

Socialization

Many people think that the society you grow up in can affect the way you behave. Take a look around you, are you more likely to relate to someone from your city, or from another country? Chances are, you will have similar morals, beliefs, and characteristics as someone from the same city as you. This is because people who grow up in the same areas are raised similarly. An example would be that if you grew up in the Philippines, you were most likely taught to address adults as “tito” or “tita”, even if they aren’t related to you. These shared morals and characteristics help you fit into your society better, and to understand others in your society.

The process of learning how to live in your society and culture is called “socialization”. When someone says they are “socializing” a child, they mean to say that the child still needs to learn important social rules and cues. For example, when a parent coaches a child to greet another adult as “tito” or “tita”, they are socializing their child, teaching them that that is the proper way to address the adult. Eventually, a child will have been told enough times to address different adults as “tito” or “tita”, and will do it without being told to. They will have been socialized to this social norm. However, in other cultures you don’t address adults as “tito” or “tita”, and some people even use the first names of their elders. People who grew up in those societies would not have been socialized to our social norms, and would not know to call someone “tito” or “tita”. If they came to the Philippines, they might even be considered rude by not doing this. This doesn’t mean they haven’t been socialized at all, just that they have been socialized to a different culture than ours, and if they want to fit into Filipino society and be understood by Filipinos, they will have to be socialized to Filipino culture.

There are many theories about socialization. Although everyone agrees that all people become socialized, we aren’t sure how much socialization really dictates someone’s behavior. Some people think that all babies are born a “blank slate”, no different from any other baby. Then, after they are born, they are socialized into different societies, and it is that socialization that makes them who they are. However, other people think that babies can be predisposed to, or born with, certain character traits. While babies are still socialized as they grow up, their personality and behavior is not only based on how they were raised, but their predispositions. For example, siblings can be brought up by the same parents, in the same house, and usually go to the same school, but they can still have different personalities. One sibling may be more outgoing, and the other shy. One may be messy and the other organized. One sibling may be more social, and the other prefer to keep to themselves. Some of this may be due to different life experiences, but no one else has more similar life experiences to you than your own sibling, so these differences are most likely due to something else that is internal to an individual.

Another example is smiling. While some facial expressions have different meanings in different cultures, all humans smile when they are happy. People are not socialized to smile, and this is proven by people

who are born blind, who smile even if they have never seen anyone do so before. Smiling is innate, and doesn't need to be taught. Similarly, all babies cry. They do not need to be socialized or taught to cry in order for them to know how to do it. However, people are still socialized about when certain facial expressions—like smiling, or crying—are appropriate in their society.

Socialization is the process all humans go through in order to fit into their society. When someone is socialized, they learn what behaviour is appropriate, and when, how to read social cues, and what the social norms are. In other words, they learn how to “act normal”. However, some people do believe that we are predisposed to certain behaviors regardless of how you are socialized. There is no one answer to which theory is right or which is wrong, because there is proof that both are valid. We see that certain people who grew up in the same society act similarly and follow the same social norms, but within those societies we see that people can still be different. You may learn to fit into your society through socialization, but your predispositions are what make you different, even if you were socialized similarly to everyone else. Either way, socialization is necessary to make sure that we can continue to have meaningful interactions within our society.

Authors: Nuria Benitez and Samantha Merida