

Socialization and Its Role in Culture, Identity, and Development

Posted on November 5, 2019

By definition, socialization is the process of disseminating and inheriting ideologies, norms, and customs, equipping a person with the necessary habits and skills for social participation. In other words, socialization is the means through which cultural and social continuity are realized. In sociological theory, socialization assumes a vital role as it forms the underlying process of social interaction, which in turn shapes the essential behavior for effective social participation. Social interaction provides the pathway for the perpetuation and cultural renewal of society. Particularly in children, the process of socialization is dictated by two stages: primary socialization and secondary socialization, which are considered fundamental for the sustainment of all the other essential later forms of socialization. These two stages ensure proper adaptation to society's values throughout the lifecycle of a person. Based on this concept of socialization, the processes represent socialization in children as an interactive process through which they interpret social relationships within their cultural and social context.

Primary and secondary socialization are the two basic forms of childhood socialization that shape children's characters, inherited norms, and customs. Primary socialization is defined as the learning and acceptance of a set of societal values and norms that are dictated through the process of socialization. In childhood, this process of socialization is significant as it sets the framework and foundation for all later socialization stages. Primary socialization is characterized by children learning the actions, values, and attitudes that are deemed appropriate for a person to be a member of a particular society. Parents, caregivers, and immediate friends are the main social units that influence primary socialization. This face of socialization gives an individual the basic step to align with society's values and prepare the person to develop and create roles in a social context.

The primary socialization process acts as the transformation of children into responsible and social human beings. This is especially done through teaching basic values as well as through language and training from their immediate family members. Social systems and social rules are incorporated with the child's social experiences in order to evoke social and physical responses that are persistent within the context of culture. In this regard, the study of socialization identifies the different functions of institutions such as family, school, and media in instilling cultural and social values.

These agents of socialization promote childhood development in a cognitive and social manner, which shapes the psychological behaviors and attitudes during childhood. For instance, a child knows which gender they are and how they are expected to behave depending on their gender from primary agents of socialization. By the time secondary socialization starts influencing the child's behaviour and attitudes, the child already has an idea of which gender they are and how society expects them

to behave in reference to their gender roles. In this regard, secondary agents are responsible for reinforcing what children learn from their primary agents of socialization.

Secondary socialization is a process characterized by the learning of what appropriate behaviour entails in regard to being a member of a small unit of society. This type of socialization, through secondary agents of society such as school, reinforces and justifies the behavioural patterns learned from primary socialization during the early stages of childhood. Through this process, children and adults learn responsive behaviours which are deemed appropriate by the society in which they are. Depending on the society in which the individuals are, secondary socialization can result in desirable outcomes as the individuals learn what the society perceives as “normal” and hence, the individual’s course of action is influenced by the society’s consensus. On the contrary, in some cases, some individuals do not undergo the experience of these processes of socialization, such as feral children, or in other cases, a person learns inappropriate behavioural patterns within a society. In this case scenario, the specified individual is subjected to a resocialization process in which the individual subject is taught new values, norms, and practices in order to adjust and align with society in a social context.

The resocialization process exposes a person to new attitudes and skills which are deemed essential and adequate in a particular society and as dictated by the norms and values of the people within it. Society performs an essential role in the psychological development of individuals, and hence the isolation and lack of social interaction generally result in issues that have been proven to be irreversible. In regard to feral children’s experience, these children are isolated and lack total human contact and hence lack the ability to fit in modern society in terms of behaviour, language, and what society perceives as “normal.” For instance, in the case scenario of “Victor of Aveyron,” the boy lived in the woods for nine years without social interaction or human contact of any form. The boy was subjected to a resocialization process through which he was able to learn and adapt to some essential norms of city life. However, the boy did not fully learn the language due to the lack of primary socialization in childhood.

In this essence, the case scenario, the experience of feral children indicates that social deprivation and prevention from normal social interactions influence the mental health and child development process. The process of resocialization is instrumental in correcting the social discrepancies in feral children, although the children do not fully learn social norms as compared to other normal children.

