Sociology Shortcuts No.3

Sept. 2022

A-Level Sociology

The Intro Issue

welcome

Issue 3 (yes, really) sees Sociology ShortCuts cement its position as the *numero uno* free Sociology Magazine aimed at A-level and High School Sociology students across the UK, World and, if it's not too much of a stretch, the Known Universe.

The fact it's the only free Sociology Magazine aimed at etc. doesn't, IMHO, detract greatly from this status. Although maybe a little bit, if you're being picky.

But as someone very famous, whose actual name escapes me, once said "You've got to be in it to win it".

And we're definitely in it. For sure.

Anyway, this Issue sees another bumper crop of pages and content. And this time we're focusing on Introductory Sociology - all the things you need to learn in the first couple of weeks of "doing Sociology" before forgetting about it completely.

As ever, the content's aimed at A-level Sociology teachers and students of no and every exam board and you should find it accessible while also being a bit challenging in parts.

Like Sociology, when you come to think about it.

Which we hope you will.

this issue

Sociology Shortcuts No.3

Sept.2022

A-Level Sociology

The Intro Issue

What Is Sociology?

Having decided to study Sociology it's perhaps understandable that you might want to know exactly what it is you've let yourself in for. And while all will, no-doubt, become clear at some point - sooner, rather than later, hopefully - it won't hurt to have a sneak-peek at the Bigger Picture: the broad brush strokes, as it were, of what the subject's all about.

We can do this in a couple of ways: the first being what we might call a conventional Introduction:

Sociology, in this respect, is the study of human behaviour and relationships and Ritzer (1979) provides a good "working definition" when he says:

"*Sociology is the study of individuals in a social setting that includes groups, organisations, cultures and societies. Sociologists study the interrelationships between individuals, organisations, cultures and societies*".

Sociology, therefore, involves studying people and their *patterns of behaviour.*

To do this involves looking at the relationships we form, such as between parents and children or teachers and students and how these interconnect: the focus of sociology, therefore, is *group behaviour*: how membership of social groups, such as families and schools, impacts on individual behaviours.

Personal experience of the social world should tell you that life isn't a series of random, purposeless or unstructured events. We're surrounded by *patterned behaviour;* some,

such as family groups, with a long history, others much more recent than we may imagine: compulsory State education in the UK, for example, was only established in the mid-20th century.

The key point to understand here is that *patterns of shared, stable, behaviour*, such as family groups, must have a *cause*: something that encourages individuals to behave in ways that, while not necessarily entirely predictable, are *predictable enough* on a general day-to-day basis.

For sociologists, this "cause" is culture - something that, for the moment, we can consider as a distinctive *way of life* characteristic of a particular society.

It's a concept that's central to a sociological understanding of both individuals and societies and it's one to which we will necessarily return.

For the moment, however, we can have a quick look at what we might call a less-conventional Introduction to Sociology…

Make a list of the groups to which you belong (such as friends, family, school, social media…).
For each group identify ways they influence your behaviour
(you must, for example, attend school until you're 16)

"People know what they do. They frequently know why they do what they do. But what they don't know is what what they do does".

Although Sociology definitely is all abut the relationships and the culture, a more-provocative way to think about it comes from Michel Foucault (1986).
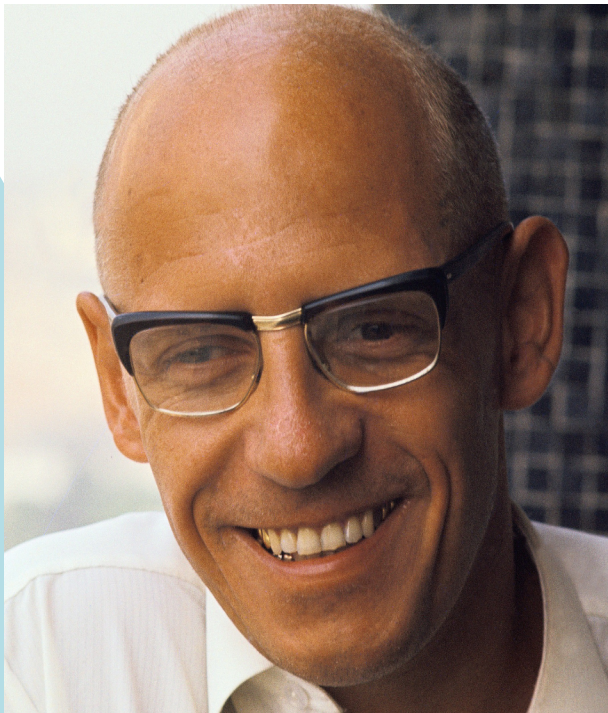
Foucault's observations - at first glance convoluted and wonderfully-nonsensical - repay careful unpacking because they point towards what Sociology, as an academic subject, is designed to do:

