

## **SOCIOLOGY SHORT CUTS 2**

# **CORE CONCEPTS**

### **Activities And Web Links**



**Culture**

## 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:

- 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* – different ways of behaving in different cultures.

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.

Set 1: Aspects of British Culture



Set 2: Aspects of Tribal Culture, New Guinea



## 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.

