Discuss Cultural Influences on Gender (8+16)-

There has been research into how cultural influences play a role in gender, for example Wood and Eagly used data from thousands of various types of cultures and coded them using content analysis to discover any similarities or differences in gender role activities performed by men and women. The data was gathered using an ethnographic approach which is the systematic study of people ad cultures from the point of view of the subject. They found that across various non-industrialised cultures men generally contributed more than women to providing food and women contributed more to child care, especially in infancy. This supports that there are differences between genders in non-industrialised cultures and they were shown to support their traditional gender roles. However Wood and Eagly’s research can be said to also have methodological issues, as a non-experimental method of an observation was carried out, which can lead to subjectivity and researcher bias thus affecting the internal validity of how cultural influences may affect gender, weakening the support for the theory.

There has been supporting evidence into how culture affects gender roles as Margaret Mead used an ethnographic approach to study cultures which involved her immersing herself within a culture, conducting participant observation and interviews. In 1935 she described the cultures of three different pre-industrialised societies in New Guinea: The Arapesh, the Munduumor and the Tchambuli tribe. Mead found that in the Tchambuli tribe, women were dominant and men were less responsible and more emotionally dependent, in the Arapesh tribe both males and females were gentle and cooperative and in the Mundugumes tribe both males and females were violent and aggressive. This research by Mead supports that culture plays an important part in an individual’s gender, as typical characteristics of a gender were reversed, suggesting that gender and the typical characteristics and stereotypes that are associated with each gender vary between cultures, thus showing that nurture may play more of an important role than nature. However there has been research that contradicts Mead’s findings as Gewertz observed the Tchambuli in the 1970’s and found that males were more aggressive than females, and thus argues that Mead studied these tribes when they were facing a change in their lifestyle and were forced to behave differently from normal – more aggressive than normal. This shows the importance of considering the context of a cultures situation when observing their behaviour. Gewertz’s re-test of Mead’s study found different results, which affects the reliability as there were not consistent findings meaning that Mead’s findings is considerably weakened which lessens the credibility of how cultural influences affects gender. Good!

Meads research has also been criticised for observer bias and cultural bias. This is because she may have over-emphasised the role of nurture over nature because of her own beliefs and theories, thus she may not have been objective. This belief that she held was a reflection of the beliefs held by her own culture at the time, hence she is culturally biased and ethnocentric, and since she imposed the beliefs of her culture on the way she interpreted the behaviour on another culture. This shows that cultural bias is an issue with the research into cultural influences on gender as it shows how difficult it is not to let our own cultural biases influence the way we record and interpret behaviour from a culture that we are unfamiliar with. This raises the question as to whether psychology can ever be totally free of cultural bias thus decreasing the validity of cultural research and lessening the theory. Excellent!

Cultural research into gender is said to only emphasise the role of nurture in how an individual’s culture can alter their typical gender role behaviour, thus it can be seen as supporting a reductionist view. This means that we are able to gain a deeper understanding into how culture influences gender roles as it is only focusing on a simple part. However it fails to consider how nature and biological factors such as genes and hormones may also play an important part in influencing an individual’s gender and their behaviour. This is a negative as biological factors has been seen to be majorly influential such as the case study of David Reimer in which his biological male gender was still largely apparent even after 14 years of being socialised into a female gender role.

**7 + 12 = 19/24**

* **Try to use all the studies for this topic, 2 in detail and 2 in less detail will be fine.**
* **Rethink the last paragraph**