1. *As rational, reflective, beings we're perfectly aware of the things we do.*

We don't in other words, need sociologists to tell us…

2. *We also tend to have a reasonable idea about why we behave as we do.*

But that's not always necessarily the case and there's a role for sociologists in trying to understand and explain the choices people make. Why, for example, some people choose crime or why some people leave education at the earliest opportunity.

3. *It's the third part of the statement - the idea people don't really understand how the choices they make or the things they do impact on others - that's arguably the major focus of sociology.*

The role of the sociologist, in this respect, is to explain how the consequences of individual choices and behaviours impact on the behaviour of others - and *vice versa*.

Sociology, in other words, is all about understanding and explaining how individual behaviours are actually the outcome of group decisions.

And What Can You Do With It?

While it's all-well-and-good understanding what sociology is, but the key question on every student's lips is what can you do with it?

According to the venerable British Sociological Association "*Studying sociology…equips you with the skills for many careers*".

And while this is nice to know, it's a bit vague.

And to compound matters, digging deeper into what the BSA considers a career fit for a sociologist is, how shall we put it, a little *disappointing*?

While Police Officer, Voluntary Worker, Social Worker and Teacher are all, in their own inimitable ways, worthwhile and fulfilling careers (so I'm reliably informed), they're unlikely, with the best will in the world, careers to set the pulse racing.

This is perhaps compounded by the thought that "*learning about sociology is handy for subsequently teaching other people about sociology*" probably isn't a great advert for the subject.

It doesn't, however, have to be this way.

And increasingly it's not, as both sociology and putative sociologists break-out of both the "public sector silo" and the tyranny of particular types of job.

Sociology, as many sociologists are starting to understand, is almost uniquely-placed to take advantage of the changing 21st century

This is because Sociology is a subject whose knowledge and skills can be applied to the needs and requirements of widely-different organisations and industries.

While some types of work clearly require specific academic skills, an increasing number require something softer: a more-general set of focused skills that can be applied to a wide range of different occupations.

Any business that involves understanding things like the group behaviours and dynamics of both customers and employees, or how to create and maintain order and manage change a sociological background is a distinct advantage.

Which means the occupational horizons for sociologists have both expanded exponentially over the past few years - and will continue to expand into the foreseeable future - around the idea of the non-academic sociologist embedded into public and private organisations.

"My name is Rachel and I'm a non-academic sociologist…"

Embedded Sociologists are increasingly common in the contemporary workplace, even in areas like the Tech Industry where sociologists bring their academic expertise to bear in a range of roles covering areas like:

• *Public policy*: analysing, understanding, monitoring and measuring the impact company or industry policies have on different social groups.

• *Corporate Social Responsibility*: helping to develop industry and organisational policies around areas like education (such as the digital divide), social environments (the impact different corporate polices on things like free speech, harassment and bullying have on different communities) and inequality (how technological developments "alleviate or compound racial and socioeconomic inequities").

• *Compliance*: developing and monitoring ways companies and organisations comply with their legal and moral obligations to their customers and workforce.

• *Human Resources*: Sociologists can play a crucial role in areas like diversity and social inclusion / exclusion within companies. They can also have an important input into developing non-discriminatory organisational cultures – understanding, for example, why a particular organisation or industry is unappealing to women, people of colour or those from less-privileged backgrounds.

• *Training*: These roles cover a wide range of areas and ideas, but examples might include sociological insights into developing inclusive corporate cultures, diversity training, organisational impacts on the social environment and the like.

• *Research*: While a conventional knowledge of research methods – including methodological concepts like reliability, validity and representativeness – can be useful to organisations, sociological understanding can be brought to bear on things like the impact of different media technologies and a range of social media questions: why people use different identities, online ethnography, social well-being and so forth.

While this list isn't exhaustive , it is indicative of the kinds of careers and roles sociologists can have outside a relatively narrow range of "public service" occupations.

