

Why is the term 'british culture' controversial



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This essay will critically comment on how and why the term ' British Culture' is controversial. The beginning of this essay will define culture; explain why it is said that culture has many different inner related meanings, what factors contribute to a culture and how one is formed.

Moving on from that by commenting on the difference in primary and secondary socialization and what variables can determine the social groups or identities individuals take on. The essay will then move towards explaining the different components of culture, such as wealth, language and social norms. Following on from this it will explain how influences such as immigration and ethnicity have contributed to the ever evolving term ' British Culture'. The discussion will then progress on to compare the values and attitudes, towards immigration, ethnicity, subculture and counter culture. Throughout the essay there will be reference to religion and how it is a key factor in the culture of Britain and how ethnocentrism can influence a culture. Also, supported arguments with evidence on how there is not just one culture as a whole but an amalgamation of attitudes, values and goals that characterize Britain, which in turn make the term ' British Culture' controversial.

Culture may be taken as constituting the ' way of life' of an entire society, and this will include codes of manners, dress, language, rituals, norms of behaviour and systems of belief. (Jary and Jary, 1991: 138) Culture is a behaviour that is learnt by humans, and is entirely dependant upon the beliefs and behaviours of those in direct contact with each other. To have a ' British Culture' as a whole would be extremely difficult given the variables that have to be considered. Culture is not an instinctive reflex of a child it is

dependant on the environment it is raised in, it is through cultural determinism rather than biological determinism that culture is learnt. A Culture is formed by a group of individuals that follow the same social norms, beliefs and attitudes towards society.

Cultures can sometimes be distinguished by language, race or dress. Some believe there is just one culture that defines a country, when in reality there are many subcultures that combine to make ' British Culture'. Individuals from other countries with very opposing cultures to that of the British may view British Culture differently, to those who live in Britain and are a part of its ' Culture'. Socialization is the way in which we learn the dynamics of the society that we live in, the way we learn how to behave to be socially accepted in our environment. There are two types in which people learn this; Primary socialisation and secondary socialisation.

Primary socialisation is the way in which people learn how to behave through their parents, family and those in consistent direct contact with the child in the very early stages of its life. In childhood, it will respond to the approval or disapproval of these influential figures copying their examples. This is a key time in which children learn language and basic patterns of society. Many see this as the foundations that are necessary for all later learning. This stage is vital to enable people to understand society until a time they are mature enough to understand and make their own judgements. What is learnt in primary socialisation usually sticks with the child throughout life and this may or may not always be a good thing.

For example, if a family bring their child up to discriminate against a certain race this stigma can be carried through to adulthood. Those who do not receive primary socialisation do not usually accept cultures norms and values and are typically likely to become feral and uncultivated. Secondary socialisation takes place around the time a child is attending school, learning new things from not only an academic perspective but also a social perspective too. How the child interacts with other pupils, what behaviour they see they imitate to be accepted into groups within the playground and/or classroom. Children at this point will be learning a range of social skills and will gain a more details understanding of society outside the norms of the family. The acceptance of friends and peer groups takes over the needs of being accepted at home, and things that may have been learnt in Primary socialisation can be overwritten during adolescence.

This socialisation will continue outside of the education system with friends and people they come into contact with in all social situations; Youth clubs, Social networking and activities such as clubbing. This usually continues into their early 20's around the time individual is leaving the education system and has enough experience and knowledge to form their own opinion and feel accepted in the social group they are a part of. This learning will continue every time they learn something new, meet new people or experience new things. So, essentially, human beings are being socialised into their society, learning new things about it, until the day they die. When these types of socialisation are applied to Britain there are essential things to consider. Primary socialisation is something the environment that a child

are raised in barley influences, but in Secondary socialisation the class of a family be it working class or upper class will affect this dramatically.

