Socialisation

**Socialisation** is the learning of a culture of a society. **Resocialisation** is the learning of new **norms** and **values**, for example when someone enters a different society.

Socialisation can be divided into **primary** and **secondary socialisation** and is carried out by the **agents of socialisation.**

Primary Socialisation

This refers to socialisation during the early years of childhood, mainly by the family, which is the main agent of primary socialisation.

Functionalists, such as Parsons, see primary socialisation as crucial as it enables individuals to live in the society they are part of.

Through primary socialisation, children first learn the basic norms and values of society and begin to develop their **individual identities**, as well as their **social identities**, such as gender and ethnicity.

Secondary Socialisation

This takes place outside of the family and is where secondary identities begin to form. These are more fluid and changeable.

Agents of Secondary Socialisation

Education

At school children learn values and norms they will be expected to conform to in society. This is done through the **hidden curriculum**, which is the hidden teaching of behaviour through rules, teachers behaviour etc.

In addition, through the **formal curriculum**, which is the subjects taught, individuals learn about society.

Functionalists see school as important. Durkheim saw school as a society in miniature, which prepares people for life in adult society. Parsons argued schooling was a bridge between the **particularistic values** and **ascribed status** of the family (where an individual is treated as a particular child and therefore differently to others) and the **universalistic values** and **achieved status** of society (where an individual is treated according to the same standards as everyone else in society).

Marxists, such as Althusser, see the education system as reproducing class inequality (ensuring the working class fail) and making this failure seem legitimate (so the working class don’t challenge capitalism).

Peer Group

Peer group pressure to conform and the fear of rejection by peers has an enormous influence on an individual’s identity. This rejection by peers can be seen as **informal social control** where an individual behaves in a particular way because they fear what the repercussions would be amongst their peers.

Workplace

This involves learning norms and values in the workplace. In the workplace individuals have to get along with workmates and managers as well.

Media

The mass media (television, newspapers etc.) and social media (Facebook, Twitter etc.) are major sources of information, norms and values, as well as spreading images that can influence people’s behaviour and identities.

**Globalisation** means that this information is drawn from all over the world.

Functionalists feel that the media is beneficial and builds **value consensus.**

Marxists see it as a form of social control, lulling the masses into conforming to and not challenging capitalism, whilst accepting a class divided society.

Religion

Religion involves beliefs which influence people’s ideas about right and wrong behaviour, important values and norms, and morality, and these may in turn affect the behaviour and identities of individuals and the culture of communities.

Functionalists see religion as helping to build a **collective identity**. Durkheim saw religion as an important agent in achieving a value consensus.

Sociological Perspectives/Theories

Structuralism

* **Structuralism** is concerned with the overall structure of society, and the way social institutions, e.g. family, limit and control individual behaviour.
* Structuralist approaches have the following features:
	1. The behaviour of individuals and their identities are seen as being a result of society (social influences). The individual is moulded by society through socialisation.
	2. The main purpose of sociology is to study the overall structure of society, the social institutions of this structure, and the relationships between these institutions, e.g. the links between the workplace and the economy. This is sometimes referred to as a **macro approach.**
* There are two types of structuralism: **Functionalism** (consensus theory) and **Marxism** (conflict theory).

Functionalism

* Main theorists include Durkheim and Parsons.
* Functionalism sees society as working in a similar way to the human body. This is known as the **organic analogy.**
* Both the body and society are made up of interconnected parts which contribute to the running of the body or society as a whole. For example, the heart, lungs and brain all have important roles to play in keeping the body healthy. If one of them doesn’t work properly, then the whole body doesn’t work properly. This is the same for society.
* We need to understand the function of each part of society to understand how they work together and maintain society.
* Society has **functional prerequisites.** These are basic needs or requirements. This is the same as the body which has basic needs or requirements.
* In society the functional prerequisites include the production of food, the care of the young and the socialisation of individuals.
* Social institutions, e.g. the family and the education system, exist to meet these basic needs.
* Stability in society is based on socialisation into norms and values on which most people agree. These shared norms and values form part of a **value consensus.** This maintains a peaceful society without too much conflict.
* If everyone shares the same values in society then every individual will feel part of that society **(social solidarity)**. This ensures people cooperate and don’t do anything to damage society.

Marxism

* Main theorist is Karl Marx.
* Marx believed that the economy was the driving force in society, and it was this that influenced the nature of social institutions and people’s values.
* Society includes two main parts:
	1. The **base/infrastructure:** This underpins everything in society. It includes **the means of production** (land, factories etc.) and **the relations of production** (relationships between those involved in production, e.g. owners and employees).
	2. The **superstructure:** This includes social institutions, e.g. the family and education, which Marx saw as influenced by the economy.
* The main groups or classes in society are determined by their relationship to the means of production. This means there are two classes:
	1. The **bourgeoisie:** own the means of production.
	2. The **proletariat:** don’t own the means of production and work for the bourgeoisie for a wage. They sell their **labour power.**
* In a capitalist society, the proletariat work for the bourgeoisie and produce **surplus value** (profit). This money goes to the bourgeoisie.
* The bourgeoisie exploit the proletariat as the proletariat do not get paid what they should do. The bourgeoisie keep the proletariats wages low in order to make as much profit as possible.
* Because the bourgeoisie want to make more profit, but the workers want to earn a higher wage, this causes **class conflict.**
* However, the bourgeoisie have the power and are the **ruling class.** This is because they own the means of production so can decide whether to open or close factories etc. In addition, governments have to listen to the bourgeoisie in order to avoid unemployment etc. if the bourgeoisie don’t invest their money.
* The proletariat don’t challenge their position because they are suffering from **false class consciousness.** Social institutions pass on ideas that the system is fair and so workers don’t recognise their exploitation. Therefore they don’t challenge the situation.
* However, Marx thought that one day the proletariat would gain class consciousness and there would be a **proletarian revolution** resulting in a communist society.

Interpretivism

* **Interpretivist** or **social action** theories are concerned with discovering and understanding interactions between people.
* This includes:
	1. Discovering and understanding interactions between individuals or small groups
	2. How people interpret and see things as they do
	3. How they define their identities
	4. How the reaction of others can affect their views and their own identity
* Interpretivist theories include the following features:
	1. Society and social institutions are created by individuals. People aren’t moulded into behaving the way they do by society.
	2. An emphasis is placed on the individual and everyday behaviour rather than the overall structure of society. For example, rather than studying trends in crime and how society may influence crime, interpretivists may study a criminal group to see how they came to be seen and behave as deviant. This is referred to as a **micro approach**.
	3. People’s behaviour is driven by the meanings they give to situations. For example, a parent may interpret a baby crying in different ways. This will then affect the action they take.
	4. The main purpose of sociology is to study and understand the meanings individuals give to their behaviour.

Interactionism

* **Interactionism** is an interpretivist theory which is concerned with understanding behaviour in face to face situations and how individuals and situations come to be defined in particular ways. This is known as **labelling.**
* It is also concerned with how these definitions affect people’s behaviour.

*Shoplifting in Chicago (Mary Cameron): An Example of Interactionism*

* Cameron found that stores didn’t automatically prosecute everyone they suspected of shoplifting. They were often reluctant to prosecute because of the difficulty of proving the case and the cost of releasing employees to be witnesses. They were inclined to let suspects off with a warning, particularly if they were willing and able to pay for the goods.
* However, not everyone was treated in the same way. According to Cameron, store detectives made assumptions about what the ‘typical shoplifter’ is like. They believed adolescents and black people were more likely to be shoplifters and kept them under surveillance when they were in the store. By contrast, detectives were unlikely to be suspicious of people they saw as ‘respectable’. These people tended to be middle class and white. Even when the detectives witnessed an offence, they were less likely to report it if the suspect was of a similar background to themselves.
* When arrests were made, the stores were more likely to press charges if the suspects were black. For example, only 9% of arrested white women were charged, but 42% of black women. Furthermore, when cases went to court, not only were black women more likely to be found guilty; they were six times more likely to be jailed than white women.

Structuration

* Main theorist is Anthony Giddens.
* This is a mixture of structuralism and interpretivism.
* Social institutions limit and control behaviour and have influences on the formation of identity. However, individuals can, within limits, make choices within those structures. For example, the school is part of the education system: a social structure. Young people are constrained by law to go to school. However, whilst at school students have choices about how to behave.
* This means that whilst people operate within the constraints of the social structure, the can also act, make choices, and sometimes change that social structure.



Feminism

* This is a view that examines the world from the point of view of women.
* Feminists argue that a lot of sociology is **malestream**. This means male sociologists focus on the experiences of men in society.
* There are 3 types of feminism:
	1. **Marxist Feminism:** emphasises how women are exploited both as workers and as women and this benefits capitalism.
	2. **Radical Feminism:** focuses on the problem of **patriarchy**, which is the system where males dominate every part of society.
	3. **Liberal Feminism:** focuses on removing all forms of discrimination to establish equality of opportunity for women. This accepts the system as it is but seeks to ensure women have equal opportunities with men, whereas Marxist and Radical Feminism want to change the system.

New Right

* This is more of a political philosophy and is associated with the Conservative government between 1979 and 1997. However, some New Right ideas have resurfaced during the 2010-15 coalition government.
* The main features of this perspective are:
	1. An emphasis on individual freedom and self interest, and the need to reduce the power of the state/government to the minimum.
	2. Reduced spending by the state, by making individuals more self reliant.
	3. A defence of the free market. This means that free competition between individuals, companies, schools and other institutions is encouraged because it gives individuals maximum choice between competing products, e.g. healthcare and education.
	4. A stress on the importance of traditional institutions and values, such as traditional family life and traditional education.

Postmodernism

* This stresses that society is changing so rapidly and constantly that it is marked by uncertainty and risk. It also argues that society is fragmented into many different groups, interests and lifestyles.
* Postmodernists suggest society is made up of individuals making individual choices about their lifestyles and identities, free from traditional constraints like class, gender or ethnicity.
* Societies can no longer be understood in terms of grand narratives or **metanarratives** like Marxism or Functionalism, which are broad explanations for how societies operate.
* Postmodern society involves a **media saturated** **consumer culture** in which individuals are free to **pick and mix** identities and lifestyles, choosing from a limitless range of consumer goods and activities available from across the globe.

Sociological Perspectives/Theories

**Structuralism**

**Structuralism** focuses on the overall structure of society, and the way social institutions (e.g. family) limit and control individual behaviour.

Key features of structuralist theories:

1. The behaviour of individuals and their identities are influenced by society. The individual is moulded by society through socialisation.
2. The main purpose of sociology is to study the overall structure of society, social institutions, and the relationships between these institutions, e.g. the links between the workplace and the economy. This is sometimes referred to as a **macro approach.**

There are two types of structuralism: **Functionalism** (consensus theory) and **Marxism** (conflict theory).

