

SOCIOLOGY SHORT CUTS 2

CORE CONCEPTS

Activities And Web Links



Culture
Socialisation
Identity

1. Culture**Activity 1: The Components of Culture**

In the video culture is defined as a 'way of life' specific to a particular society. This Activity is designed to develop this by looking at the application of basic sociological concepts (such as roles, values and norms) that are related to the concept of culture. This can be done in two ways:

1. In small groups, ask your students to identify some of things they think the members of "our society" have in common. If you have already introduced definitions of roles, values and norms ask them to think specifically in these terms, otherwise head-up a white-board / OHT with the following, putting brief definitions under each heading if necessary (for example "a role" is a part we play in life):

- Roles
- Values
- Norms

Ask each group to suggest things we have in common in our culture under each heading. This will start to produce illustrations of the concept of culture that can be developed in part two.

2. You can illustrate how roles, values and norms are related (each role, for example, involves a set of values and norms) and form the basic building blocks of any culture by thinking in terms of the "3Rs" (Relationships, Rules and Responsibilities):

You can do this by asking your students to focus on their school as "a culture" (or subculture if you prefer). In small groups, ask the students to identify:

- The relationships involved in the "school culture" (this will involve identifying various roles – teacher, student, caretaker etc. that make-up the school role set).
- How these relationships are linked – and held together – by various responsibilities (values)
- How these relationships are governed by formal and informal rules (norms).

Activity 2: British Culture

This Activity is aimed at developing students' understanding of culture by asking them to identify some behaviours and beliefs characteristic of 'British culture'. It can be done individually, but it's more fun if you do it as a class. Draw the following table on a whiteboard or flip chart (including, if necessary, the examples to get your students thinking). Give the groups a few minutes to identify examples and then, as a class, add their examples to the chart.

Once completed you will have a set of examples to illustrate what your students believe to be norms and values characteristic of 'British culture'.

Aspect of Culture	Behaviour Typical of 'British Culture'	Typical Beliefs of 'British Culture'
Politics	Legal system – Law-abiding	Fair trial
Family	Marriage / cohabitation	Romantic love
Work	Employer / employee	Work for money
Education	Attending school (5 – 16)	Qualifications important
Media	Watching TV	Private / Public ownership
Religion	Prayer	Christianity / Islam
Science	Medical Surgery	Keeping people alive as long as possible

Activity 3: Every Picture Tells a Story

This Activity can be used to help students understand the concepts of:

Cultural continuities – the fundamental traits that underpin all human behaviour.

Cultural diversities – the different ways people of different cultures develop different ways of behaving.

Split the class into an even number of small groups.

Copy the following two sets of photographs onto an acetate for OHP viewing (or simply provide photocopies for each group).

Some groups should be asked to look for examples of cultural continuities between the two sets, while others are asked to look for examples of cultural diversities.

To guide their observations, ask the students to think about some or all of the following categories:

- Roles
- Values
- Norms
- Socialisation
- identities.

It may be necessary to give your students an example to get them started:

Continuity: In each culture people play male and female roles.

Diversity: Cultural norms governing dress and social interaction are different in each setting.

Online Classroom^{tv}
ACTIVITIES**CORE CONCEPTS****Set 1**

Set 2



2. Socialisation**Activity 1: Instincts**

Sociologists generally favour cultural explanations of human behaviour over genetic / biological explanations and one way to get this idea across to students is to ask them to identify any form of human behaviour they believe is instinctive rather than culturally influenced.

This Activity tests whether or not it's possible to identify human instincts; it's a useful exercise, not simply to test this idea, but also because it can be used to lead into a discussion of learned behaviour and socialisation.

1. Define the concepts of *instinct* and *biological drives* and make sure the students understand how they differ.

2. Head-up a white board (or similar) in the following way:

Behaviour	Instinctive?	Biological Drive?	Culturally Influenced?

3. Ask the students – either as a whole class or in small groups - to identify any form of behaviour they think could conceivably be based exclusively on instinct (for example, eating, sleeping, crime, looking after children...). Write each suggestion in the “Behaviour” column.

