

The process of socialisation

Sociology



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Sociologists explained the process of socialisation in many different ways – they have looked at all factors which could occur in such process. The socialisation starts within the family and relatives where babies are imposed to four processes identified by Oakley as: manipulation, canalization, verbal appellations and differential activity exposure. Through these, parents teach their children things such as eating, dressing, talking and behaving suitably (manners, socialising with other kids) in order to help them successfully function in society later in life.

Sometimes, parents tend to hold hegemonic stereotyped views of typical characteristics of boys and girls which are used as norms when socialising their children, in order to help them get accepted within the society – boys and girls are expected to behave in certain ways. Feminists would argue that because of such socialisation, women have a worse start when growing up (eg. always has been taught to be emotional and obey men) and therefore possess less power and opportunities in the society.

This well explains the process of socialisation, however, Marxists would disagree, as they believe that it does not matter what gender you are – their view would be that social class is the most important factor that influences the process of socialisation. This suggests that if a girl or a boy has been immersed in upper class' culture, due to the parents' habitus, both of the genders would have equal chances to gain power and status in society through their natural confidence, private-schooling, parent's contacts etc.

This is supported by Bourdieu's cultural capital which suggests that being brought up by the parents with the education, knowledge, language, attitudes and values possessed by the upper-class - will have an impact on

the process of primary socialisation because, as Marxists believe, social class is the most crucial element in the process of socialisation. On the other hand, the secondary socialisation may be viewed as more influential in the process of socialisation.

This is because the areas of secondary socialisation are wider than just relatives. The areas include: the education system, peer group, workplace, the mass media and religious institutions. These present norms and values that have massive influences on the socialisation process. For example, mass media presents girls as 'sex objects' therefore a girl will believe that in order to meet society's expectations – she needs to be attractive. The peer group, and how they behave, dress, talk will also have an impact on an individual's socialisation, as we may sometimes, adapt what Goffman called 'impression management' – individuals may use props such as speech or consumer goods in order to present an identity of ourselves that we want to be identified with, the purpose of it being - gaining acceptance in the society.

Marxists would argue that not everyone has the access to every 'prop' due to differences in social class – the idea of their structural approach is to enforce the fact that an individual sometimes may not have the free will to do anything in order to function in a society the way they want to – the wider forces that control the individual do not give him much choice.

This well explains the process of socialisation, but postmodernists, who accept social action approaches as a better explanation of the process of socialisation, would argue that in fact, an individual is free to accept any identity in order to function in society. Cooley has found the idea of 'looking-glass self' which is the image reflected back to us, from another's point of

view. This allows us to adapt our behaviour with the purpose of improving our social-skills as well as being accepted within a particular society.

This was supported by Mead who argued that individuals are in a state of flux – changing and developing all the time as they go through daily life. This explains the process of socialisation quite well, but there is not enough emphasis on power inequalities, power of social institutions, need to work and earn money therefore I believe that in this case, interpretivists have a better view on the process of socialisation.

Giddens argues that identity is partly formed by an individual choice, but is also limited by the social structure and the society in which people live in (Jenkins suggested that identity is formed in a socialisation process as a form of gaining acceptance within the society, reaching desired status etc.).

This best explains the process of socialisation because people are able to form their own choices in becoming a socially accepted person, but they are also controlled to some extent by boundaries such as norms and values that keep the society running properly.

For example, girls can choose the compromise of working harder than boys so that in the future, girls can overcome the hegemonic stereotype and earn the equal status in society, but they also need to be aware of the fact that probably lower income of their parents will not allow them to go to Eton where the brightest kids emerge. Therefore, for the reasons stated above, I believe that Giddens' third way of socialisation best explains the process of socialisation.