Functionalism

This is also known as **consensus structuralism.** This is because it argues society is generally stable and based on consensus/agreement.

**The organic analogy**

Functionalism sees society as working in a similar way to the human body. This is known as the **organic analogy.**

Both the body and society are made up of interconnected parts which contribute to the running of the body or society as a whole. For example, the heart, lungs and brain all have important roles to play in keeping the body healthy. If one of them doesn’t work properly, then the whole body doesn’t work properly. This is the same for society.

We need to understand the function of each part of society to understand how they work together and maintain society.

**Functional prerequisites**

Society has **functional prerequisites.** These are basic needs or requirements. This is the same as the body which has basic needs or requirements.

In society the functional prerequisites include the production of food, the care of the young and the socialisation of individuals.

Social institutions, e.g. the family and the education system, exist to meet these basic needs.

**Value consensus and social solidarity**

Stability in society is based on socialisation into norms and values on which most people agree. These shared norms and values are known as the **value consensus.** This maintains a peaceful society without too much conflict.

If everyone shares the same values in society then every individual will feel part of that society **(social solidarity)**. This ensures people cooperate and don’t do anything to damage society.

When people don’t feel part of society, they feel a sense of **anomie.** This can cause serious social problems such as crime.

Marxism

This is also known as **conflict structuralism.** This is because it sees society as based on conflict/disagreement, particularly between different social classes.

**The importance of the economy**

Marx believed that the economy was the driving force in society, and it was this that influenced the nature of social institutions and people’s values.

**Structure of society**

Society includes two main parts:

1. **The economic** **base:** This underpins everything in society. It includes:
	1. **The means of production** which produces wealth, e.g. factories, land etc.
	2. **The relations of production** which are the relationships between those involved in production, e.g. owners and employees.
2. **The superstructure:** This includes social institutions, e.g. the family, the education system, which are influenced by the economy.

As a result, everything that we learn from social institutions is influenced by the economy, e.g. education teaches us to work hard because this benefits the economy if we do this when we have a job.

**Two main classes**

The main groups or classes in society are determined by their relationship to the means of production. This means there are two classes:

1. The **bourgeoisie** (ruling class)**:** own the means of production.
2. The **proletariat** (working class)**:** don’t own the means of production and work for the bourgeoisie for a wage. They sell their **labour power.**

**Conflict and exploitation**

There is conflict in society because the interests of the two classes conflict. The bourgeoisie want to make more profit, but the workers want to earn a higher wage. This causes **class conflict.**

This also results in the bourgeoisie exploiting the proletariat because in order to make as much profit **(surplus value)** as possible, the bourgeoisie don’t pay the proletariat as much as they should for their work.

**False class consciousness**

The proletariat don’t challenge their position in society and their exploitation because they are suffering from **false class consciousness.** Social institutions pass on ideas that the system is fair and so workers don’t recognise their exploitation. Therefore they don’t challenge the situation.

**Proletarian revolution**

However, Marx thought that one day the proletariat would gain class consciousness and there would be a **proletarian revolution** resulting in a communist society.

Feminism

Feminists argue that a lot of sociology is **malestream**. This means male sociologists focus on the experiences of men in society.

Feminists aim to:

1. Research and raise awareness of the experiences of females in society
2. Improve the situation for women in society.

Radical feminists believe society is **patriarchal**, which means it is organised by and in the interests of men. Women are exploited in society by men, e.g. women are often paid less than men at work for doing the same job.

They look at how society and social institutions transmit a **patriarchal ideology**, which justifies the advantages of men and the inequalities women face. The family is particularly responsible for this, but other institutions such as education and the media also transmit this ideology.

Sociological Perspectives/Theories

**Social Action Theories**

Social action theories or **interpretivism** argue individuals’ identities and behaviour are not shaped by society. Features of interpretivism include:

1. Society and social institutions are created by individuals. People’s behaviour isn’t caused by society or social institutions.
2. People’s behaviour is driven by the meanings they give to situations. This means people respond and therefore behave in different ways.
3. They focus on the individual and their behaviour rather than the overall structure of society. For example, rather than studying how society may influence crime, interpretivists may study a criminal group to see how they came to be seen and behave as deviant. This is referred to as a **micro approach**.
4. The main purpose of sociology is to study and understand the meanings individuals give to their behaviour.

Symbolic Interactionism

**Interactionism** is an interpretivist theory which is concerned with understanding behaviour in face to face situations and how individuals and situations are defined in particular ways.

**Labelling**

Becker bases his theory of labelling on Cooley’s concept of **the** **looking glass self.** Cooley argued our identity is based on what we think other people think of us. For example, if people think we are funny, we believe that is part of our identity.

Becker therefore argues once we are labelled by others, we can become aware of this label by the way other people behave around us. As a result we may conform to the label. For example, if someone is labelled a troublemaker, they will eventually become a troublemaker. This is known as a **self-fulfilling prophecy.**

This shows that people’s behaviour is influenced by interactions with other people in society, not by social institutions.

**Shoplifting in Chicago (Mary Cameron): An Example of Interactionism**

Cameron found that stores didn’t automatically prosecute everyone they suspected of shoplifting. They were often reluctant to prosecute because of the difficulty of proving the case and the cost of releasing employees to be witnesses. They were inclined to let suspects off with a warning, particularly if they were willing and able to pay for the goods.

However, not everyone was treated in the same way. According to Cameron, store detectives made assumptions about what the ‘typical shoplifter’ is like. They believed adolescents and black people were more likely to be shoplifters and kept them under surveillance when they were in the store. By contrast, detectives were unlikely to be suspicious of people they saw as ‘respectable’. These people tended to be middle class and white. Even when the detectives witnessed an offence, they were less likely to report it if the suspect was of a similar background to themselves.

When arrests were made, the stores were more likely to press charges if the suspects were black. For example, only 9% of arrested white women were charged, but 42% of black women. Furthermore, when cases went to court, not only were black women more likely to be found guilty; they were six times more likely to be jailed than white women.

**Postmodernism**

Postmodernism rejects the arguments of both interpretivists and structuralists. They argue that these theories are outdated as we live in a postmodern society.

**Fragmented and constantly changing**

In postmodernism, society is changing so rapidly and constantly that it is characterised by uncertainty and risk.

Postmodernists also argue that society is fragmented into many different groups, interests and lifestyles. This is because society is made up of individuals making individual choices about their lifestyles and identities.

People are no longer constrained or limited by factors like class, gender or ethnicity. As a result, these are fragmenting and constantly changing. For example, postmodernists argue we now live in a classless society because anyone can move up and down the class system.

**Consumer culture and choice**

Postmodern society involves a **media saturated** **consumer culture** where people can buy an almost limitless supply of consumer goods. Individuals use these goods, e.g. clothes, cars, home appliances etc, to create their identity.

Consumer culture therefore provides individuals with choice over their identities because individuals are free to **pick and mix** identities and lifestyles, choosing from a limitless range of consumer goods and activities available from across the globe.

The process of **globalisation**, where cultures around the world have become more interconnected, has meant we can choose from a range of identities, e.g. we can buy consumer goods from the USA, Japan etc.

All of this means we can choose our identities and easily change them by buying different products.

**Metanarratives**

Because postmodern society is constantly changing, theories like Marxism or functionalism are now outdated. Society changes so rapidly that these theories or **metanarratives** cannot explain behaviour as being due to things like capitalism or value consensus, etc.

Theoretical Perspectives on Socialisation and Culture

Structural Theories

**Structuralists** see culture and individual identities as created by society.

Individuals are socialised by social institutions (agents of socialisation), e.g. the family which form and limit people’s identities

Individuals have little choice over their identities.

Functionalism

Functionalists like Durkheim and Parsons see learning culture through socialisation as positive. It transmits the norms and values of society.

The socialisation process acts as a social glue with shared norms and values (**value consensus**) ensuring we all agree about how we should behave.

Functionalists see socialisation as beneficial for all of society because it allows us all to feel part of society (**social solidarity**) because we all share the same norms and values. This allows us to cooperate with each other and reduces conflict.

It is important that members of a society see themselves as part of a wider group. This social solidarity ensures we don’t do anything to damage the group (society).

Parsons

Socialisation ensures we internalise society’s values and then keep to them when performing different roles in society. The expectations of different roles reflect the values of society. For example, the norms expected in the role of an employee, such as being hard work, reflect the value society places on hard work.

Society remains stable because, most of the time, individuals keep to the requirements of particular roles.

Parsons sees family as important in moulding and shaping human identity. Secondary socialisation involves people then adjusting their personality as they encounter different agents of socialisation, e.g. peers.

Religion is also a key agent of socialisation that reinforces the social solidarity of a group.

Parsons sees people as the sum of the values, beliefs and expectations of society. This is a very structural point of view which sees society as moulding human behaviour.

Marxism

Marxists see socialisation as negative. They see socialisation and agents of socialisation as a form of **social control.**

The culture of society is the culture of the ruling or dominant class. There is not a value consensus, instead people are socialised into the values of the dominant class. This is known as **ruling class ideology** and is passed on via socialisation

Socialisation **reproduces** and **legitimises existing social inequalities** making them seem normal and natural and therefore preventing people from challenging these inequalities. This ensures there is **false class consciousness** where the **proletariat** do not realise they are being exploited and do not challenge their exploitation.

Bowles and Gintis

Argue the education system teaches values such as punctuality, discipline and obedience within the individual via the **hidden curriculum.** These are qualities that the Marxists think are needed in a capitalist workforce, which make them hardworking but easy to exploit.

Feminism

Socialisation reinforces and reproduces **patriarchy**. Feminists see socialisation as a way of reinforcing gender inequality.

Heaton and Lawson

Argue the hidden curriculum is a major source of gender socialisation within schools. They believe that schools seem to show or have:

* Textbooks where children are taught from an early age that males are dominant within the family.
* Different subjects for different genders, e.g. girls do subjects related to traditional roles, such as caring.
* Sports that are segregated by gender.
* Majority of teachers are female but head teachers are mainly male.

Oakley

Argues that the family uses four methods to reproduce gender roles and therefore inequality in society, which maintains patriarchy:

1. **Manipulation:** children are encouraged to behave in ways appropriate for their gender, e.g. boys are encouraged not to cry.
2. **Canalisation:** children are directed into activities and toys that are seen as appropriate for their gender, e.g. girls are given kitchen sets as toys.
3. **Verbal appellations:** parents refer to their children in ways that reinforce gender stereotypes, e.g. boys are called ‘Mummy’s little soldier’.
4. Different activities: children take part in different activities with their parents, e.g. girls help their Mum with cooking.

