

# Internalization of values socialization of the baraka

Society



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Internalization of Values Socialization of the Baraka and Keiski Aubrey Love  
English Comp 3 Dr. Popham 3/21/2012 The people who inhabit a community and their interactions with one another comprise a society. These repeated interactions allow people to internalize or, hold true, what society portrays as everyday norms and values. These norms and values are instilled during childhood through the time he or she becomes an adult. Amiri Baraka's autobiography "School" and Lisa Keiski's essay "Suicide's Forgotten Victims," makes this evident.

In both "School" and "Suicide's Forgotten Victims," Baraka's and Keiski's daily interactions with their peers, authority figures, and society contribute to the formulation of important life lessons. Through the daily interactions with his peers in his educational setting, Baraka internalizes concepts pivotal to real world situations. School provided Baraka with an environment to socialize with students that have common interests and goals: "The games and sports of the playground and streets was one registration carried with us as long as we live" (260). Friends compose the next primary socializing agent outside the family.

It allows Baraka to see beyond his small world at home and introduces him to new experiences. Physical and recreational activities are important components in childhood development. Interactions with his peers provided Baraka with his first experience of equal status relationships. When Baraka played around with his friends, he made a distinction between himself and the others around him. The games shared between his friends shows that Baraka began learning to understand the idea of multiple roles; the duties and behaviors expected of someone who holds a particular status.

Baraka took the values he learned from playing with his friends and certified them, implementing them in his everyday actions for the rest of his life. Baraka's peers allowed him to internalize a vital life lesson necessary for the real world. Like Baraka, the daily interactions of Keiski with her roommate and friends in college allow her to experience a form of socialization necessary for reality. College not only provides a rigorous coursework, it offers Keiski and her peers a place to learn and grow from each other. I went to a mutual friend who was going to stay with her that night... he had been around Sue too and said that she'd be all right..." (95). When faced with a scenario that Keishi is unsure about, she seeks refuge and clarification from a friend, hoping he can provide her with insight and wisdom about her situation. Although he tried to affirm Sue's safety, deep in Keiski's heart, she knew Sue faced trials and tribulations. From her interaction with her mutual friend, Keiski learns that she cannot depend on others to understand or take care of a situation for her.

Keiski had some kind of understanding of Sue's hint for help, while her mutual friend did not sense suicidal signs from Sue and thus remained clueless the underlying pain. Keiski internalizes the life lesson that not everyone will understand a particular situation and if he or she does not understand, he or she will not have the answer to fix the situation; not all daily interactions lead to a positive end, a harsh but evident value in society. Similarly to the peers in Baraka's " School," authority figures contribute to Baraka's socialization by exemplifying values and norms in their day-to-day actions.

In this case, authority figures take the form of Baraka's teacher, Mrs. Powell. "The only black teacher in the school at the time..., beat me damn near to death in full view of her and my 7B class... (which apparently was sanctioned by my mother...)" (258). Baraka exerted the wrong class attitude by playing around while the teacher taught her class. Mrs. Powell uses Baraka as a demonstration for the class on what appropriate behavior in the classroom is. Mrs. Powell provides Baraka with an experience of the hierarchical system between adults and children.

Baraka's mother's approval of physical discipline shows Baraka that certain behavior in a given situation will not be tolerated. The authority figures intend to instill the value they believe prove useful in society; values such as respecting authority figures or not talking over someone in a conversation. Through his experience with Mrs. Powell, Baraka internalizes the importance of recognizing people in positions of power and how to interact with them; a life lesson needed in almost every situation: family, friends, or the workplace.

By the same token, authority figures in "Suicide's Forgotten Victim" help the socialization of Keiski by allowing her to view the world in terms of how it affected her well-being. She says, "My own therapy has been immensely helpful, perhaps lifesaving" (96). Keiski's repressed feelings grew stronger eating away at her conscious. She condemned herself for not having done anything to help prevent Sue from committing harm to herself. Keiski sought help from a psychiatrist whom gave her the support she needed, gingerly and sympathetically listening to Keiski's issues.

The therapeutic treatment of positive discussion allowed Keiski to think about herself and how she continuously handled the situation instead of worrying about her roommate and feeling guilty for not taking action to prevent such a travesty from occurring. It was helpful to Keiski in that she began to understand her why she was feeling the way she was. It can be argued that without having the support of the psychiatrist Keiski could have succumbed the pressure and guilt she felt and like Sue, have tried to end her life. That emotional outlet ultimately saved Keiski from herself and the personal guilt within her that built up.

The authority figure, the psychiatrist, taught Keiski that she has to remember to consider herself and her own emotions when dealing with hardships in order to maintain good mentalhealth. Not only do the peers and authority figures contribute to Baraka learning life lessons, society as a whole holds the many values and norms that vary fromcultureto culture. Baraka narrates a moment in time where he was on trial for supposedly cussing out a cop and making remarks about the cop's father in a bank. Baraka countered stating African Americans focus on joking about mothers and the case was dismissed.

From these societal experiences Baraka states, " I learned that you could keep people off you if you were mouth-dangerous as well as physically capable" (263). Away from the school or home setting, Baraka becomes exposed to values of society that may not have been so evident, such as racism. In society, it is important to be verbally educated. Not everything in life requires physical strength to overcome an obstacle. Baraka learned

that words are just as powerful as physical abilities. He can get what he wants by persuading another by manipulating words and sentence structure.

Language is used to convey rules, norms, and values amongst a group. It is main form of communication that exists. Baraka learns that life is based off previous statements about how to live, whether they are true or not. Without language, these ideals would not be able to be shared. Just like Baraka, society in Keiski's "Suicide's Forgotten History" society teaches life lessons on how to deal with the pressures of day-to-day interactions. The nature of society blames and points fingers when something goes wrong: "We, as a society, need to stop stigmatizing the friends and relatives of a suicide victim and start helping them" (94).

The societal stigma that followed casted blame on Keiski for Sue's suicidal attempt, subjecting her to isolation. This stigma only promotes more grief, increases the recovery time, and discourages individuals from seeking help. Keiski argues that society needs to change its approach in dealing with suicide and suicide's victim. Instead of pointing fingers and having scapegoats, society needs to give support and sympathy to families that have lost a love one to suicide. Keiski wants society to focus on prevention and intervention to allow families and friends to cope with their trauma.

Although "School" and "Suicide's Forgotten Victim" tell the story of two distinctive individuals growing up, both account for strong life lessons learned in the process. Peers provide environments for individual to interaction and learn from one another. Authority figures give insight to the world at large through the experiences of their socialized minds. Society is the daily interaction of citizens in any environment exposing people to all the

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aspects that make up society. These are key agents in the development of norms and values in children throughout their growing period.