If social life is patterned - it isn't just a simple series of random, purposeless or unstructured events - something must cause *institutionalised behaviour* (a "*pattern of shared, stable, behaviour*" such as a family). Is that "something" instinct or culture?

Instinct...

The idea we have "instincts" that guide our behaviour in some way is still a fairly common assumption in our society, for a couple of reasons:

Firstly, we are taught that animal behaviour is guided by instincts, by which we generally mean to be some sort of genetic programming that tells them how to behave (they "instinctively know" how to do something).

And since people are "essentially animals", it's only a short step to believe that some - if not necessarily all - human behaviour has a similar instinctive basis.

Secondly, the concept is frequently used in everyday language, where people use phrases like "The striker's instinct for goal" or "She seemed to instinctively know they were talking about her".

This gives the idea a *taken-for-granted* quality, something "everybody knows", that becomes part of our *commonsense* store of knowledge.

While the concept of instinct does have some usefulness when explaining how and why some animals behave as they do, its usefulness when applied human behaviour tends to be questioned by sociologists.

And to understand why, we need to be clear about its meaning.

Instincts have three main features; they tell an animal:

- *what* to do,
- *when* to do it and
- *how* to do it.

To clarify these ideas, consider this example:

What? Every year blue tits nest in my garden, in the bird box I've so thoughtfully provided for them (except, I should add, when my garden was being redesigned and I took the box down. They nested in my barbecue instead, the little scamps). This is evidence of instinctive behaviour because the adult blue tits know *what* they've got to do each year. They do not need to be taught this behaviour.

When? Aside from nesting every year, the blue tits also know at what point to start nest-building, egg-laying and chick-rearing. Again, this is instinctive behaviour because it doesn't have to be taught or learned.

How? Without fail, these birds build exactly the same sort of nest each year (a single-story "everyone-in-it-together" affair). This, again, is instinctive behaviour because the adult birds have no choice in the matter. Rather than build something a little more accommodating they just build the type of nest they've been genetically-programmed to build.

Or Culture?

Sociologists are sceptical about the idea of instinct as the basis for human behaviour, for three main reasons:

Choice: Instincts, by definition, involve a lack of choice: their purpose is to create order by explicitly removing choice from the agenda. Human behaviour, on the other hand, involves an almost limitless set of choices, some of which are fairly banal ("Should I do my Sociology homework or watch TV?") and some of which aren't ("Should I buy this very interesting book or steal it from the bookshop?").

Diversity: The fact we can make behavioural choices, contributes to the diversity of human behaviour. One of the fascinations of Sociology (there are others, but none actually come to mind) is that people develop different (*diverse*) ways of doing things. If our behaviour was simply instinctive we'd expect to see much the same sort of behaviour wherever we were in the world - and while there are numerous similarities and continuities in people's behaviour, there are also a vast range of differences that stem from our ability to make choices.

Adaptation: We live in a vast, complex, constantly-changing world and people need to be able to adapt to such changes. A simple example here is the recent and rapid development of computer technology that, through things like the Internet, has changed the way people both see and interact in the world.

Fifty years ago the idea we'd be carrying hugely-powerful computers around in our pocket and using them to connect to people around the world did not exist outside the world of science fiction.

Now computer technology is everywhere and embedded deeply into our social behaviour.

Instinctive behaviour is something that *does not and cannot change*. If human behaviour was guided by instinct, we would find it impossible to either initiate or adapt to change…

What Is Culture?

If the concept of culture is such a central one in Sociology, it would be useful to develop what we mean by it…

In broad terms, a culture is a way of life specific to a particular group or society. More-specifically, it's what Dahl (2001) calls "*a collectively held set of attributes*" and this includes both the material things people value, such as cars and computers, and the non-material things: the knowledge, ideas and beliefs that influence how and why people behave as they do.

As you might expect, these things and ideas are dynamic, change over time and are transmitted from one generation to the next through a mechanism called socialisation.

Put more-sociologically, cultures embody two main strands:

1. Material culture consists of the *physical objects* ("artefacts") a society produces that reflect cultural knowledge, skills, interests and preoccupations.

2. Non-Material culture involves ideas: the knowledge and beliefs that characterise a particular group of people at a particular time in their social development. This might, for example, involve things like rational and scientific beliefs about the world. Equally, it may involve irrational and non-scientific beliefs.