If the child goes to a private school the children they will interact with may very well have been primarily socialised with the same beliefs, code of manner, dress, and language as its peers, therefore a younger culture is already being formed. Those that go to a public school where different races attend, different classes of people, people who have not necessarily been raised in the same area have much more socially diverse knowledge. The components of culture are what identify a culture, things such as symbols of culture, language, attitudes, values, beliefs, religion, and norms attach and in some cases stereotype individuals to a culture. Symbols of culture are things such as the cars people drive, and the houses they live in, people that belong to a particular culture that of wealth and high education may want to show they have nice things and show a very materialistic view to society. Using this example in language; they will speak very proper, very well spoken also another way of showing the culture or 'group' they belong to. Their values and beliefs may be that of a conservative, who doesn't believe in welfare for the less fortunate and they may have a very strict attitude on who and where they socialise, their norms maybe to work a 60 hours week in the office, and play golf on the weekends with those who are a part of their social group.

This is a very stereotypical example but demonstrates that culture can be identified by a number of variables. Language is very subjective when related to culture, because this does not necessarily enable people to identify a culture, but the language used within the culture itself is what

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makes it different. There are many different dialects within Britain. Most commonly known and attached to a 'culture' is Cockney Rhyming Slag, originating from the poorer, lower class Londoners.

This thick heavy accent, made up of rhyming words identified a culture of working class men and women living in the council estates of east London around the time of the industrial revolution. When looking at norms of a culture, these are activities and routine actions carried out. These are more noticeable in subcultures. The younger generation in Britain are seen to be loud, binge drinking youths.

This is due to a norm of this generation being to go out at the weekend and socialise with friends. A culture is continually reinvesting its self in line with society, through the processes of modernity, societies have expanded and grown in size and the modern societies we see in the world today are culturally diverse. Subcultures are a part of every culture as a whole, people may have a view of what British Culture is when in fact each area, town, city, age group or race may have their own network of subcultures that are combined to make what people believe is 'British Culture'. A subculture is a group who do not follow the same norms and values as the majority. There still British culturally but many subcultures combine to make a culture as a whole.

Subcultures consist of people whose experiences have led them to have distinctive ways of looking at life. An example could be university subculture, which could be the subculture of going out and socialising on weeknights known sub culturally as 'Student Nights' this is a young culture where the

views and norms are very different from those who work full time. There are also some ethnic groups that form subcultures their norms distinguish them from the mainstream, so might their religion, language and clothing. In some cities, we tend to see concentrations of particular national or ethnic groups in particular areas, for example, Birmingham is a very culturally diverse city because subculture thrives alongside the mainstream. There are hundreds of Asian subcultures as there is a very large Asian community. As there are many different types of subcultures they all blend into the main stream.

The recent riots in London are a result of counter culture, counter culture is specifically opposing to the majority culture, by having opposing norms and values. Crime is very common in counter culture as they tend to lack inclusion within the wider community. Therefore, it is easier to pit themselves against it and live at the margins of society. Counter culture is specifically seen the London riots, by the way in which it was promoted, through social networking. Counter cultures communicated with one another to attack the streets, homes and shops of London. The riots spread to Manchester, Birmingham and Bristol.

This shows that it is a social movement, not just people making the decision to steal because the opportunity is there. In places like Birmingham, counter cultures of gangs hit the streets specifically targeting shops, breaking and entering to steal the goods inside. Some members of counter culture believe that the way of life living within the counter culture is easier in their environment than following the culture of the majority. It is hard to understand a culture, or to judge whether the values and norms of a culture are socially acceptable.

This is because of ethnocentrism; this is where people judge others culture based on the beliefs and values of their own. It is problematic as it is hard to be non-bias when looking at someone else's behaviour and subconsciously comparing it to that of your own. Cultural relativism is what sociologists use to take themselves, their own belief and views out of perspective when looking at other cultures they do this by understanding that beliefs are relative to a particular society and are not comparable between societies. British culture has many sub cultures and counter cultures that run alongside the mainstream and in some cases combine to make the majority culture. British culture is controversial because it is not just one view, one value or norm that everyone follows.

Britain is not a dictatorship, it is a free country. Where everyone believes they have their own rights, freedom of speech and are individual.. Britain is not just home to English residents, it is very ethnically diverse which brings about new cultures and influences that help it to grow and develop. The younger generation have been more educated in the beliefs of Muslims, the norms of the polish, the values of the Asian community.

Culture in Britain can be relative to secondary socialisation, just as humans continue to gain knowledge and adapt their own identity, British culture does this also.