

Key concepts and processes of

cultural transmission

REVISION



Key words

Norms are the unwritten rules which guide how we behave. E.g. eating with a knife and fork, covering your mouth when you cough, putting large amounts of money in a bank.

Values are the things that people see as important in life and often shape norms.

e.g. politeness, working hard, cleanliness, wanting to be rich and successful are all values.

Socialisation means learning to be a member of society. A baby has to learn all the norms, values, customs, language, beliefs etc. of its society.

Culture and behaviour—Culture helps to shape the way that people act. Culture is like a way of life. It includes norms, values, beliefs, language, customs, traditions, dress etc. These all shape our behaviour. E.g. In Britain people traditionally get married and have children in their 20's or 30's. Therefore, people feel a pressure from society to do these things at that time. This has been changing and some people may now delay or never get married and/or have children.

Nature versus Nurture debate, is about how far our behaviour is decided by nature or nurture. Nature means that our behaviour is natural (we are born that way) and Nurture means that we learn to be a certain way through socialisation.

If David Beckham's son Brooklyn becomes good at football, is it because of nature. He has the same genes as his father. Therefore, you could say it was Nature.

On the other hand Brooklyn was encouraged and taught to be good at football. So was his dad by his dad who was a good footballer. Therefore, it could be Nature.

Instinct and evolution may also cause humans to behave in certain ways according to Nature theory.

FERAL CHILDREN—Children who are unsocialised and haven't learned their culture or norms.

Two examples are HORST the puppy boy who was found in a flat in the 1980's being neglected by his parents and brought up.

The other well-known one is Genie, a young girl who was neglected by her parents and never learned to live normally.

Stereotyping is when people have a fixed, exaggerated view of a group of people. E.g., Italians make great lovers, All French people wear onions around their neck. Whist stereotypes can be funny we must be aware that they can be dangerous as in the case of Hitler and the Jews,

Agencies of socialisation refers to the institutions that help to socialise us. E.g. Family, Education, Religion, Mass Media, Work.

Deviance = Actions which breaks social norms and values. Remember that deviance changes over time and from place to place e.g. homosexuality, smoking, drinking alcohol in some Muslim countries is forbidden.

CULTURE AND CULTURAL VARIATIONS

Different cultures have different norms, values, beliefs, traditions, dress and language. E.g. Aborigines believe that the land is sacred and will not plough the land. In 1950's Britain homosexuality was illegal and now it is tolerated much more widely. Women in the 19th Century could not vote and were dominated by men. Today's women may vote and have much more equal rights, we have even had a female prime

minister.

VARIATIONS IN GENDER PATTERNS

Anthropologists study human societies often first hand. **Margaret Mead** found three tribes in New Guinea. In the **Arapesh** tribe both sexes are gentle, passive and what we would see as feminine. Even men are described as giving birth!!

The **Mundugumor** tribe are very different. Both sexes are like our idea of men. Both boys and girls are hostile and independent.

In the third tribe, the **Tchambuli**, both sexes are very different. Women are practical, bossy and in control of the household. Men like to gossip, wear lovely ornaments, shop, paint and dance!!

This shows how cultures vary and gender roles vary.

Sociologists say that **gender roles are socially constructed**. They are made up by society.

WHY DO SOCIOLOGISTS BELIEVE IN NURTURE IS THE STRONGEST INFLUENCE ON BEHAVIOUR?

- 1) Feral children are the proof that without nurture humans would not become part of society at all.
- 2) Margaret Mead's study proves that gender roles are shaped by society. Nurture is most important.
- 3) In human history humans have behaved in many different ways. E.g. Women's roles in Victorian England are very different to today.

CULTURAL RELATIVISM.

This means that cultures need to be understood in their own terms. Norms and values are different and we should not judge others as being better or worse. E.g. In medieval England girls as young as 12 would be married. We would now see this as child abuse. Medieval people were not wrong but their norms and values were different. There have been other societies who have done similar things.

CULTURAL UNIVERSALS



This is the ideas that there are some things which are found in all human societies e.g. all societies have language, religion, property, and incest is seen as wrong. Even this covers massive differences. In ancient Egypt Pharaohs were seen as Gods and could not marry ordinary people, so had to marry close relatives, such as sisters!!

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

This is about the huge differences in human cultures. The differences are amazing even in something as basic as food. Look at all the different styles, ways of eating and tastes. Clothing also has incredible differences over time and from place to place.

SOCIALISATION.

PRIMARY SOCIALISATION takes place in the family.

SECONDARY SOCIALISATION takes place outside the family and is



done by **agencies of socialisation**, such as family, school,



peers, religion

and the **mass media**.



