

1. Outline and explain two ways subcultures are shaped by an individual's social class [10]

One way in which an individual's social class may shape subcultural formations is through socialisation. The process of primary socialisation shapes individuals through the family and this leads to children adopting the norms and values of their family's social class. This is often reinforced through secondary socialisation, such as education, where an individual's tastes and attitudes are either approved of by the education system or rejected. Archer argued that the rejection of the working-class habitus, particularly with respect to the way they were dressed in schools, leads to a form of symbolic violence against young working-class pupils. This reinforces ideas that education does not accept them, and this leads to the formation of working-class subcultures, where status is awarded to individuals on the basis of conforming to the cultural tastes of the group. For example, wearing branded sportswear or developing a hyper-heterosexual identity. This leads to the reproduction of working-class subcultures from one generation to the next.

A second way the subcultures are shaped by an individual's social class is through resocialisation. This is the process of learning alternative norms and values to those already learnt. Whilst the family provides primary socialisation – usually into the norms and values of their social class, those who gain social mobility through education and gain higher status employment undergo the process of resocialisation. For example, working-class students who have achieved in education, may go on to study at university and qualify to work in one of the established professions, such as law or medicine. As the norms and values of these professions are different to those of the working-class (and mainstream society) they will adopt new norms and values to fit into their new role in society. For professional classes, this may be through the language they use in the workplace, the events they attend or the cultural knowledge they acquire through association with others within the professional subculture. The process of social mobility is reliant upon resocialisation from one social class habitus to another in order for the individual to succeed.

Item A

Different sociological perspectives argue over how identity is formed. Whilst some suggest that structural factors shape our identity, others argue that identity is socially constructed based upon our understanding of society.

2. Applying material from item A, analyse two explanations for the formation of identity [10]

One explanation of identity formation is based upon how individuals are influenced by 'structural factors' (Item A). Structural factors, such as social class or gender can influence an individual's identity formation according to conflict theorists, such as Marxists and feminists. For example, Charlesworth argue that social class influences an individual's identity formation as the working-class see themselves involved in a struggle between themselves and those with more financial capital and access to power. This develops into an 'us and them' mentality which becomes part of an individual's identity. Furthermore, Lawler argues the middle-class identity is formed through claiming a sense of superiority over working-class cultures, seeing it as derivative and distancing themselves from the activities of the working-class. As a result, they develop an identity that is more in line with the upper classes to ensure that they do not find themselves labelled as lower-class by others in the middle-classes.

A second explanation for the formation of identity is that identity is 'socially constructed'. Interactionists argue that people make sense of their own self and define their own identity through the social interactions that they have with others. One of the earliest sociologists to suggest this was Cooley, who argued that individuals gain a sense of their identity through their perceptions of how others see them. As a result, their identity is formed through the actions and reactions people around them display when the person behaves in a particular manner. Furthermore, Goffman argued that people construct their identities based upon social contexts, taking on different roles in different social situations. For example, individuals may play one role at home, such as a father or a partner, whereas in the workplace they may take on a different role such as a manager or an employee. This demonstrate how social contexts help form individual's identities.