*Criticisms of Structural Theories*

Individuals are seen as simply puppets or what Garfinkel called **cultural dopes**, where they simply accept norms and values with little input from the individual. According to the interpretivists, individuals can make choices about norms and values.

Interpretivist/Social Action Theories

**Social action** theories place more emphasis on the role of individuals in creating culture and their identities.

**The Looking Glass Self**

Mead argued that as children grow up they learn to develop a sense of who they are (**their self-concept**) and what makes them different from others. This occurs during socialisation through social interaction (interacting with other people).

As they interact with other people they develop ideas about how others see them and by seeing how people respond to them, they may modify their self-concept and sense of identity and begin to see themselves as others see them. This means the self-concepts and identities of individuals are changing and developing all the time.

Cooley developed the concept of the **looking glass self** to explain this. Cooley argues that our identity is formed based on how we think other people see us. We either behave as we think people see us or we try to change our behaviour to modify people’s views of us.

For example, an individual may see themselves as outgoing, friendly and sociable, but others may see them as unfriendly and standoffish. This might result in the individual adopting a new identity where they conform to how others see them or where they change their behaviour to try and change people’s views of them.

**Impression Management**

Goffman sees society as like a stage, with people acting out performances. People try to project particular impressions of themselves (the presentation of self and try to convince other people that that is their identity.

Goffman also says that whilst there is a public area where we act out our performances, there is also a private area where individuals stop performing and are themselves, such as at home.

While the individual may try to present a certain impression to others, there is no certainty that they will succeed.

**Labelling**

Becker argues that our identity is influenced by other people’s perceptions of us. This is similar to Mead and Cooley but Becker argues that once people begin to see us as having a particular type of identity that becomes our **master status.** It becomes very difficult to get rid of this identity and eventually the individual may conform to it.

*Criticisms of Interpretivist/Social Action Theories*

Individuals are seen as having too much control over their identity and not enough emphasis is given to the importance of inequality in society and the role of social institutions in influencing people’s identities.

While individuals may be able to choose some aspects of their identity, their choices are limited by factors such as wealth, employment etc.

Structuration

Giddens argues that social structures limit the identities people may adopt, but they also make it possible for people to form identities in the first place. Therefore, whilst there is a structure to society that limits individuals’ identities, individuals can still make choices about the identities they adopt within that framework.

**The Reflexive Self**

This refers to the idea that an individual’s identity is formed and develops through a process of reflecting on their identity as they interact with other individuals and the agents of socialisation. Individuals can change their identities as they reflect on themselves.

1. Explain what Goffman means by impression management.
2. Suggest ways in which you try to manage the impressions of yourself that you give to other people. Do you always succeed in giving the impression you want? Why?
3. With reference to Cooley’s idea of the looking glass self, explain, with examples, how the reactions of other might encourage people to change how they view themselves.
4. What is the difference between Becker’s labelling theory and Cooley’s looking glass self?
5. How does the reflexive self differ from the looking glass self?

Postmodernism

Theorists such as Baudrillard, Lyotard and Jameson all agree that **metanarratives** cannot explain how society works.These are structuralist theories such as Functionalism, Marxism and Feminism which say all of society behaves in this way, e.g. for Marxism culture, identity and socialisation are all to do with capitalism and class inequality. Postmodernists believe that the norms and values of our society are not transmitted through agents of socialisation in order to benefit rich businessmen, for example.

They argue that in a society such as ours which celebrates diversity, there is so much choice for individuals about what identity they adopt. This is helped by **consumer culture** and the media which provides us with all these choices.

We as consumers choose our identity and **pick and mix** our identities based on what norms and values we want to adopt. Bauman argues we go **shopping for identities** and can easily change our identity and adopt any identity we want.

Because of all the choice available, this has also led to **blurring boundaries** of different cultures and identities. For example males are increasingly adopting traditional feminine behaviours such as focusing on their appearance.

Postmodernist sociologists emphasise how the idea of ‘self’ can change, and they also emphasise the degree of choice we have over our identities.

Social Class Identity

**Social class** refers to a group of people who share a similar economic situation, such as occupation and income.

Objective and Subjective Definitions of Class

There are two ways of defining class:

1. **Objective class identity** refers to a person’s income, occupation etc.
2. **Subjective class identity** refers to what class a person thinks they belong to.

Subjective class identity is part of what Bourdieu called a **habitus.** This is the set of ideas of a social class and which influences their tastes and choices. It can influence:

* The knowledge they have
* The way they use language and their accent
* Manners and forms of behaviour
* Attitudes and values
* Cultural tastes including, diet and leisure activities, for example.

High culture reflects the habitus of the upper class whilst popular culture reflects the habitus of the working class.

Those who have access to the habitus of the dominant class have what Bourdieu called **cultural capital.** This is the knowledge, attitudes and values of the upper and middle class which gives them an advantage in education.

Upper Class Identity

The **upper class** includes 3 main groups:

1. **The traditional upper class:** this includes royalty and the traditional, land owning aristocracy.
2. **The owners of industry and commerce:** this includes wealthy business owners.
3. **Stars of entertainment, media and sport:** this includes people who have become wealthy due to entertainment and sport.

The Traditional Upper Class

Scott suggests features of traditional upper class culture and identity include:

* A family life with an exclusive upbringing and lifestyle.
* Marrying into other upper class families **(social closure).**
* Private education at schools such as Eton and Harrow, as well as education at Oxford and Cambridge universities. These provide cultural capital, an appreciation for high culture and networks with peers which helps individuals later in life **(social capital).**
* Military service
* Employment of domestic staff, e.g. butlers.
* A taste for high culture.
* Particular codes of etiquette and manners.
* Leisure activities like hunting and shooting etc. These also provide social capital.
* A sense of leadership and self confidence.

The Nouveau Riche (New Rich)

These have acquired their wealth in their own lifetimes rather than inheriting it.

They may attempt to achieve acceptance by the traditional upper class but find this difficult as the traditional upper class regard them as culturally inferior, lacking cultural capital and as having poor taste.

The new rich tend to establish their identities through their lifestyles and extravagant consumption. They buy extravagant consumer goods to provide them with status **(conspicuous consumption).**

Middle Class Identity

The **middle class** refers to those in non manual work, e.g. office work.

The middle class has expanded rapidly in recent years and it consists of such a wide range of different groups with different jobs, qualifications, incomes and lifestyles that it is difficult to talk about a shared middle class culture and identity.

There are, however, some general features that distinguish the middle class from the working class:

* A commitment to education.
* A recognition of the importance of individual effort, ambition and self help.
* A sense of individual and family self interest.
* A concern with **future orientation** (planning for the future) and **deferred gratification** (putting off today’s pleasures for future gains).
* A commitment to greater respect for high culture than popular culture.
* A concern with their own health.

Taste is one way the middle class helps to secure and maintain its identity, through a sense of superiority over white working class culture. She suggests working class people are viewed by the middle class in a negative light, as lacking taste etc.

There are a number of groups in the middle class:

* **Professionals:** lawyers, doctors etc., who value education, their independence, high culture and have high levels of cultural capital.
* **Managers and government officials:** have upper range salaries and identity is formed around conspicuous consumption (identity based on what they buy). Value politeness, respect for the law, refined behaviour, an appreciation of high culture, moderation in behaviour and activities which are high in cultural capital.
* **Self employed small business owners:** likely to be individualistic and work centred.
* **Financial and creative middle class:** stockbrokers, investment managers etc. and those working in the media and advertising. Tend to be young and very well off with high levels of conspicuous consumption. Features include high and popular culture, clubbing, expensive restaurants, use of designer drugs and specialised leisure activities and holidays. Very concerned with own self interest, earning a lot of money and conspicuous consumption.
* **Lower middle class ‘white collar’ workers:** employed in routine, non manual work, like sales staff. Have limited promotion prospects and lifestyles which are very similar to the new working class. More likely to have a collective identity expressed through membership of trade unions.

Working Class Identity

The **working class** refers to those working in manual jobs, like factory or labouring work.

There are two broad groups within the working class:

1. The traditional working class.
2. The new working class.

The Traditional Working Class

This has practically disappeared today. It was found mainly in areas with traditional industries such as mining and shipbuilding.

Features included:

* A close knit community.
* Traditional gender roles: men were breadwinners and women were housewives.
* Manual work.
* Obtaining a skill and a job were more important than educational qualifications.
* A strong sense of working class identity and class solidarity.
* A strong commitment to the Labour Party.
* An us v them attitude towards their bosses.
* Enjoyment of popular and folk culture, e.g. brass bands.

Sugarman identified three main attitudes:

1. **Immediate gratification:** enjoying pleasures today rather than putting them off for later.
2. **Present time orientation:** a focus on the present rather than the future.
3. **Fatalism:** acceptance of the situation they were in and little hope in improving or changing their lives.

The New Working Class

This is now the largest section of the working class.

Features include:

* A **privatised**, home centred lifestyle with little involvement in the community.
* An **instrumental approach** to work. Work is a source of making money not a source of identity.
* Little loyalty to others in the same class.
* Women are likely to be in paid employment.
* High levels of home ownership.
* Emphasis on consumer goods and conspicuous consumption.

The Underclass

The **underclass** is a social group at the bottom of the social class structure. Its members are cut off or excluded from the rest of society **(social exclusion).**

New Right writers, such as Murray, see features as:

* High levels of illegitimacy and lone parenthood.
* Drunkenness and yob culture
* Crime, benefit fraud and drug abuse
* Exclusion from school and educational failure
* Work shy attitudes and living off benefits

This viewpoint has increasingly been applied to the whole white working class, not just the poor, in a process Jones has called the demonization of the working class.

Some sociologists argue the chav stereotype is used to devalue working class taste and culture, and the word ‘chav’ has now become a common form of middle class abuse of the entire poor white working class.

Shildrick et al point out that the media explain these alleged features of the poorest groups in society as arising from character deficiencies of individuals rather than from inequalities in wealth. This reinforces the impression that the poor are poor because of their own failings.

The Importance of Class as a Source of Identity

Why Class is Not Important

Postmodernists suggest class is no longer important because people’s identities have become much more fluid and changeable and people can now pick and mix any identities they want from a range of consumer choices. Consumer culture has more influence on people’s identities than class.

Social class is also of declining importance today because classes are fragmented into different groups and are being replaced by a range of other influences on identity, including gender, religion, ethnicity and consumer lifestyles.

Pakulski and Waters suggest that class is dead as an important factor in a person’s identity, being replaced with lifestyle and consumption patterns. People’s identities are more influenced by what they consume and they are not limited by their class.