When there are no more suggestions discuss with the students the behaviours they have identified and:

a. Tick any behaviour that falls into the “Biological Drive” category (this will include things like breathing, bodily functions, etc.).

b. Tick any behaviour that falls into the “Culturally Influenced” category (that is, any behaviour where we can decide whether or not we do it – this will put paid to things like crime (many people never break the law) and looking after children (many people choose to remain childless, or they employ other people to look after their children)).

Once complete you're likely to find lots of ticks in the culture category, a few ticks in the biological drive category and very few, if any, in the instinct category...

Activity 2. The Socialisation Game

This is a simple board game activity that can be used to illustrate the idea of gender socialisation.

If played as a class, photocopy the game board onto an OHP acetate and project it onto a white board.

Split the class into two groups – males and females.

Each group takes it in turn to role the die and their counter moves around the board accordingly. following the instructions printed on whatever square they finally land on (respective positions on the board can be noted using a marker pen if using an acetate, otherwise team counters will be needed).

The first team to reach the Finish square wins...

Required material:

[Socialisation Game Board.pdf](#)

Activity 3. Agencies of Socialisation

In this Activity students are required to apply concepts like values, norms and sanctions to a number of different agencies of socialisation. If the class is large, divide them into small groups and give each a specific agency to research (**Family**; **Peer group**; **Education**; **Work**; **Media** and **Religion** gives a good spread of agencies). If the class is small, either individually or in pairs, get them to choose an agency. Ask each group to head-up a sheet a sheet of A4 paper (Landscape orientation works best) in the following way:

Agency of Socialisation: [Agency]				
Roles	Values	Norms	Positive Sanctions	Negative Sanctions

Each group should identify, for their chosen agency, examples of the *roles* people play, *values* they might develop, *norms* they're expected to obey and examples of positive and negative sanctions they employ.

Once each group has completed the activity the information can be shared in a range of ways, such as in-class presentations by each group, photocopying and sharing the information each has collected and so forth.

3. Identity**Activity 1: Who am I?**

The main objective of this activity is to demonstrate how social and personal identities are linked by showing how students draw on a range of the former as a means of expressing the latter. This Activity is excellent in helping students to understand:

- how we construct identities
- the relationship between social structures (in the shape of social identities) and social actions (in the shape of personal identities).
- how even what we think of as our 'individuality' arises from membership of social groups and social relationships

Begin by asking students to construct a picture of their own identity. Ask them to write down 10 things about themselves.

Most students will invariably draw on a range of cultural factors (age, gender, class, region, and ethnicity), physical features and things that describe their individuality, such as easy going, loud, lazy and so on.

Remind students of the distinction between social and personal identity that was made in the video (or show them the relevant section) and invite individual students to explain to the class 'Who they are' by:

- listing the things that contribute to their sense of identity.
- explaining why they choose each of these things.
- distinguishing between their social and personal identities.

Once completed this can be used to lead into a class discussion about the relationship between personal and social identities and what this tells us about the relationship between the individuals and societies.

Activity 2. Gender Socialisation and Identities.

In the previous activity it's highly likely that, as in the video, most students will have referred to gender as a major source of their personal identity and this activity builds on this recognition to explore the idea of gender socialisation and difference and the role of culture in shaping gender identities. It also helps to establish synoptic links with two other popular A-level topics, education and deviance (as well as, a little more abstrusely, Stratification and Differentiation in terms of something like different life chances).

Give your students a copy of the following report (or copy it to acetate and display for the whole class) to read:

Gender stereotypes still hamper young

Will Woodward: The Guardian, 20/09/2000

"Adolescents are still unable to shake off gender stereotypes that appear as entrenched as ever...Inside, outside and beyond school, young men and women are under continuing pressure to conform to traditional behaviour.

At school, women avoid physics and information technology and choose English, biology, history and modern languages. "Young women find it easier to ask for help than young men, who find it harder to admit a lack of knowledge," the report, "Young People and Gender" says. Boys are more likely to break the law - a gap which extends after the age of 14 - or be involved in crime, alcohol abuse and illegal drugs.

Girls, who are more likely to be concerned about their body image and weight, are much more likely to start smoking. Suicide rates are higher for men and double the number of boys die at 17. Boys are less likely to visit their GP or to use other health services. Girls are more at risk of depression, eating disorders and self-harm.