Interestingly, of course, the objects of material culture - such as a mobile/cell phone - have cultural *meanings* for the people who produce and use them. A phone is not only a device for talking to people or browsing the Internet.

They also have cultural meanings: the kind of phone you own, for example, says something about you to others, both *intended* ("*look how wealthy I am!*") and *unintended* ("*that phone is so uncool*").

By extension, this tells us something about the *symbolic nature* of both cultures as a whole and the artefacts they produce. There is, for example, nothing inherent in "a phone" that tells us its *meaning*, as opposed to its *function* (or purpose). It can mean different things to different people and groups within a particular culture, just as it could mean different things to different cultures.

If you think about it, the *problem of meaning* is potentially a real one in cultures as large and complicated as our own.

Take, for example, the idea of **social status**.

Social status relates to how you are viewed by others and the level of *respect* they give you. Like a lot of things related to culture, the problem we have is that status isn't something we can detect with our senses: it has no physical substance, yet we recognise it when we encounter someone who has it.

This apparent contradiction - how do we recognise something when it can't be seen? - is resolved by the development of *status symbols*, such as a mobile phone: objects that *symbolise* (or *represent*) someone's *social status*.

The existence of status symbols tells us something about the nature and organisation of both society and culture: for something to *symbolise status* it must mean it's linked into a *structure of meaning.*

That is, to understand the significance of status *symbols* we have to be able to key into a set of organised cultural meanings that tell us what something means. This is important, as you might expect, because it demonstrates the existence of cultural organisation.

That is, societies and cultures are organised in ways that can be studied and explored by sociologists.

Identity

Identity is related to social status in the sense that if you think about your response to the question "*Who are you?*", it's likely you would reference a range of social characteristics that "*define who you are*" both for yourself and, equally importantly, for others. These might include:

Family: for example, name and general background.
Age: such as whether you are young or old.
Nationality: British, American…
Gender: male, female, non-binary…
Sexuality: heterosexual, LGBT+

In other words, when you start to think about "who you are" it's probable you'll think about your identity - at least in explicitly social terms. That is, in terms of how the culture to which you belong expresses these things.

For the moment it's enough to conclude on a couple of points:

Firstly, to describe (or *identify*) ourselves we draw on a range of *sources of identity* (*cla*ss, age, gender, ethnicity, *sexuality, disability…*).

Secondly, in order to define ourselves as *individuals* we draw upon a wide range of *cultural* ideas and beliefs - something that illustrates the central importance of culture in our lives.

What Is Society?

*S**ociety** is a concept that's easy to reference, we all understand what is meant by "our society", be it Indian, Mauritian, Nigerian or British or whatever, but it's a lot more difficult to define…*

One key feature of a society is that people see themselves as having "something in common" with other members of "their society" and, by extension, see themselves as different to members of "other societies". In this respect, different societies involve two types of *space*:

1. Physical space in the sense of a distinctive geographical area marked by either *physical border* (such as a river) or a *symbolic border* (an imaginary line, for example, marking where one society ends and another begins).

Anderson (1983) captures the significance of this idea when he categorises societies as "*imagined communities*"; something that exists only in the mind. As he argues, "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion".

Societies, in this respect, are mentally constructed in a range of ways that include things like:

• geographic borders that set physical boundaries - we might, for example, consider everyone born within these borders to "belong" to a particular society.

• a system of government, which may involve things like a monarchy, parliament and civil service.

• a common language, customs and traditions that people share.

• a sense of belonging and identification that involves developing an awareness of "our society" as different to other societies; Indians, for example, may see themselves as different to Pakistanis or Bangladeshis.

2. Mental space that relates to the various beliefs people hold about the similarities they share with those belonging to "their society" and the differences between them and people who belong to a different society.

Defining a society in terms of physical space is, in itself, a *mental* construction; we're giving a particular meaning and significance to what is effectively lines on a map.

The Social Construction of Reality

If societies are mental constructions - they have no real existence outside of the mind - it follows that this reality is *socially constructed*. To understand how this occurs, therefore, we need to explore the concept of culture, something we've previously referenced as both a distinctive "way of life" and something that has to be taught and learnt through primary and secondary socialisation.

We can develop this concept to understand how culture contributes to the social construction of reality by noting that Dahl (2000) defines culture as "*a collectively held set of attributes, which is dynamic and changing over time*" that structures the social world. All cultures, in this respect, consist of two basic components:

• *Material culture* involves the physical objects ("artefacts"), such as cars, 'phones and books, a society produces and which reflect cultural knowledge, skills, interests and preoccupations.