Class divisions have weakened and people’s cultural choices and lifestyles have become more individualistic and less influenced by their community and work.

Why Class is Still Important

Many people continue to identify themselves with a social class, e.g. the British Social Attitudes Survey in 2012 found 95% of people identified themselves with a social class.

The suggestion that people’s identity is formed around choices in leisure activities and consumption ignore the fact that these choices are influenced by people’s income.

Social class has an important influence on people’s standard of living, educational success, their health and life expectancy, their homeownership and their risks of unemployment and poverty, as well as other aspects.

Social Class Identity and Agents of Socialisation

Family

The family creates norms and values that can be seen as class based and a key part of an individual’s social class identity.

Everyday events such as mealtimes can reflect social class identity and how the family influences it. For example, the middle class are seen as eating in the evening, around the table with the rest of the family. The working class are seen as eating earlier due to the end of the working day for manual workers and around the television.

However, Postmodernists would argue these norms and values are breaking down and blurring due to changes in the family structure and the widespread nature of the media.

Cater and Coleman

Found the chances of becoming a teenage mother was almost ten times higher for a girl from an unskilled (working class) family background than a girl from a professional (middle class) background.

In interviews with working class teenage mums they found many of them spoke of the norm of settling down early. Indeed, most of their mothers had been teenage mums too.

They also saw having a baby as giving them an identity and purpose.

Education

Education tends to influence class identity in terms of the type of school an individual attends.

Private (fee paying) schools tend to be surrounded by signals indicating they have a higher class position, e.g. a school crest or the types of school trips.

The formal curriculum of these schools will have an influence too. A student who studies Latin at a private school is likely to have higher cultural capital and see their identity and society differently from a student studying vocational courses.

Bourdieu

Suggested for the middle class going to university is like being ‘a fish in water’.

For the working class university can be isolating and daunting as it has a middle/upper class image.

Media

The media represents different social classes in different ways.

For example, TV programmes that focus on the working class such as ‘Shameless’ show the working class as aggressive and good at playing the welfare system. ‘The Royle Family’ showed working class family life as being based around watching TV in the front room.

Medhurst

A group of middle class students watching ‘The Royle Family’ thought it was an accurate representation of working class life in the UK.

This shows how the media can influence other group’s perceptions of different social classes.

Brundson

Middle class people saw satellite dishes as tasteless and a symbol of the working class.

(You can include Jones’ argument that the term ‘chav’ is used to demean the working class, as well as Shildrick et al’s argument that the media explain the poorest groups of society are poor due to their character deficiencies, not due to inequalities of wealth in society).

Religion

It is difficult to identity a relationship between religion and class in the UK due to the changing and diverse nature of religious groups and the changing and diverse nature of class identities.

There is some evidence that attendance at Church of England ceremonies is higher for the middle classes, although that doesn’t mean the middle classes are more likely to be religious. There is some evidence that attendance in church provides a degree of status within communities, especially rural communities.

However, religions such as Rastafarianism are more likely to have a broader working class base as they are often located in inner city areas.

Peer Group

Peers play an important part in the class identity of individuals, especially young people. An individual’s peer group is related to where they live, the school they attend and their hobbies. These can all be related to class. Class therefore can influence the formation of peer groups. There is evidence that peer groups in schools often form along class lines.

Mac an Ghaill

Identified a group of peers in a school known as the macho lads. They were male and working class. They rejected school and were more interested in looking tough and messing about.

Brah

Studied a group of white skinheads for whom their working class identity was important. They worked hard to create a culture of ‘whiteness’ which means their norms and values were intended to reflect their ethnicity and their class.

This is an example of a cultural comfort zone.

Workplace

Manual work tends to be associated with the working class and non-manual work with the middle classes. This is a key part of class identity.

Willis

Found in the 1970s that manual work was central to men’s sense of masculinity as ‘real men’ and was their main source of identity.

Age Identities

Age has a large influence on our lives, e.g. where we shop, what we buy, how we pay for our goods, our interests.

Biology and Age

Biology has some influence on the fact that different age groups have different behaviours and society expects them to do different things. For example, the elderly are less likely to be engaged in manual tasks due to physical limitations.

However, we can see differences between age groups in different societies. For example, the elderly in the UK are treated very differently from the elderly in tribal societies.

The Social Construction of Age

The norms and values associated with different age identities are created by society. The norms and values attached to different age identities can change over time and between different societies. For example, in tribal societies the elderly often have greater status and power. This is clearly different to the elderly in modern societies such as Britain. Also in medieval times most children moved straight into adult roles. There was no youth identity.

There can also be differences between ethnic groups. In Asian and Chinese ethnic minority groups, for example, elderly people are still often held in high esteem.

Age Groups

There are different norms and values associated with different age groups. These can therefore be a form of **social identity** as well as **individual identity**. Your age can have an impact on your own sense of identity as well as how other people see you.

Old Age

Most people tend to think of old age as beginning at around retirement (65-68). The view of what is old age though has changed as life expectancy has increased.

There is now a range from the young old to the oldest old (those aged 85 and over).

In addition, the experience of old age can vary widely depending on a person’s class, ethnicity and gender.

In Britain the elderly are not accorded a great deal of respect or status because work is the major source of status in industrial societies. Loss of work can also result in a decline in self-esteem, social contact with others and income as well as a rise in loneliness, poverty, depression and poor health.

Ageism and the Stigmatisation of the Elderly

**Ageism** refers to stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination against individuals or groups on the basis of their age.

There are three elements to ageism

1. Ageism is often institutionalised: it is embedded in organisations and the law, e.g. people aged over 70 are excluded from jury service.
2. Ageism is often expressed through everyday prejudices that affect how we interact with the elderly, e.g. the elderly may be deemed too old to carry out a particular task.
3. Ageism can involve the assumption that the very old are vulnerable and depend on younger adults for care.

Old age is stereotyped and identified as a period of:

* Loneliness
* Being unable to learn
* Having poor health
* Being dependent on others

Pilcher notes that old people are often described in derogatory ways. These stereotypes tend to marginalise old people and label them as inferior

Ginn and Arber note that the increasing number of elderly people has led to rising fears about the costs to society, e.g. the costs of pensions and care. Media reports on this portray the elderly as a burden on taxpayers.

Old age can be seen as a **stigmatised identity** which prevents people from establishing other identities and from participating fully in society.

Active Ageing

Marhánková refers to a new identity for older people called **active ageing**, which is where older people are active rather than being dependent etc. Older people can choose to stay in work, look after their health through physical activity, volunteer, pass on their skills, take part in lifelong learning etc.

Marhánková points out that freedom from work, longer lives, better health and more free time have enabled the elderly to develop new lifestyles and seize new opportunities.

However, the opportunities for active ageing may be limited by social class. In 2012-13, 13% of pensioners lived below the government’s poverty line. This makes it harder for these older people to establish active identities through consumption and leisure.

Mid Life

There is some disagreement as to when middle age begins. Some have set it as 35 whilst others suggest it might be 50.

There are physical indicators of middle age, such as greying hair, ‘middle aged spread’ and, in women, the menopause.

Social indicators of middle age might be children leaving home to go to university or having more money for leisure pursuits.

There might even be emotional indicators such as midlife crisis.

Youth

In the 1950s adolescence or youth was recognised as a unique age group for the first time. This was mainly due to the emergence of a youth culture due to an increase in young people’s spending power brought about by full employment. As a result businesses targeted products at youth such as pop music and fashion.

Youth tends to be an age identity where the peer group is important, and where people have **disposable income**. This means they are free to spend this money on leisure and consumption.

Studies of the media have focused on how youth is demonised. Cohen observed how newspapers tend to exaggerate the behaviour of groups of young people in order to sell papers. His study focused on how fights between the mods and rockers produced a **moral panic** about these young people who were seen as **folk devils**. This illustrates how young people are seen as a social problem by the older generation.

However, studies of young people suggest the generation gap (conflict between parents and teenagers) implied by moral panics is exaggerated. There is little evidence that youth identity is significantly different in terms of what young people value compared with their parents. Few young people have become involved with subcultures defined as deviant by the media, such as teddy boys. Most young people are generally conformist and place a high value on traditional goals.

Childhood

This is a time in which children are supposed to be protected by their parents. The state has also introduced legislation in order to set out guidelines for what is acceptable behaviour for children. For example schooling is compulsory between 5 and 18 whilst the age of criminal responsibility is 10.

Childhood is good for illustrating how age is socially constructed. For example, Ariès showed that in medieval times childhood was not seen as a separate status. Children often moved straight from infancy into working roles in the community.

Gender Identity

Sex and Gender

**Sex:** used to classify people as being male or female based on their biological or physical characteristics.

**Gender:** used to describe the ways in which men and women are expected to behave in society. It describes socially constructed behaviour, which means behaviour which is made by or shaped by society.

Femininity and masculinity

**Femininity** is the character trait of behaving in ways considered typical for women.

**Masculinity** is the character trait of behaving in ways considered typical for men.

Biological Determinist View

This is the view that gender is based on biology, e.g. men are naturally aggressive and women are naturally passive and expressive.

Parsons supported the **biological determinist** argument. He suggested that males and females were initially socialised by the family into different roles which, he argued reflected their natural characteristics.

He argued that men were socialised to adopt an **instrumental role**, whilst women adopted an **expressive role:**

* Instrumental role: breadwinner and disciplinarian in the family.
* Expressive role: child bearer and to look after the home and children.

The Social Constructionist view

Stanley and Wise argue that masculine and feminine behaviours are connected to the way we are socialised through the different agents of socialisation. However, we can also choose how to behave and our femininity or masculinity may be based on these choices.

Mead studied 3 different tribes in New Guinea and uncovered examples where male and female behaviour was different from behaviours in the UK. For example, in one tribe men did the shopping and put on make up and jewellery to make themselves attractive, whilst the women took part in what we would see as masculine activities, such as trading.

There are also a range of different types of masculinity and femininity in the UK which also leads sociologists to conclude that gender identity is socially constructed.

Hegemonic Identities

A **hegemonic identity** is one that is so dominant, it is difficult for people to assert alternative identities. If people do assert an identity which is different to the hegemonic identity, they may be viewed as deviant.

There is a hegemonic masculine identity and a hegemonic feminine identity.

Types of Femininity

Hegemonic Femininity

Hegemonic femininity consists of women being passive, focusing on appearance, taking on the expressive role and being subordinate to men.

However, the traditional stereotype of women taking on the expressive role is being replaced by role models of strong, independent, successful women. Women are now contributing to the family income or are the main wage earner.

