

Candidate 3 evidence

6. Using one structural and one action theory, analyse the way culture is formed.

In your answer you must:

- use one structural and one action theory
- use at least one sociological study of your choice
- link your chosen theories to your chosen study.

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Culture describes the set of norms and values which a group of people in society agree is the shared way of life. This includes music, food, and clothing.

We learn about culture through socialisation for instance in schools we often learn about our cultural traditions e.g. Scottish country Dancing and history, even national symbols such as tartan.

Diversity is the idea that all groups in society are represented equally in all aspects of culture such as films, books and other media.

The UK is a culturally diverse society however, some ethnic groups and women are not equally represented in our culture throughout the UK. Some groups can be under or miss represented in many aspects of culture such as the media where a huge portion of TV presenters are white males

Marxists claim that culture is created by the bourgeoisie as they are the dominant group in society. This is because they say that the bourgeoisie controls the economy and therefore controls the institutions of society and can put forward their cultural ideology. E.g. through the media Marxists claim that the bourgeoisie decide what is and what is not high culture. High culture is defined as a set of cultural activities which are given higher status in society; this may include activities such as opera and classical music concerts which are activities mostly enjoyed by bourgeoisie. Low culture can be defined as the culture of the proletariat and is looked down upon by the upper class. For example, activities such as karaoke and football. Cultural institutions such as the media are owned and controlled by the bourgeoisie and therefore the content is defined by them. This allows the bourgeoisie to justify their control of society. For example, The Sutton Trust have indicated that over half of leading journalists in the UK are privately educated, a significant overrepresentation compared to the general population. A 2025 survey of UK journalists found that 22% of respondents attended a fee-paying secondary school.

A strength of this theory is that it links the economy and culture for instance Marxists point out the focus on consumer goods in capitalist societies helps to maintain false consciousness. This is because many workers feel their status is enhanced by the consumer goods they own eg a certain model of car or branded

trainers etc. The proletariat are therefore doubly exploited as a worker then as a consumer buying things they don't need.

A weakness of this theory is the notion of the proletariat as a group who accept everything they're told and lack agency to question the Bourgeoisie.

Symbolic Interactionism claims that culture is made through out interactions with others. Firstly our significant others and then the generalised other. The formation of culture according to SI is also influenced by the socialisation processes. Socialisation refers to the lifelong learning process through which individuals acquire cultural knowledge, values, and norms. SI highlight the role of significant others, such as families and later generalised others such as media in shaping an individual's cultural understanding. Through daily interactions, individuals internalise cultural expectations and learn appropriate behaviours.

It is through these interactions we build shared cultural norms as we store cultural knowledge for instance we associate red for danger and thumbs up for good.

SI put great store on symbols, and we learn about our own culture through these. Cultural symbols include tartan and thistles in Scotland.

One weakness of SI view of culture is that it is not good at explaining the power of some groups to impose meanings on symbols or to interpret interactions. Hence, feminists would claim that SI ignore the power men have in defining culture e.g. representations of beauty in art and m over time have been decided by men.

A study that backs up the SI view on culture is Cohen's study, 'Folk Devils and Moral Panics'. Cohen found Media exaggerated the extent of the 'trouble' between the Mods and Rockers, for instance *Newspapers described the mod and rocker clashes as being of "disastrous proportions", and labelled mods and rockers as "sawdust Caesars", "vermin" and "louts"*.

Cohen claimed that media, police, courts and even government created a moral panic about the Mods and Rockers and made the young people into folk devils by exaggerating and misreporting what actually happened on the bank holiday weekends.

One strength of this study is that it demonstrates clearly what the response of moral entrepreneurs such as media can have on demonising a group, in this case Mods and Rockers. However, this study is relevant today for instance the current media demonisation of immigrants and refugees, who are represented as folk devils.

One weakness of this study is that it does not address the issue of power. Marxists for instance would criticise this study as it ignores the ownership and control of institutions such as media and politics.