In conclusion, all the socialization processes prepare individuals for the achievement of an appropriate social life by equipping them with shared behaviours, values, beliefs, norms, and attitudes necessary for a normal social context. Primary socialization is essential for childhood development as children learn social practices from their immediate caregivers and parents. Secondary socialization reinforces the behavioural patterns acquired from primary socialization and through which individuals learn appropriate social behaviours as demanded by society. Lastly, the resocialization process in feral children is instrumental in teaching the affected children new social ways of living, even though the children do not learn all the parts of city life due to mental and

childhood development impairment, which is largely irreversible.

Task 2: Influence of gender and class on women's identity

Women's experiences are perceived to be guided and shaped by gender and social class identification. Gender-Class differences inflicted by society are evident in women's behaviors and beliefs, which are key factors in defining women's identity. Different attitudes and behaviours are expected from both girls and boys by British society. Gender socialization is termed as the impacting knowledge of different behaviours on the basis of gender, which is instrumental in shaping one's identity in reference to their gender. Girls are brought up in conformity to the female role, while boys are raised in conformity to the gender male role. Historically, the concept of gender and class has been used to define a woman's identity in British society.

Gender role refers to the personal traits, character, attitude, and behaviour that are encouraged and expected of the individual on the basis of sex (Benokraitis, 2017). A young British woman's identity is influenced by social institutions that define gender roles and class identity in reference to the processes of socialization. According to social sciences, institutions refer to mechanisms and structures of social comparison and order aimed at regulating people's behaviour, which aid in shaping one's identity in society. These institutions are defined by the role of social permanents and purpose transcending society's lives while setting and enforcing a set of rules which govern the human corporation, behaviour, and identity. The gender and class socialization institutions are family, school, and the media.

Primary socializing agents such as parents and caregivers form the starting point for the shaping of a woman's identity. Family is viewed as the main source of influence on socialization. In other words, the family is the initial agent of socialization. A child acquires the initial behaviours and identity through the family, which in turn defines the overall moral conduct and one's identity in the future. The family institution is significant since it instills the first civilized behaviours. In this essence, the feminine class and gender roles begin in the family. Additionally, families play a vital role in influencing one's identity, emotional health, and personality. It is evident that parents socialize differently with both daughters and sons; for example, boys are allowed to be independent and free at an earlier stage than girls, and they are less counselled on appropriate eating habits and clothing. They are also free from carrying out domestic duties and other household chores, which are termed feminine. On the other hand, girls' freedom and independence are limited as they are expected to be generally obedient, passive, and nurturing, and also assume almost all household tasks.

The secondary process of socialization also plays a vital role in establishing the identity of a woman in British society. Secondary socializing agents such as the school nurture the identity already acquired from the family. In schools, identity is acquired through the official, social, or hidden curriculum. The official and social curriculum includes the identity gained by the students from their female teachers,

which also influences the shaping of their identity status in society. The school teaches the children about their roles within society with regard to their gender. Subsequently, social class generates expectations and meanings in objective material. In British society, Upper-class women's and lower-class women's social status provides class-based pressure that dictates how women relate and their occupation in society. These class-based differences define the identity of women and their role in society.

Through secondary socialization, women in British society are able to determine their identity in reference to their cultural gender roles and social class status. The media institutions, such as television, movies, and radio, among others, educate women on ways of establishing and shaping their identity based on examples from fellow women within their social class status. Socialization occurring through radio shows and television programs, which are usually commercialized, is effective in guiding women on how to develop and shape their identity in society.

In conclusion, the inheritance of ideologies and social norms is significant in defining women's identity, and, therefore, primary and secondary socialization play a vital role in the process of acquiring and inheriting these desired norms and characteristics aimed at describing one's identity in society. The socialization process and institutions that outline the gender and class influences and roles can lead individuals to shape their identity. In these assertions, the gender role and social class of women are essential in guiding and shaping their identity.