Assertive Femininity

Blackman found the lower middle class and working class New Wave Girls in a secondary school used their sexuality to challenge the school’s male culture and the sexism of male teachers as well as their male peers. This **assertive femininity** empowered them and gave them some control and at the same challenged ideas that women should be passive.

Ladettes

Jackson describes a group of working class girls who take on laddish behaviour by rejecting education due to fear of failure. A 2006 World Health Organisation survey found that girls in the UK were among the most violent in the world with nearly 1 in 3 Scottish and English adolescent girls admitting to having being involved in a fight in the past year.

Types of Masculinity

Hegemonic Masculinity

This is associated with male supremacy (power and authority), heterosexuality, aggression, repression of emotions and other behaviours. The behaviour of hegemonic males is often macho and sexist and includes expectations about what women should do and be and about the technical competence of males.

Traditional masculinity is often, but not entirely, associated with working class males. Nayak argues that in the 1950s and 1960s these men had **‘body capital’**. They were the main breadwinner, did hard physical jobs and as a result were able to opt out of domestic duties.

Laddish Masculinity

This involves sexual promiscuity, drinking, football and loutishness.

Jackson argues boys adopt laddish behaviour due to the fear of academic failure and concern with social relationships and the desire to ‘fit in’.

Complicit Masculinity

This is where men might be said to adopt a shared role in the family, as well as being more caring and emotional. Men are also no longer the main breadwinner. This links with the idea of the New Man.

Marginalised Masculinity

Marginalised masculinity applies to men who no longer have masculine jobs to go into due to changes in the economy, leaving many with a crisis. Connell uses **marginalised masculinity** to describe the sense of loss experienced by these young men. This links with Mac an Ghaill’s **crisis of masculinity.**

Subordinate Masculinity

**Subordinate masculinity** is a term Connell uses to describe a masculinity which is concerned with gay men who are viewed as behaving differently and do not conform to the expectations of the dominant hegemonic masculinity.

Metrosexuality

This was mentioned by Frank Mort when he studied the rise in men’s fashion magazines. **Metrosexuals** are heterosexual men who embrace their feminine side, use cosmetic products and take an interest in fashion.

10% of cosmetic surgery is now carried out on men with the male grooming market having grown by 800% since 1998.

The Succeed Foundation in 2012 found 80% of men had anxieties about the body image compared to 75% of women.

Crisis of Masculinity

Men are no longer the main breadwinner, nor are they what Gilmore described as the provider, the protector and the impregnator. This has led to what Mac an Ghaill has called a crisis of masculinity where men are searching for a gender identity that fits in the modern world.

Ethnic Identity

**Ethnicity** refers to the shared culture of a social group, which gives its members a common identity. It includes culture (traditions, language, food, religion and norms and values) and descent (where your ancestors were originally from).

Minority ethnic identities often share History (they may share a sense of struggle and oppression); language (members of particular groups may speak the language(s) of their country of origin at home); religion (this is the most important influence for some minority ethnic groups); and traditions (these may be religious or cultural).

Ethnicity as Resistance

Sewell found anti-school male black subcultures emphasised their ethnicity as a response to racism at school. Jacobsen also found that young British Asians have adopted a defensive Islamic identity as a result to the social exclusion and racism they encounter in British society. This can also be seen by black youths adopting Rastafarianism.

Types of Ethnic Identity

White Identities

Identities of white British people don’t tend to be focused on as much because much of British society and the agents of socialisation promote and favour white people and their culture. They also do not face the racism and discrimination that ethnic minority groups experience.

The assertion of a white British identity is also associated with racism and groups like the British National Party.

Also ‘white’ is not an ethnic group with a shared culture, history etc. as there are different cultures amongst English, Scottish, Irish, Welsh and Polish communities in Britain.

African Caribbean Identities

For younger African Caribbeans who were born in Britain, certain styles of dress and tastes in music, the use of the patois dialect, dreadlocks and a sense of pride in their black skin as a form of resistance to racism, all help to establish a distinctive black identity. This may be reinforced by distinctive black subcultures like Rastafarianism.

Modood found that skin colour is an important source of identity to many young African Caribbeans. Some African Caribbean youth stress their black identity because of their experience of prejudice and discrimination from white society. Black pride and power may be celebrated, especially if black youth perceives itself to be excluded or stereotyped by white people and symbols of white authority, e.g. teachers.

Asian Identities

There are a diversity of different Asian groups with important differences between them.

In Britain the largest Asian groups include Indian Asians, Bangladeshis and Pakistanis. Extended families and arranged marriages are common to all these groups, as well as enjoyment of Bollywood films and Bhangra music and dance.

However, these groups speak different languages (Punjabi, Hindi, Gujarati, Urdu), have different forms of dress (e.g. turbans for men and veils for women), have different diets (Hindus and Sikhs don’t eat beef, Muslims eat halal food), have different religions (Hinduism, Sikhism, Islam, Buddhism and Christianity) and religious institutions (mosques and temples) and celebrate different festivals (e.g. Ramadan and Eid for Muslims, Diwali for Hindus and Sikhs and Versaiki for Sikhs).

Religion is particularly important in the different Asian groups. Jacobsen found that for many young Pakistani Muslims, Islam has become a central feature in building a positive identity in response to a racist, Islamophobic British culture.

Those wishing to assert their ethnicity as their main source of identity are likely to emphasise aspects of their minority ethnic cultures in their impression management to others. Mirza et al suggested the growing popularity for wearing the hijab by Muslim girls was mostly influenced by peer pressure and a sense that the headscarf marked an individual’s identity as Muslim.

**Changing Asian Identities**

Johal has suggested that amongst younger Asians there is the emergence of two new ethnic identities: British Asians and Brasians.

British Asians have two identities. The Asian one they learn through primary socialisation and the British one they learn through secondary socialisation. They adopt whichever identity is appropriate for where and who they are with. This is known as **code switching.** Johal and Bains argue British Asians adopt a white mask when interacting with white culture, such as in education or the workplace.

Brasian is a hybrid identity which blends both British and Asian cultures. They pick n mix elements of both cultures.

Back found that interethnic friendships and marriages mean that groups borrow ideas from each other. This has led to the blurring of boundaries between ethnic groups.

Butler found that for Muslim women family and religion were important but these women also wanted more opportunities in terms of education and careers and were challenging some of the restrictions that traditional Asian culture imposed on them.

**Muslim: a Stigmatized Identity**

The increase in Islamic fundamentalism, as well as events like 9/11 and the bombings in London in 2005, and the media reporting of the activities of a tiny minority, have formed the basis for the stereotyping of all Muslims. As a result, the identity ‘Muslim’ has become a stigmatized identity for many Muslims who have no sympathy with extremism.

Baroness Warsi in 2011, then Co-Chair of the Conservative Party and Cabinet Minister, complained of fashionable Islamophobia and suggested prejudice against Muslims was now seen as normal.

As Phillips pointed out, media reporting of Muslims in the 2000s resulted in the word ‘Muslim’ conjuring up images of terrorism. This is obviously negative and incorrect.

Hybrid Identities

This is a type of ethnic identity.

*This links to Johal, Johal and Bains and Back.*

Disability and Identity

An **impairment** is a loss or limitation in the functioning of the mind or body.

A **disability** is when an impairment prevents people from carrying out day to day activities.

Medical Model of Disability

The medical model saw people as disabled because they couldn’t take part in the same activities as other members of society. This labelled the disabled as inferior because it was assumed that to be disabled was abnormal and meant reliance on the able bodied.

Social Model of Disability

Oliver argues society disables physically impaired people because the disabled are excluded from full participation in society by stereotypical attitudes held by able bodied people. This links to disability being socially constructed.

Social Construction of Disability

Shakespeare suggests that disability should be seen as a **social construction.** Societies don’t take into account the needs of those who do not meet society’s ideas of what is ‘normal’. A disabled identity may be generated even for people who have an impairment that doesn’t major difficulties because they don’t conform to what society sees as ‘normal’, e.g. a person of very small stature. Essentially society makes an impairment a disability.

Barriers put in place by society, e.g. lack of disabled access to buildings, turn an impairment into a disability, which means it is socially constructed.

In addition, most of the UK population are impaired in some way but are rarely classified as disabled, e.g. people who need glasses. However these people are not seen as disabled because society doesn’t define this as a problem and therefore society doesn’t create barriers for people who need glasses.

Stereotyping

The negative stereotypes of disability are often based on the view that the disabled are dependent. However we all depend on other people and organisations to help us feed and clothe ourselves for example.

Society sees some **social aids** like wheelchairs negatively, whereas social aids like glasses are not seen in this way.

Most of us learn about disability through socialisation. Popular views of disability are often formed through the media. These tend to be quite negative.

Barnes suggested stereotypes of disability include ideas that disabled people are:

* Dependent on others
* Unable to contribute to society
* Non sexual
* Unable to speak for themselves
* Less than human
* To be made fun of, pitied, or praised for their courage

Recently more positive images of the disabled have become more widely available in the media, e.g. the London Paralympic Games in 2012. However, since this there hasn’t been much coverage of sports involving disabled participants.

Disability and Capitalism

Marxists such as Finkelstein have suggested that our negative attitudes towards the disabled may be because capitalism emphasises work as a source of identity, status and power. Because capitalist society requires a healthy and fit workforce the disabled became an economic burden for society and are defined as a social problem.

Disability and Identity

Master Status and Stigmatised Identity

Disabled people may not see their impairment as the main part of their identity. However, many people with impairments may be unable to assert their choice of identity (**impression management**) as others may see them primarily as disabled and treat them according to stereotypes.

Disability can become an identity where people are excluded from society. For example, wheelchair users often find that people will talk to the person pushing a wheelchair rather than the person in the wheelchair.

This can result in employment discrimination as employers may be reluctant to take on a disabled person. Therefore the disabled are more likely to be on welfare benefits and experience poverty.

Gender has an impact as well. It is assumed by professionals that disabled women should not be having sex and that they are likely to make unsuitable mothers. There have been a number of cases in which disabled women have been forcibly sterilised or have had their children take into care.

Learned Helplessness

Stereotypes of the disabled being dependent can have an impact on disabled people themselves.

Scott observed the interaction between medical professionals and blind people and argued the blind developed a blind personality. Part of this involved **learned helplessness**, which the blind people adopted because the medical professionals expected them to rely on the able bodied whether or not they needed to.

Disability and Resistance

Recent studies suggest disabled people are more likely to resist negative definitions of disability. Many disabled individuals reject medical labels and have a very positive self-image. This is partly helped by the increased prominence of disabled people in the media, e.g. Ade Adepitan.