• *Non-material culture* consists of the knowledge and beliefs valued by a particular culture. This includes things like religious and scientific beliefs and also the meanings people give to material objects.

Merton (1957), for example, suggests objects like cars, houses and clothes can function in two ways:

their **manifest function** refers to the purpose they exist to serve; clothes, for example, function to keep you warm .

Their **latent function**, however, may be hidden or obscured. Material objects can, for example, function as status symbols - owning something a culture feels is desirable says something about you to others.

The idea cultural objects can have different meanings suggests two things:

1. Cultural interaction, especially in contemporary societies, is both sophisticated and complex.

2. The more-sophisticated the interaction in any society, the more open it is to misinterpretation.

Making sense of cultural interaction, therefore, involves anchoring it in ways that create common meanings and provide a structure within which behaviour can be played-out in predictable ways.

For a society to function it must have *order* and *stability* and for these to exist people's behaviour must display *patterns* and *regularities;* behaviour must be organised and structured and while cultures may develop differently they are all constructed from the same basic materials: roles, values and norms.

Socialisation

How do we learn how to become competent social actors?

Socialisation is a process that describes how we are taught the behavioural rules we need to become both members of a particular society / culture and a competent social actor within that society.

In other words, for sociologists we are all a product of our nurturing - we do not have instincts to guide our behaviour and development - and one way of demonstrating this idea is through a naturally-occurring form of experimentation: unsocialised or *feral children*.

Although evidence of human infants raised by animals "in the wild" is rare and not always reliable (one exception being Saturday Mifune discovered, aged 5, in 1987 living in a pack of monkeys in South Africa), evidence of children raised with little or no human contact is much more common.

A well-documented example is "Genie", a 13-year old Californian girl, discovered in 1970. Pines (1997) notes Genie had been

Feral children are sociologically significant for two main reasons:

1. When children are raised without human contact they fail to show the social and physical development we would expect from a conventionally-raised child - walking upright, talking, using eating implements and so forth.

2. If human behaviour was instinctive it's not clear why children such as Genie should develop so differently to children raised with human contacts. We would also expect feral children, once returned to human society, to quickly pick-up the things we consider normal human behaviours. This, however, is not the case.

"isolated in a small room and had not been spoken to by her parents since infancy. She was malnourished, abused, unloved, bereft of any toys or companionship". The result of this experience was that, when found "she could not stand erect…she was unable to speak: she could only whimper".

"Culture isn't something we're born with,

The fact we can make choices contributes to the diversity of human behaviour; different cultures develop different ways of doing things.

Sometimes these are relatively trivial. Billikopf (1999) found out the hard way that "*In Russia, when a man peels a banana for a lady it means he has a romantic interest in her*".

At other times they are more fundamental. Wojtczak (2009) argues that in Victorian Britain most women "*lived in a state little better than slavery*": As she notes:

• women had to obey men, because in most cases men held all the resources and women had no independent means of subsistence.

• woman who remained single could not have children or cohabit. Nor could she follow a profession.

• girls were barred from universities and could obtain only low-paid jobs.

• women's sole purpose was to marry and reproduce.

This is not a situation we would recognise in contemporary Britain. If human behaviour was instinctive we would expect to see much the same sort of behaviour wherever we were in the world and whatever point we chose in history. The fact we do not suggests, as Podder and Bergvall (2004) argue "*culture isn't something we're born with, it is taught to us*".

it is taught to us".

types of socialisation 1

Learning "rules for social interaction'' occurs through socialisation, a process with two main forms.

Primary socialisation occurs, according to Charles Cooley (1909), within *primary groups* that involve *"intimate face-to-face association and cooperation"*; these are critical to the development of behaviours we recognise as "fundamentally human", such as learning language.

The first primary relationship we form is usually with our parent(s), followed by primary attachments to people of our own general age (our friends) and, subsequently with other adults, such as school and work colleagues.

Primary socialisation is necessary because human infants require the assistance of other members of society to develop as both human beings and as members of a particular culture.

We don't just need to learn "general human behaviours", we also have to learn about social relationships, how to play *roles* and so forth.

Secondary socialisation involves *secondary groups* and is characterised, according to Berger and Luckmann (1967), by "*a sense of detachment…from the ones teaching socialisation*". This relates to situations where we don't necessarily have close, personal or even face-to-face contacts with those doing the socialising.

