

The individual has
little control over the
social forces essay



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Societies work or function because each individual is performing a set of norms and values which are seen fit for the person of the society.

Structuralist sociologists argue that the life of an individual or his social identity is developed by the agencies of socialization such as family, peer groups and religion. Emile Durkheim is an avid supporter of this theory saying that society is much bigger than us and encompasses our lives from all corners. From an early stage of life, through socialization children are socialized into the norms and values, their parents see fit.

An important element of encouraging socially acceptable behavior within the children is by using informal social control and this is how gender roles are also emphasized for example by gifting a boy a gun we encourage aggressive and adventurous behavior while girls are given dolls to emphasize their roles as being caring and expressive. Informal social control can take forms of appreciation, punishment, calling names and even exclusion from the group. In this regard, children have no option but to accept their model roles which are carried throughout their lives.

From the point of functionalists, socialization is seen as a one way process in which individuals are thought to be passive responding unknowingly to rewards and punishments. In this context, socialization is no more than training where individuals are not free to negotiate their social roles. Talcott Parsons is also of the view that society is a social system where order is maintained.

Social order is there for maintained by individuals learning the norms the society provides. In doing so they internalize these roles i. . these social roles

become a part of them. Deviant behavior can therefore be explained by inadequate socialization. Primary socialization is also seen as a place for internalizing concepts of obedience within the future working class. Cooper identified that within family parents are the bourgeoisie and children are proletariat. This theory is also further developed by feminists who argue that patriarchy or male dominance is emphasized in the primary and secondary socialization of children.

Females are still finding it difficult to develop their careers because of the restrictions put on them by parents and husbands. They discard the opinion that nature has predefined their roles to child rearing and bearing rather it is the nurture or ideologies feed to them over the years. Another example is of the feral children who weren't socialized by humans and so learnt according to the forces affecting them. This shows just how important socialization and agencies of socialization are in shaping our lives as if the true self of a person is not humane if no socialized.

However, on the other side of debate interpretivists are firmly against the view that these institutions have any direct effect on shaping social identities of people rather individuals make sense of the world around them and react differently in different situations. G. H Mead, one of the founders of symbolic interactionism said that during childhood, a child passes through several stages in forming his social identity. From birth, children are confronted with a number of ready-made roles which form a vital part of their social identity but in no way it means that they can't negotiate them.

This is clear as if this was the case every individual will have the exact same norms and values instead we see individuals with different set of norms and priorities. Human beings are therefore seen as active in the acquisition of their social roles. Another sociologist C. H Cooley defined how social identities of children are formed in the primary socialization. In that stage only the child himself but the parent himself is learning their roles. The child therefore gradually becomes self-conscious of its independent identity and it is the stage when its ' I ' becomes is the socialized ' Me '.

Later in life, at the stage of secondary socialization, the individual will chose roles from the generalized other which is at widest in the society. At this stage the self becomes completely social. There is no necessary career for him or path for him to follow in the identity transformation. This describes the notion of deviant behavior where individual can either conform to the society norms or go against them. There are great many opportunities of human's negotiation and interpretation of identities. H. Bulmer also emphasizes the choices facing an individual.

He has to assess them such as wealth available, aspirations, realities, problems. And then make a decision. Another explanation comes from Dennis Wrong who has said that human beings aren't computerized devices who will take on the roles set by the society for them. This is the over socialized concept indication sociology's inability to comprehend emotions and feelings. He posits that each individual will not internalize the norms in the same degree and some may become overburdened and show deviant behavior.

Another sociologist, Freud described human behavior as a constant conflict between his ego (the conscious reality and id (instincts and unconscious, repressed life). In what we say internalization of roles, it is actually the social control forcing individuals to conform. Although two different perspectives on the freedom of individual shaping his identity one emphasizing the action of society on individuals and the other emphasizing the individual's interpretation of social roles and neither can be completely accepted.