Sexual Identity

Gender, Sexuality and ‘Normal’ Sex

What is classified as normal sexual behaviour is socially constructed. In Britain the dominant view of sexuality is heterosexuality as it has links to reproduction. This is known as **heteronormativity.**

Sexuality has always been a part of femininity with women being defined, very often, by their physical attractiveness. There is also a **double standard** applied to men and women with sexually promiscuous females likely to be condemned by both sexes.

Changing Sexual Identities

Physical appearance has begun to become part of masculinity. This links with metrosexuality and subordinate masculinity.

In addition, men’s bodies have become more sexualised, especially in the media. There is also more importance attached to men’s body image than there used to be. For example, in 2005 the Sun published a Hall of Shame of celebrity males with ‘male boobs’. Women have now taken up the position of **active viewers.**

Stigmatized Sexual Identities

Individuals whose **sexual identity** is regarded as not the norm are likely to be seen as deviant. This can result in hostility in public places, bullying, mockery in the media and discrimination.

Gay and Lesbian Identities

Hostility towards homosexuality in Britain is reducing. In the media, for example, TV soaps and dramas feature gay and lesbian relationships.

Much of the changes though are fairly recent, particularly with regards to the law. It was only in 1968 that it became legal in England and Wales for men over the age of 21 to have sexual relations, and not until 1980 in Scotland. The age of consent for gay men only became the same as for heterosexual adults in 2000.

The rise of the gay movement, the importance of gay spending and newly emerging forms of masculinity have overcome much of the stigma attached to male homosexuality, as well as weakening the differences between gay and straight masculinities.

As a result of the gay movement, gay people now have a wide range of sexual identities open to them.

However, it is important not to exaggerate the extent of these changes. Homosexuality is still regarded as deviant by many people. Homophobia, which is the irrational hatred, intolerance and fear of homosexual and bisexual people, is still very common.

A 2013 Stonewall report found that 55% of lesbian, gay and bisexual (LGB) young people experience homophobic bullying at school and most hear homophobic language on a frequent basis. 1 in 5 employees has experienced verbal bullying from colleagues or customers whilst the majority of LGB people expect to be discriminated against if they stand for political office, want to foster a child or consider becoming a magistrate or a school governor.

Dorais argues many young men who attempted suicide did so because they struggled with their own sexual identity in a homophobic society. Most of the men in the study were gay or regarded as effeminate by others and did not conform to hegemonic ideals of masculinity.

Identity and Heterosexuality

Heterosexuality to some degree also seems to be the product of culture, rather than by biology. This can be illustrated by examining the way the definitions of sexual attractiveness have changed over the course of the last 100 years in Western Societies. Studies of 18th and 19th century paintings suggest the ideal of feminine beauty was plump women, in 1950s female sex icons such as Marilyn Monroe were much bigger women than the supermodels and celebrities favoured by the fashion industry in the early 21st century.

Feminist sociologists have suggested this media representation is responsible for eating disorders. They argues the media continue the idea that slimness equals success, health, happiness and popularity.

Further evidence that suggests heterosexuality is socially constructed is the double standard that exists with comparable male and female sexual behaviour. Males are supposed to be promiscuous predators, whereas females are supposed to be passive and more interested in love than sex. Because of this, women’s sexual identity carries risks. Lees argues if they are seen as promiscuous they may be subject to verbal abuse and labels.

Homosexuality, Leisure and Consumption

By the 1970’s a distinct gay subculture had emerged in British culture offering a positive gay identity. Much of the gay subculture that emerged focused on leisure and consumption, e.g. gay bars, clubs and restaurants. Gay culture became politicised as gays sought to assert their identity. Organisations such as Stonewallsought changes to the law in order that homosexuals had the same rights as heterosexuals. Gay pride marches increased visibility and social acceptance of gay people. More recently, campaigns for equal rights have been extended in the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender movement (LGBT).

National Identity

Nationality and National Identity

**Nationality** is having citizenship of a nation state. It usually involves the rights and responsibilities attached to being a citizen, e.g. education, obeying the law.

Nationality is usually based on where you were born or marriage but can also be achieved by naturalisation, where people choose their nationality after meeting legal requirements.

**National identity** can be defined as the feeling of being part of a larger community in the form of a nation, which gives a sense of purpose and meaning to people’s lives as well as a sense of belonging.

National identity is not necessarily the same thing as nationality. For example, people who have British nationality may not subscribe to a British national identity. Many citizens of the UK, who are defined as British, see themselves primarily as English, Scottish, Welsh or Irish. Moreover, many British citizens may see their national identity as linked to their country or region of origin and so may see themselves as African Caribbean or Bengali, for example. Others may see their identities as being more closely linked to their religion, such as Muslim.

Every nation has a collection of stories, images and symbols about its shared experiences, which people draw on to construct and express their national identity.

Nationality as a Source of Identity

National identity usually involves a sense of belonging to a nation state and sharing things in common with others of the same nationality, and an awareness of differences from those of other nationalities. **Nationalism** is a sense of pride in, and a commitment to, a nation.

The British nation state includes England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Citizens of the UK all have British nationality but they do not all have this as their national identity. A declining number of people are identifying themselves as British, instead adopting English, Scottish or Welsh national identities. In the 2011 census 58% of people in England described themselves as English only, not British.

We can see the growth of nationalism in the UK with elected assemblies being set up in Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as a Parliament in Scotland. In addition, the Scottish National Party (SNP) formed a majority government in the Scottish Parliament in 2011 and in the 2015 general election when the SNP won 56 out of 59 seats in Scotland.

British Identity

The British are a mix of social and immigrant groups. However, a sense of British identity has been created around a number of key themes:

* **Geography:** the fact Britain consists of islands gave it a clear sense of boundaries that made it distinct from Europe.
* **Religion:** Protestantism is the dominant religious identity in Britain. In times of national celebration religion plays a central role.
* **War:** Wars have reinforced the sense of ‘them’ versus ‘us’ and especially British values.
* **The British Empire:** Britain’s success as an imperial power brought economic success and a sense of achievement.
* **Monarchy:** the cultural symbols of British nationality are designed to place the monarchy at the heart of British identity.

The 2014 British Social Attitudes survey found ¾ or more of people saw speaking English, having British citizenship, respecting Britain’s political institutions and laws and being born in Britain or living most of your life here as ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ important for being truly British.

Prime Minister David Cameron saw commitment to the values of freedom of speech, freedom of worship, democracy, the rule of law, and equal rights as defining characteristics of British identity.

However, it is difficult to say that these values are uniquely British as they are found in most democratic countries. The history of British people is very different as well with battles between English and the Scots and Irish, and exploitation of former colonies under the British empire.

National Identity and Socialisation

The British people are socialised into a British identity in several ways:

* **A common language:** English is seen as central to our cultural identity.
* **Education:** the teaching of History, English literature and Religion in British schools tends to promote national identity.
* **National rituals:** royal and state occasions are used to reinforce the British way of life.
* **Symbols:** these include styles of dress, uniforms, passports, styles of music, national anthems and flags.
* **The mass media:** television, magazines and newspapers encourage people to identify with national symbols such as the Royal Family by taking a keen interest in their activities. The media also play a key role by talking up British achievement.
* **The mass production of fashion and taster:** Britishness can also be embodied in particular foods, consumer goods and retail outlets.

The Decline of British Identity?

Waters suggests British identity may be under threat for four reasons:

1. **Celtic identities:** there has always been a sense of Welsh, Scottish and Northern Irish nationalism. This is even more the case now they all have either an elected assembly or Parliament. People in Scotland are more likely to identify themselves as Scottish than British, whilst people in England people are more likely to identify themselves as equally British and English.
2. **Globalisation:** British identity may be diluted as some British companies and products are taken over by foreign companies while others close down their factories and move production to cheaper developing countries. There are also concerns that American culture is taking over the British high street. Moreover, media is increasingly produced for the international market. There are fears that these largely American products may erode Britishness and create a single global culture.
3. **Multiculturalism:** A survey conducted in 2005 found only 39% of minorities saw themselves as ‘fully British’. Modood found that Asians and African Caribbeans did not feel comfortable with a ‘British’ identity: they felt that the majority of white people did not accept them as British because of their skin colour and cultural background.
4. **English identity:** Curtice and Heath have suggested that the group who identify themselves as English has grown and a significant proportion of these **‘Little Englanders’** openly admitted being racially prejudiced.

Hall suggests that one possible consequence of globalization is that national cultures may decline, leading to new **hybrid cultures** and **hybrid identities**. There is evidence for this:

* Decisions and events in one part of the world can have consequences for people across the globe.
* The media report events across the world almost immediately as well as exposing people to other cultures.
* People travel abroad much more than they used to.
* More British people buy homes in foreign countries
* Britain’s membership of the EU means that some decisions affecting British life are taken in collaboration with other European countries.
* Immigration means that there are substantial ethnic minority groups in different countries.

Postmodernists see such changes as opening up more opportunities for people to choose from a wider range of cultures and identities than they had in the past. Consequently national identity may be less significant as a source of identity, and people might see a European or global identity, for example, as more significant than a British identity.

On the other hand, Hall recognises that globalization can result in increased nationalism as a way of opposing it.

This idea of asserting national identity as a way of opposing changes like globalization has been described by Orr as part of a trend towards people constructing **negative identities**. Rather than people defining themselves as who they are, they instead define themselves as who they are not. Groups like the British National Party, the UK Independence Party and the English Democrats can be seen as evidence of this.

Also, we may be seeing a new form of Britishness emerging. This can be illustrated with the news that chicken tikka masala has now replaced fish and chips as the UKs most popular food and in the multicultural nature of the British Olympic team at London 2012.

Consumption and Identity

Postmodernists argue that class, gender, ethnicity and age no longer have a significant impact on identities. Lyotard argues that **metanarratives** no longer explain people’s identities.

Postmodernists argue that identities are now much more fluid and changing. They believe that our leisure and consumption choices have much more impact on identities now. They suggest that most people have an almost unlimited free choice of leisure activities and lifestyle, and can adopt any identity they wish.

Bocock believes that people’s consumer choices are important aspects in defining their identities and the status they wish to project to others.

Leisure

In British society, much leisure has become more privatised and home centred. Entertainment that was once mainly available outside the home, e.g. football and music, is now available inside the home due to technology.

Postmodernists argue leisure industries provide a range of lifestyle activities that people can buy into to promote their identities. An example of this is through tourism.

Tourism

Tourism is no longer about just having a holiday but about having cultural experiences to enhance and explore lifestyles and identities.

Museums and art galleries which were once seen as part of high culture are increasingly places of fun and entertainment with interactive activities.

Urry suggests much tourism is now sold on the basis of identity packaging. For example, the countryside is sold to tourists as enabling them to experience the same locations as literary figures, such as Shakespeare or Bronte country.