Boys "take greater risks and feel greater pressure" to be sexually active and find it harder to admit inexperience. But "in spite of the notion of 'girl power', young women still find it problematic to say no to sex and negotiate the use of contraception".

At work, young men are more likely to want managerial or professional jobs - 75% compared with 25% for women, who are concentrated in personal service industries with part-time jobs and lower wages. "The need to conform to masculine stereotypes prevents young men from joining traditionally female careers." Although more young men are officially unemployed, a large group of young women remains outside employment, education and training opportunities because of caring responsibilities."

The article can be used as the basis for a discussion of gender stereotyping in any, or all, of *three* ways:

1. Ask students to individually write down five ways in which they think their life would have been different if they had been born a boy rather than a girl and *vice versa*.

Next, ask your students which of these differences they think are primarily due to biological causes (e.g. males are stronger, women bear children) and which are due to cultural causes (e.g. expectations about appearance, educational and work opportunities and so forth).

Ask a selection of students to volunteer their answers to the rest of the class and briefly discuss the implications of these answers – what, for example, does this tell us about the relationship between biology (the sex we are born as) and culture (how social identities shape the way we see gender and personal identities)?

2. *Either* ask your students to individually write short answers to the following questions *or* use them as the basis for a discussion about gender:

a. Are there “masculine” and “feminine” stereotypes in adult society (and if so what sort of “traditional behaviours” do they involve?).

b. Why do boys and girls still prefer different subjects at school (do you have any personal experience of pressure to take or reject certain subjects)?

c. Why are boys are more likely to break the law?

d. Why are girls more concerned about their body image and weight?

e. Are there different pressures placed on boys and girls (from whom?) concerning sex and sexuality?

3. Finally, ask your students, in small groups or as a class, to consider how gender identities might have changed since their parents were young. This will help them to reflect on the way social changes (such as globalisation) have impacted on changing gender socialisation and identities.

Activity 3. Personal Identities

Ask your students to select one aspect of their personal identity from the list they created in Activity 1 and then ask them to:

- identify *why* they see this trait as part of their identity.
- volunteer some possible reasons to the class as to *how* they came to have this view of themselves. This will usually lead to identifying the role of others in the process of identity formation (for example, making comparisons with others, being defined by others etc.).
- recall and describe situations in which their personal identity (or some aspect of that identity) was confirmed or contradicted by the reactions or responses of others towards them.

In our experience students enjoy this Activity. It's an excellent way of illustrating how even the views they have of themselves as distinct individuals are shaped by social relationships and, talking about themselves and their own experiences helps to make the abstract concept of identity more real to them.

Web Links**1. Culture**

<http://www.gpwu.ac.jp/~biddle/>

This site contains a range of notes on various aspects of British culture and includes some interesting and thought-provoking comparisons with Japanese culture (the author currently teaches in Japan).

<http://www.delmar.edu/socsci/rlong/intro/culture.htm>

Introductory lecture notes that identify and explain a number of key concepts related to culture.

<http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/classics/culture/questions.htm>

A range of “culture questions” (on areas like family life, roles, history and traditions) that teachers can adapt and use as and how they see fit in the classroom – perhaps as the basis for discussion or as part of written exercises. The material includes brief answers to the suggested questions.

2. Socialisation

<http://www.feralchildren.com/en/index.php>

If you want to explore the idea of feral children further this site has a huge database of examples.

<http://core.ecu.edu/soci/juskaa/SOCI2110/soci1.htm>

This site has an extensive range of online PowerPoint slides (in the “Lecture Notes” section) covering a number of concepts and theorists related to culture and socialisation.

<http://www.delmar.edu/socsci/rlong/intro/social.htm>

Introductory lecture notes that identify and explain a number of key concepts related to socialisation.

3. Identity

http://elt.britcoun.org.pl/elt/i_index.htm

A wide range of facts, figures, notes, quizzes and articles on aspects of English and British identity.

http://www.virtualartroom.com/cultural_ID.htm

This site suggests how students can explore their cultural and personal identities through a mixed media project.

<http://www.philosophersnet.com/games/identity.htm>

The Personal Identity game where “The aim of the game is to stay alive!”.