Children who are not socialised may never become fully human. There

are case studies of people living with wild animals called **feral children** who are **unsocialised**. They find it difficult to ever learn human language and how to get on with others.

AGENCIES OF SOCIALISATION

FAMILY—The, most important for the first few years. Children copy adults and older brothers and sisters. Adults also guide children and encourage them to play with certain toys. They will smile and encourage good behaviour and tell children off for bad behaviour.

PEER GROUP—Outside of the home the peer group can be important and as children get older the peer group may influence them even more. The peer group can reward and punish its members. Children who do not follow the peer group may be left out. The peer group can be a very important part of someone's identity.

EDUCATION—In Britain all children receive secondary education. School teaches many skills and knowledge. Schools also teach the **Hidden Curriculum**. This includes doing as you are told, getting on with others and learning right from wrong. Until the 1970's schools tended to



teach girls and boys in very different ways and girls were encouraged to study subjects that fitted what were seen as **feminine roles** and careers e.g. domestic science, needle work.

Believe it or not the school you went to can shape your identity.

MEDIA— People spend many hours watching TV, reading books and magazines, listening to radio, playing computer games and going on the internet. This may influence young people to copy what they see. People copy celebrities who are **role models**.



Some sociologists believe that people use the media in a much more clever way now. They are able to decide what to believe and use the media in different ways.

When Jamie Bulger was murdered the media said that the boys who killed him had been influenced by a horror film called Child's Play. Later this was said not to be true adults and older brothers and sisters. Adults also guide children and



encourage them to play with certain toys. They will smile and encourage good behaviour and tell children off for bad behaviour. Family can have a great effect on a person's identity.

REGION refers to the part of the country a person comes from. E.g. whether you come from the north or the south may influence the way you dress, speak and act. Being a Scouser, Geordie, Black Country, Brummie or Cockney may be an important part of your identity.

HOW IS IDENTITY DECIDED?

A person's identity may be decided by many things. We have already mentioned Nation, and Region. Also important are the following:

STATUS is to do with how important a person's position in society is. E.g. A judge has a higher status than a refuse collector and a doctor higher than that of a nurse. A person's status will affect their identity.

Ascribed status is a position you were born into . E.g. Queen or father.

Achieved Status is a position that has been earned. E.g. Doctor, lawyer.

ROLES are the sets of norms that go with a person's **STATUS** or



position in society, e.g. There are a set of norms that go with being a teacher, father, police officer, judge, footballer. A person's role will have a strong effect on their identity.

LABELLING is when a person gets a label attached to them like being clever, naughty, a criminal or a liar. These can be good or bad but may have an effect on people's behaviour and how they see themselves.

STEREOTYPES can also affect people's behaviour and identity. They are similar to labels and can be harmful. E.g. the police who investigated Stephen Lawrence's murder saw black young men as troublemakers or gangsters. This is an example of a stereotype being very harmful.

Gender also has an effect on people's identity. They may be stereotyped and expected to do traditional girls and boys roles. E.g. Ben on Eastenders was not expected to like dancing by Phil, his father, who is a very traditional male character. The film Billy Elliott also explores this idea.

SOCIAL CONTROL

In society we have written rules of behaviour (laws) and unwritten rules of behaviour which includes norms. Values, morals and societies expectations have power over individuals and stop them breaking the rules.

Social control means the ways in which society makes sure that society follows its norms, rules and laws. **Informal social control** happens through the agencies of social control (**family, peer groups, education, religion, work, mass media**).

People who do not conform may be sanctioned. **Sanctions** include being ignored, dirty looks, sarcastic comments, being sacked, detentions, tellings off, exclusion.

Informal social control works so well that most people do not think about it. People who break the rules are seen as deviant. They may suffer sanctions like those above.

At worst they may have a **stigma** attached to them. **Stigma** means that society strongly disapproves of a person's actions or beliefs. Stigma is like a **negative label** that is very hard to shift. E.g. a paedophile would suffer from stigma because their actions are so strongly disapproved of. Being a murderer would be the same but there are less severe kinds of stigma which may be to do with a person's identity, such as being disabled or being from a particular ethnic group.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IpHcTGXy76I>

Useful clip on Deviance and Social Control

Example questions

There are no Skill 3 – Evaluation question on this topic.

Describe what is meant by culture. (2 marks)

Explain what social norms are. (2 marks)

Give an example of a feral child. (1 mark)

Explain why the family is the most important part of socialisation. (4 marks)

Outline the nature-nurture debate. (5 marks)

Explain the term identity (4 marks)

Explain why sociologists believe nurture is the most important influence on behaviour. (4 marks)

Identify two examples of cultural diversity in the UK. (2 marks)