The Tourist Gaze

Urry talks of the **tourist gaze** whereby tourists gaze view and consume different objects, scenes, experiences, landscapes or townscapes. These are organised by tourism experts to provide enjoyable experiences which are out of the ordinary. An example of this is heritage tourism such as castles where tourists are encouraged to gaze upon a once secure world under threat in the uncertainty of postmodern society.

Tourism involves reconstructions which are designed to appeal to tourists imaginations. Baudrillard refers to these as **simulations** where imaginary things are presented as real, e.g. the Jorvik Viking Centre in York.

The Creation of Identity in a Media Saturated Society

We live in what Baudrillard calls a **media saturated society**. In this society, the media creates desires and pressures to consume and individual identity is no longer formed by class etc. but by influences from the media.

Strinati argues we are bombarded daily by popular culture which increasingly dominates the way we define ourselves.

New identities are created by globalisation which brings different cultural groups into contact. People now adopt different identities to meet the diversity in their lives. Instead of identifying just with class, for example, they identify with ethnicity, disability, race, religion, nationality, music, fashion labels, dress, sport and other leisure activities. Individuals can **pick and mix** to create whatever identities they wish.

Shopping for Identities

Shopping is now a major leisure activity. Postmodernists suggest shopping is not just about buying products but about buying into lifestyles which helps establish identities. This links with Giddens’ idea of the **reflexive self.**

Bauman and May suggest that advertising for products like perfumes, alcoholic drinks, cars and clothing is not simply about selling the products as these goods have **symbolic significance.** The label is more important than the product itself, e.g. the make of trainer is more important than the actual trainer. These products come packaged with an associated lifestyle as shown by people in adverts. These people act as **lifestyle models** and this encourages people to buy these products in order to buy into these lifestyles. Advertising and shopping provide what Bauman and May call **do it yourself identity kits.**

Bauman argues that life has become a shopping mall to stroll around consuming whatever you want, trying out whatever identities you choose and changing them whenever you want.

Constraints on Choosing Identities

The postmodernist view ignores a range of factors which still have important influences on consumption patterns.

Occupation

Work affects the time and money people have to spend on leisure and consumer goods.

Parker believes that people’s jobs and whether they enjoy them or not influences people’s leisure choices.

Social Class

Scraton and Bramham argue that the postmodernists ignore the fact that leisure and consumer based activities are only available to the most well off members of society. This means that some people have more opportunity to choose their lifestyles based around consumer culture than others.

Some leisure activities are denied to the working class simply because of the high costs involved, e.g. golf clubs.

For many people shopping is about seeking out bargains, not identities, because of limited incomes.

People’s choices will also be influenced by the amount of **cultural capital** they have. This will influence what they choose to buy.

Age

The leisure of young people tends to be spent outside the home with their peer group. They may have more **disposable income** due to part time work but lack of financial responsibilities, e.g. bills. This means they are more leisure centred than any other age group, except the retired.

The Family Life Cycle

Young couples who have their own homes and children will face more restrictions on their leisure activities with bills and children.

As children become less dependent on their parents and as mortgages get paid off, people will have more disposable income to spend on leisure activities and consumer goods.

Ill health, as people get older, with reduced income in retirement, may limit leisure opportunities.

Gender

As a result of socialisation, men and women have different leisure interests.

Feminists have shown that women generally have less time and opportunity for leisure activities than men, due to the **expressive role** as well as paid employment. Women also earn less than men.

Research by Deem found that women’s leisure activities were often combined with aspects of childcare, such as going swimming with their children. This limits the choice of women about their leisure activities.

Green, Hebron and Woodward found that patriarchy restricted women’s leisure opportunities to approved activities. Male partners often felt threatened by taking part in leisure activities without their partner that might bring them into contact with other men, e.g. clubbing.

Patriarchy also restricts women’s choice of leisure activities through the harassment women may face in public places, e.g. in pubs and clubs.

Ethnicity

People often make choices about their leisure activities based on their ethnicity. Some ethnic groups are more likely to take part in certain activities due to cultural expectations.

Some ethnic minorities might find their activities restricted by racism.

Asian women are more likely to be restricted to home and family based activities because of how their culture defines their roles.

Roberts found that many Asian workers will work more so they can afford and have time to visit family in their countries of origin.

However, younger British born people from ethnic minority groups may be adopting less culturally defined leisure choices. This may not be the case for everyone though.

The Pursuit of Profit

Marxists like Clarke and Critcher point out that leisure has become a multinational industry employing millions of people worldwide and is concerned with making profit.

Clarke and Critcher argue people don’t have free choice of leisure activities and consumer goods. Advertising creates endless demand for must have products. Rather than having free choices of leisure activities and consumer goods, advertising aims to convince people that their identity depends on buying into the latest lifestyle trends. This benefits capitalist companies that produce or provide these products.

Production and Identity

This mainly looks at how people’s occupation or lack of occupation influences their identities.

Work as a Source of Identity

How money is earned, how much is earned, working conditions, working hours and the amount of pension all have an impact on a person’s status and their life.

Parker

Parker suggested that people’s jobs and the way they experience work, e.g. job satisfaction and work activities, influence their leisure activities. These activities can affect the identities individuals’ project to others. He suggests there are three patterns in the link between work and leisure.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Work-Leisure Pattern** | **Nature of Work** | **Typical Occupations** | **Nature of Leisure** |
| Opposition | Physically taxing and dangerous male dominated occupations; hostility to work | Mining, deep sea fishermen, steelworkers | Opposition to work. Leisure is a central life interest. an opportunity to escape from the hardships of work |
| Neutrality | Boring and routine work with little job satisfaction leading to apathy and indifference to work. | Routine clerical workers, assembly line workers, supermarket staff | Nothing much to do with work. Leisure is for relaxing at home and with family like DIY and going out with the family. |
| Extension | Work involving high levels of personal commitment and job satisfaction | Professionals and managers: doctors, teachers, social workers, business executives | Because work is so interesting and demanding leisure is work related and there is a blurring of the distinction between work and leisure. Work extends into leisure time. For example, business executives playing golf or eating out with clients, teachers using their own time to run school trips/holidays. |

Clarke and Critcher

Clarke and Critcher believe leisure activities are largely shaped by capitalism. They argue individuals are manipulated to take part in certain types of leisure.

They claim the state tries to encourage people to take part in healthy leisure pursuits that are not a threat to order and stability in society. This also keeps the workforce healthy and saves the state money on healthcare

Also most leisure is run by private businesses and an increasing amount of consumer spending goes on leisure in Britain.

People’s choices are also restricted by the limited options made available to the rest of the population, e.g. the range of films shown at mainstream cinemas.

**Lack of Work and Identity**

Lack of work may cause people to suffer from a lack of social status. They may experience what Durkheim called **anomie.** This is a sense of insecurity as well as a feeling of not being part of society.

Riach and Loretto found the loss of a job led to disruption in personal lives and outlook. The loss of work based friends and work routines, or constant rejection from potential employers, led to a crisis of confidence, in which their previously stable identity became questioned by the individuals.

Riach and Loretto also showed how older unemployed people can go to great lengths to maintain a working identity, e.g. getting up early in the morning and having a structure to the day, gaining new qualifications etc. These maintained their self-esteem. They also sought to avoid being labelled as ‘benefit scrounging’ dole seekers, which they saw as a stigmatised identity.

They also found a reluctance to be forced into low skilled, poorly paid jobs. They saw this as undervaluing their skills.

**Class and Leisure**

Bourdieu argues social class is directly linked to culture and therefore to identity and leisure. Social class itself is partly shaped by occupation.

Bourdieu believes that the highest class engages in high culture and the working class are more concerned with mass or popular culture.

Why Work is No Longer Significant

A number of writers, including the Postmodernists, argue that our society is no longer based on production but is instead based on consumer culture. Bauman argues work is no longer a central part of identity and consumption is instead.

**Work is no longer central to people’s lives**

Consuming goods is a much more significant source of identity than work. This is sometimes referred to as **the end of work thesis**. The end of work thesis argues the following changes have occurred to work:

* A lot of jobs are less skilled leading to little job satisfaction.
* Jobs are no longer for life leading to less attachment to jobs.
* Working hours are more flexible and short term.
* Jobs are less secure due to these changes but also globalisation where products can be produced cheaper by migrant workers or in other countries.

As a result, people are no longer attached to their work as a central part of their lives.

**Work doesn’t impact people’s leisure choices**

In 2014 only 60% of the population over the age of 16 was in work and about 27% of these people were in part time work. Therefore there are substantial sections of the population, e.g. the retired, students, housewives/househusbands, the long term sick and disabled and the unemployed, whose identity is not affected by work

Parker was criticised for ignoring the influence of factors other than work in shaping identity and leisure activities, e.g. ethnicity, gender or age. His work is also very deterministic. It assumes leisure patterns are entirely determined by work patterns.

McIntosh and Deem

Feminists like McIntosh and Deem say that Parker doesn’t take into account the way that gender influences leisure and that his research is focused primarily on men in full time employment. They emphasise that women work only part time and their leisure is far more influenced by domestic labour and controlled by men than by paid employment.

Roberts

Roberts adopts a pluralist view of society He sees leisure activities as being largely a matter of choice. He argues there are many different groups in society and one single social division, such as social class, does not dominate people’s identities and leisure choices.

His research suggested there was little connection between people’s work and their leisure activities. Certain leisure pursuits were found in all occupational groups, e.g. watching TV.

Some pursuits were predominantly middle class, e.g. going to the theatre, but they only took up a small proportion of all leisure time and therefore they didn’t have a strong effect on overall patterns of leisure.

Age may also influence people’s leisure choices, e.g. whether they are retired.

**Why Work is Still Significant**

Doherty argues that:

* Work is not as insecure as suggested: long term secure employment has actually been increasing in the UK.
* Part time work is not insecure and my play an important role in balancing work and family or educational commitments.
* There is evidence of **upskilling** where employees are given more training because higher qualifications are needed for work now.
* Many workers in Doherty’s study expressed relatively high levels of work satisfaction, even those whose work might appear routine and monotonous. They still saw work as involving interaction with others and a way to socialise with others outside the family.

Globalisation and Popular Culture

The world is rapidly becoming what McLuhan referred to as a **global village**. This is used to describe how the electronic media collapse space and time barriers in human communication and people from around the world can now interact with one another instantly. This shrinks the world which has become more like one village or community.

Many people are now exposed to the same information through media which cuts across national frontiers. This has also led to a growing globalisation of popular culture.

Popular Culture

This is culture liked and enjoyed by ordinary people.

It is sometimes referred to as mass culture, which refers to culture produced for the mass of ordinary people. Mass culture is highly commercialised, involving mass produced and short lived products, which are seen by many to have no lasting artistic value.

