

# Socialization

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Human infants are born without any culture. They must be transformed by their parents, teachers, and others into cultural and socially adept animals. The general process of acquiring culture is referred to as **socialization**. During socialization, we learn the language of the culture we are born into as well as the roles we are to play in life. For instance, girls learn how to be daughters, sisters, friends, wives, and mothers. In addition, they learn about the occupational roles that their society has in store for them. We also learn and usually adopt our culture's norms through the socialization process.

Every man tries to adjust himself to the condition and environment predominantly determined by the society of which he is a member. If he fails to do so, he becomes a social defiant and is brought back into line by the efforts of the group of which he is a member. This process of adjustment may be termed socialization.

Different sociologists have defined socialization in different ways.

According to **E.S. Bogardus** “Socialization is the process of working together, of developing group responsibility or being guided by the welfare needs of others”,

**W.F. Ogburn** defines “Socialization is the process by which the individual learns to conform to the norms of the group.”

**Lundberg** says that “Socialization consists of the complex processes of interaction through which the individual learns the habits, beliefs, skills and standards of judgment that are necessary for his effective participation in social groups and communities.”

**A.W. Green** opines, “Socialization is the process by which the child acquires a cultural content, along with selfhood and personality”.

According to **Horton and Hunt** “Socialization is the process by which one internalizes the norms of his groups, so that a distinct “self” emerges, unique to this individual.

Socialization is important in the process of personality formation. While much of human personality is the result of our genes, the socialization process can mould it in particular directions by encouraging specific beliefs and attitudes as well as selectively providing experiences. This very likely accounts for much of the difference between the common personality types in one society in comparison to another. For instance, the Semai tribesmen of the central Malay Peninsula of Malaysia typically are gentle people who do not like violent, aggressive individuals. In fact, they avoid them whenever possible. In contrast, the Yanomamö Indians on the border area between Venezuela and Brazil usually train their boys to be tough and aggressive. The ideal Yanomamö man does not shrink

from violence and strong emotions. In fact, he seeks them out. Likewise, Shiite Muslim men of Iran are expected at times to publicly express their religious faith through the emotionally powerful act of self-inflicted pain.

Successful socialization can result in uniformity within a society. If all children receive the same socialization, it is likely that they will share the same beliefs and expectations. This fact has been a strong motivation for national governments around the world to standardize education and make it compulsory for all children. Deciding what things will be taught and how they are taught is a powerful political tool for controlling people. Those who internalize the norms of society are less likely to break the law or to want radical social changes. In all societies, however, there are individuals who do not conform to culturally defined standards of normalcy because they were "abnormally" socialized, which is to say that they have not internalized the norms of society. These people are usually labelled by their society as deviant or even mentally ill. Socialization is a learning process that begins shortly after birth. Early childhood is the period of the most intense and the most crucial socialization. It is then that we acquire language and learn the fundamentals of our culture. It is also when much of our personality takes shape. However, we continue to be socialized throughout our lives. As we age, we enter new statuses and need to learn the appropriate roles for them. We also have experiences that teach us lessons and potentially lead us to alter our expectations, beliefs, and personality.

Looking around the world, we see that different cultures use different techniques to socialize their children. There are two broad types of teaching methods- formal and informal. **Formal education** is what primarily happens in a classroom. It usually is structured, controlled, and directed primarily by adult teachers who are professional "knowers." In contrast, **informal education** can occur anywhere. It involves imitation of what others do and say as well as experimentation and repetitive practice of basic skills. This is what happens when children role-play adult interactions in their games.

### **Agencies of Socialization:**

The process of socialization is operative not only in childhood but throughout life. It is a process, which begins at birth and continues unceasingly until the death of the individual. It is an incessant process. Formerly, the term socialization had not been applied to adult learning experiences but had been restricted to children. More recently, however, the concept of socialization has been broadened to include aspects of adult behaviour as well. It is now thought of "as an interaction process whereby a person's behaviour is modified to conform with expectations held by members of the groups to which he belongs".

Thinkers describe the process with reference to children only because as are introduced when the person becomes conscious of self and others are absent. When the person begins to read books, listen to stories and is enabled to have an imagination

of ideal society, it becomes difficult to separate the subjective factors from the objective ones and assess their respective contribution in the socialization of the child.

Since socialization is an important matter for society, it is not desirable that the child's socialization should be left to mere accident but should be controlled through institutional channels. What a child is going to be is more important than what he is. It is socialization, which turns the child into a useful member of the society and gives him social maturity. Therefore it is of paramount need to know as to who socializes the child.

There are two sources of child's socialization. The first includes those who have authority over him; the second are those who are equal in authority to him. The first category may include parents, teachers, and elderly persons. The second one includes the playmates, the friends and the fellows in the club. His training varies in content and significance according as it is acquired from one or the other source. In one category is the relationship of constraint, in the other it is that of co-operation.

