a celebrity, friend or parent), taking care to include everything they think is representative of that person. For example, if they admire David Beckham, they might include references to football or the things he advertises (sunglasses, perfume, and so on). Once the picture is complete, ask the students to write three words on it (and only three) which they feel are representative of both the person drawn and themselves (that is, the three things about the person they either associate with themselves or with how they aspire to be; for example, if one of the words to describe Beckham is 'famous' this should be something the student would eventually like to be).
2. Each student should then make some brief notes (just bulleted points they can talk about later) about what they believe their drawing says about:
 - a. themselves
 - b. how they would like others to see them.
3. Ask students to exchange their drawings with someone else in the class. It works best if this is done randomly. Each student should make brief notes about what they think the drawing says about the person who created it.
4. Bring each pair of students together and ask a selection (depending on class size) to volunteer to talk about the drawings. Student 1 should briefly say what they believe their drawing says about them and Student 2 should say what they believe the picture says or reveals about the first student (and then repeat the process).
5. This exercise can then be used as the basis for introducing/discussing a range of identity-related ideas and issues raised in the Students' Book. These include:
 - personal identities
 - social identities
 - identity construction (including ideas about the self)
 - postmodern concepts (such as choice and lifestyle diversity).