It can also be referred to as low culture, which is a derogatory term used to suggest it is of inferior quality to high culture.

Popular culture is simple, undemanding and easy to understand entertainment.

The mass media are now spreading a common mass culture across the globe.

**Sociological perspectives on popular/mass culture**

Marxists and Neo Marxists, such as the Frankfurt School of Marxists, see mass culture as manufactured products imposed on the masses by global media businesses for profit.

Popular mass culture is a form of social control, giving an illusion of choice when in reality there is just similar dumbed down, trivial infotainment to choose from. This maintains the hegemony of ruling class ideology as consumers are lulled into passivity and conformity, making them less likely to challenge the ruling class.

Strinati (a Postmodernist) rejects these views and doesn’t accept that there is a single mass culture and audience. He argues there is a wide range of choice within popular culture. Livingstone found the writers and producers of TV soap operas saw them as educating and informing the public about important social issues.

High Culture

This is seen as something set apart from everyday life, something special to be treated with respect, involving things of lasting value and part of a heritage which is worth preserving.

High culture products are often found in special places, e.g. art galleries and museums.

They are aimed at mainly upper class and professional middle class audiences.

The Changing Distinction between High Culture and Popular Culture

Postmodernists argue the distinction between high culture and popular culture is weakening. Globalisation and the media have made a huge range of media and cultural products available to everyone. This is combined with a huge expansion in the media based creative and cultural industries, e.g. advertising and publishing, which makes the distinction between high and popular culture meaningless.

These changes enable music, art and other cultural products to be consumed by the mass of people in their own homes without visiting specialised locations. People now have a wide diversity of cultural products available to them and can pick and mix from popular or high culture.

Strinati argues elements of high culture have been incorporated into popular culture and vice versa.

High culture images like Van Gogh’s ‘Sunflowers’ are now reproduced in different ways, e.g. on clothes, chocolates etc. Classical music is used in adverts on TV, whilst literature such as ‘Pride and Prejudice’ are turned into films marketed at the mass of society.

A Global Popular Culture

Flew suggests new media technologies such as satellite TV, has played an important role in the development of a global popular culture. This global culture is primarily American.

Globalisation has undermined national and local cultures as the same cultural products are now sold across the world. This makes cultures more and more alike (cultural homogenization).

The media blur the differences between entertainment, information and advertising of products and sell across the world ideas, values and products associated with a consumerist American/Western lifestyle. This encourages acceptance of the ideas of Western capitalist societies, which is called the **culture-ideology of consumerism.**

As Ritzer shows, companies and brands now operate on a global scale. Companies like Apple etc use the transnational media to promote their products on a global scale and their logos are global brands that are recognises across the world.

Television programmes and video games are sold and distributed globally, whilst some US and British film, music and sports stars are known across the world due to the media. The media have also contributed to English becoming the internationally dominant second language of the world.

The Effects of Globalisation on Popular Culture

**Cultural and media imperialism**

Fenton points out that the term ‘global’ normally disguises the domination of Western culture over cultures. This domination of Western culture has been described as **cocacolonization** which involves **cultural imperialism** or **media imperialism.** This is the suggestion that the media led global culture which emphasises consumerism has led to Western, especially American, media products and cultural values being forced on non-Western cultures.

This can be shown by the fact that nearly all of the 500 top grossing international films of all time outside of the US, are primarily American films.

McChesney and others argue this is a direct result of the increasing concentration of the world’s media companies in the hands of a few American transnational media corporations.

**Impact on folk cultures**

If cultural imperialism is happening then it means **cultural homogenisation** is also happening where cultures around the world become more similar.

Kellner argues that this global popular culture is about sameness and erases individuality. This is partly due to the disappearance of local and national folk cultures.

**Global risk society**

Barber argues one extreme response to American cultural imperialism has been the rise of Islamic fundamentalism. This involves terrorist attacks on US targets as a response to the spread of Western culture.

**Threat to democracy**

Fuchs argues the owners of transnational corporations are able to influence governments in various countries, especially developing nations, which therefore threatens democracy.

Turkle also argues that the spread of global media, e.g. smartphones and social media, has actually reduced community engagement. People are no longer willing to get involved in their communities and would rather stay at home and surf the internet or update their profile on Facebook.

*Criticisms*

Held argues the cultural imperialist argument assumes the flow of culture is one way only: from the West to the developed world. This fails to acknowledge **reverse cultural flows**, where Western culture has been enriched by culture from the developing world.

**The pluralist and postmodernist view**

**Hybridization**

Tomlinson argues globalisation doesn’t involve cultural imperialism but instead **hybridization** where there is mixing of cultures. This promotes hybrid cultures which are a mix of local and Western culture, e.g. Western TV programmes are adapted to suit the tastes of local cultures in other countries (glocalisation).

Because there is more choice and knowledge available than ever before, people are not passive as the Marxists suggest, and it means cultural imperialism isn’t possible as there are so many different choices of culture and media products.

**More choice**

Strinati’s argument about the blurring of high and popular culture can be included here.

Pluralists argue there is no such things as popular/mass culture. There is a huge range of media products which gives consumers a wide range of choice. They argue that globalisation is providing more information rather than less.

Globalisation has helped provide more consumer choices to individuals from which they can create their identities.

Globalisation has also spread the consumption of global logos and brands which are now central to the way people present their identities to others.

**A more media-literate audience**

A **media saturated society** provides more of a range of media content. This provides people with more opinions and has allegedly produced a more critical and participatory global culture.

**Participatory culture and democracy**

Jenkins argues globalisation of the media has created a **global participatory culture** which is where media audiences create media content, e.g. Wikipedia.

Jenkins and other sociologists have argued that global culture and global society have become more democratic because users can produce culture themselves. For example, people use their spare time to create shared global resources.

This also empowers consumers. For example, fans of particular television shows can lobby television networks for the return of cancelled shows. Blogs can also be used to challenge media narratives.

**Politics and protest**

Murthy argues global media sites such as Twitter and Facebook can help increase awareness of issues such as human rights abuses and repression. This means these can be used to coordinate protests against these issues, e.g. the Arab Spring.

Spencer-Thomas argues that anti-government protests in Burma in 1988 failed to receive much global attention because the government banned journalists. However, protests in 2007 received far more global coverage because the Burmese people had access to mobile phones and the internet.

*Criticisms*

It has been argued that globalisation of media and competition between media conglomerates has led to TV news across the world being tabloidized or infotainment with an emphasis on celebrities, crime, corruption and violence. This is accompanied by the promotion of Western consumerist lifestyles. As a result this diverts attention away from other issues resulting in passivity. This supports the Marxist perspective.

Global media has led to less choice with output controlled by a few media conglomerates who produce similar media products. Local media are unable to compete with this and so are absorbed by the conglomerates or go out of business.

Globalisation and Culture and Identity

Globalisation creates a more complex and fluid world and creates more multiple and hybrid identities.

Global Culture

National and local cultures have been undermined and there is a global popular culture where norms and values etc. are similar in numerous different countries. (See notes on global culture)

More Diversity

People now have access to a wide diversity of global media and cultural signs from across the world. This has resulted in more diverse identities. (See Bradley and consumption and identity)

International Tourism

International tourism and cheaper international transport mean people can absorb the cultures of communities from across the world.

The Internet and the International Division of Labour

This enables instant communication and exploration of cultures across the world and the whole world is economically interconnected. These break down the cultural distance between countries.

Global Migration and Diasporas

This means there are more culturally diverse communities. Glocalism means different cultures interact.

Ethnic identity becomes more blurred as new hybrid identities and what Hall called new ethnicities emerge. (See changing ethnic identities)

Glocalisation and National Culture

Glocalism refers to the influence of global features on local cultures and identities. In addition to this materials and media products from different countries are adapted by local communities to meet their own needs. This is known as glocalisation.

Glocalisation changes national cultures causing a blurring of national identities. (See globalisation and declining national identities)

Changing Youth Cultures

Young people are more likely to construct their identities through social media, drawing on global imagery, rather than through established youth subcultures.

Bourn suggest young people are experiencing globalisation on an everyday basis through the friendship groups they develop, especially through their usage of the internet. He points out that they consume, via social media, a vast array of cultural signs drawn from across the globe and are the main targets of global consumer cultures. They are also increasingly targeted with messages concerning global social problems in which they also become the main activities using the global networks of social media.

Culture

Dominant culture

Subculture

Folk culture

Global culture

High culture

Mass culture

Popular culture

Low culture

Values

Norms

Customs

Socialisation

Primary socialisation

Secondary socialisation

Agent of socialisation

Roles

Status

Ascribed status

Achieved status

Identity

Social control

Formal social control

Informal social control

Globalisation

Cultural homogenisation

Structuralism

Value consensus

Social solidarity

Ruling class ideology

Bourgeoisie

Proletariat

False class consciousness

Patriarchy

Social action/interpretivism

Looking glass self

Impression management

Labelling

Self-fulfilling prophecy

Master status

Structuration

Reflexive self

Primary identities

Secondary identities

Passive identity

Active identity

Social identity

Collective identity

Stigmatized identity

Gender

Femininity

Masculinity

Biological determinist

Social constructionist

Instrumental role

Expressive role

Hegemonic identity

Hegemonic femininity

Ladette

Assertive femininity

Hegemonic masculinity

Metrosexuality

Complicit masculinity

Subordinate masculinity

Marginalised masculinity

Crisis of masculinity

Body capital

Laddish masculinity

Manipulation

Canalisation

Verbal appellations

Formal curriculum

Hidden curriculum

Double standards

Glass ceiling

Social class

Objective class identity

Subjective class identity

Social mobility

Habitus

Cultural capital

Social closure

Social capital

Nouveau riche

Conspicuous consumption

Future orientation

Deferred gratification

Present time orientation

Immediate gratification

Fatalism

Collectivism

Privatised lifestyle

Instrumental orientation to work

Underclass

Social exclusion

Cultural comfort zone

Ethnicity

Diaspora

Code switching

Hybridity

White mask

Islamophobia

Ethnocentric

Hypermasculinity

Social construction

Social aids

Learned helplessness

Multiculturalism

Little Englanders

Negative identities

Heteronormativity

Active viewers

Active ageing

Disposable income

Moral panic

Folk devils

Invisible elderly

Transitional stage

Status frustration

Bricolage

Exaggeration

Magic solutions

Malestream

Defensive identity

Neo tribes

Supermarket of style

Opposition to work

Neutrality to work

Extension of work

Anomie

End of work thesis

Metanarratives

Tourist gaze

Media saturated society

Pick and mix

Shopping for identities

Symbolic significance

Do it yourself identity kits