The relationship of constraint is based on unilateral respect for person in authority, while the relationship of co-operation is based on mutual understanding between equals. The rules of behaviour, under the first category are felt as superior, absolute and external, but rules in the second category have no superiority or absoluteness in themselves but simply are the working principles of association. Persons having authority over the child are generally older than him while persons sharing equality with him are apt to be of similar age.

There are reasons as to why socialization should proceed through authoritarian modes. The patterns of behaviour expected in the culture are innate; sometimes these are even contrary to biological inclination. It is, therefore, but necessary that persons charged with the socialization of the child must be given the power to command obedience. This power can be given only to older persons because when the process of socialization begins, the infant has no juniors and no capacity, for associating with equals.

The parents therefore are the first persons who socialize the child. They are not only closely related, to him in the family system but physically also they are more near to the child than others. The mother is the first of the parents who brings the process of socialization. It is from her that the earliest social stimuli to which a child is subjected, come. He responds to those stimuli by imitating them. With a wide age and experience gap separating the child from his parents, he cannot understand fully the logic and nature of all that they transmit to him.

In case the child does not follow the rules, he may be coerced, because from the social point of view the essential thing is not that the child be 'freed' from taboo in order to express his personality. But that he may be taught folkways and mores and protected from himself during his period of childishness.

Hence, what the child absorbs at the first instance is largely a morality or restraint. The society transmits, taking no chances, the most valued parts of its

heritage. Social morality is thus not a matter of rational understanding but of felt obligation.

The child acquires something from his equals, which he cannot acquire from persons in authority. From them he acquires the cooperative morality and some of the informal aspects of culture like small folkways, fads and crazes, secret modes of gratification and forbidden knowledge. The knowledge of such things is necessary from the social point of view.

To take an example, the knowledge of sex relations considered in our society something undesirable for a youth until he gets married. If such knowledge strictly banned until marriage the performance of numerous functions of sex life may be difficult after marriage. So sex knowledge is not excluded completely though formally it is considered undesirable. This knowledge the child acquired from equalitarian group though the child cannot get as much knowledge from another child who is same in age to him, get in so from another child learns in the equalitarian group to understand the rules as part of a co-operative effort, in so far as he learns to stand up for his rights without the protection of authority or the objectless of dependence he acquires something that is very hard if not impossible to get in the authoritarian type relationship.

Thus, both the authoritarian and equalitarian relationship contribute to the socialization of the child. Things that involve discipline and responsibility in transmission are handed over to authoritarian relations, other things to equalitarian relations.

Briefly mentioned the chief agencies of socialization are the following.

### **1. The Family:**

The parents or families are the first to socialize the child. They are not only closely related to the child but physically also, they are nearer to him than others are. From the parents he learns his speech and language. He is taught social morality. He learns respect for persons in authority. In the family, he learns a number of civic virtues.

The family is rightly called the cradle of social virtues. The child gets his first lessons in co-operation, tolerance, self, sacrifice, love and affection in the family. The environment of a family influences the growth of a child. The psychologists have shown that a person is what he becomes in family.

In a bad family, the child learns bad habits whereas in a good family he acquires good habits. An important cause of juvenile delinquency is bad family environment. At the time of mate choice, the parents also try to find out the family history of the boy and girl in order to know their good and bad points.

The relationship between the parents and the child is one of constraint. The parents are older than he is and have the power to command obedience. In case the child does not follow the rules, he may be coerced. Of the parents, it is the mother

who first begins the process of socialization. The family continues to exercise its influence throughout life. There is a vast literature on family to describe its role in society.

## **2. The School:**

The school is the second agency of socialization. In the school, the child gets his education, which moulds his ideas and attitudes. A good education can make, the child a good citizen, while a bad education can turn him into a criminal. Education is of great importance in socialization. A well-planned education can produce socialized persons.

## **3. The Playmates or Friends:**

The playmates and friends are also an important agency of socialization. The relation between the child and his playmates is one of equality. It is based on co-operation and mutual understanding. They are mostly of similar age. The child acquires something from his friends and playmates, which he cannot acquire from parents. From them he acquires co-operative morality and some of the informal aspects of culture like fashions, fads, crazes, modes of gratification and forbidden knowledge. The knowledge of such things is necessary from the social point of view. To take an example, the knowledge of sex relations is considered in our society something undesirable for a youth till he gets married. If such knowledge is banned strictly until marriage, the performance of numerous functions of sex life may be difficult later marriage. This knowledge the child acquires from his friends and playmates.

## **4. The Church:**

Religion has been an important factor in society. In the early society religion provided a bond of unity. Though in modern society the importance of religion has diminished yet it continues to mould our beliefs and ways of life. In every family some or the other religious practices are observed in one or the other occasion. The child sees his parents going to the temple and performing religious ceremonies. He listens to religious sermons, which may determine his course of life and shape his ideas.

## **5. The State:**

The state is an authoritarian agency. It makes laws for the people and lays down the modes of conduct expected of them. The people have compulsorily to obey these laws. If they fail to adjust their behaviour in accordance with laws of the state they may be punished for such failure. Thus, the state also moulds our behaviour.