One of its main purposes, or *functions*, Parsons (1959) argues, is to "*Liberate the individual from a dependence on the primary attachments and relationships formed within the family group*".

In contemporary societies, where the majority of people we meet are strangers, it would be impossible and undesirable to deal with them in the same way we treat people we love or know well. For this reason we must learn *instrumental relationships* - how to deal with people in terms of what they can do for us and what we can do for them in particular situations. Berger and Luckmann, for example, suggest that while primary socialisation involves "emotionally charged identification" with people like our parents, secondary socialisation is characterised by "formality and anonymity" - you don't, for example, treat a stranger who asks you for directions as your closest friend.

16

While these are the main forms of socialisation there are other forms we can note that apply in certain situations:

Anticipatory

It's quite rare to go into a situation like a job interview with no knowledge about that situation. Even if someone has no personal experience of job interviews they can *imagine* what's involved, because they've read about other people's experiences, watched TV programmes about interviews and so forth.

An individual may, therefore, *anticipate* the demands of the role ("how to be an interviewee") and rehearse how to play the role correctly - the appropriate way to dress, to speak to the interviewer and so forth.

Resocialisation

There are times we must learn to play new roles and in some situations, such as joining the armed forces or going to prison, individuals are forced to undergo a radical form of resocialisation that Goffman (1961) calls *mortification*; the individual is subjected to a process, such as being stripped of their civilian clothes, dressed in an identical uniform and only being allowed to speak when spoken to by someone in authority, designed to kill-off ("mortify") previously taken-for-granted behaviours. Once mortification is complete the individual can be resocialised into the *norms* and *values* of their new role.

While this is an extreme example to illustrate a point, there are plenty of times in our lives when we experience milder forms of resocialisation - such as starting school for the first time or when we get a new job…

Developmental

Reflects the fact socialisation is a complex, life-long process; we are constantly being forced to adapt to changing situations and circumstances that involve learning new and different *roles*, relationships and behaviours.

The structure of culture

Understanding the building blocks of socialisation.

roles

are a building block of culture for two reasons:

Firstly, they're always played in relation to other roles.

For someone to play the role of teacher, for example, others must play the role of student. Roles contribute to the creation of culture because they demand both social interactions - people have to cooperate to successfully perform certain tasks - and an awareness of others. Roles help individuals develop *sociality*, the ability to form groups and communities, particularly when they're grouped into *role-sets - a group of related, complementary roles*. This adds a further dimension to the cultural framework because it locks people into a range of relationships, each with their own routines and responsibilities.

Secondly, every role has a name (or *label*). This not only identities particular roles but also carries with it a sense of how people, such as family members or teaching communities, are *expected* to behave in any situation.

values

Strong beliefs about how something *should* be that are held in common with others.

Provide a sense of order and predictability because role-play is governed by behavioural rules in two ways:

• all roles have a prescribed aspect based on beliefs about how people should behave when playing a particular role. Think, for example, about the values teachers or students should display.

Role-play is structured by values that provide general behavioural guidelines - a teacher should teach their students, a parent should care for their child and so forth.

• although values are a general structuring agency they are too vague to do more than paint role behaviour in broad strokes; while we know someone playing the role of teacher *should* teach, values don't tell them *how* to play this role.

As Thio (1991) notes, "*While norms are specific rules dictating how people should act in a particular situation, values are general ideas that support the norm*".

norms

Specific behavioural guides that tell people how to successfully play a role.

Norms are behavioural rules used to perform roles predictably and acceptably - and this is important, according to Merton (1938), because without order and predictability behaviour becomes precarious and confusing and people experience what he called *anomie*. Where people fail to understand the norms operating in a particular situation they are pushed to react in a range of ways, from confusion, through anger to fear. One aspect of mental illness, for example, is an inability to recognise and follow norms - which makes it difficult for someone who is not mentally ill to interact successfully with such people.

Goffman (1959) argues that norms are more open to interpretation and negotiation than either roles or values and this makes them flexible behavioural guides that can quickly adapt to changes in the social environment.

There are, for example, many different ways to successfully play a teaching role, depending on a range of personal and cultural factors, including the behaviour of those in the teacher's role-set. While some teachers interpret their role as strict disciplinarians and others adopt a more-friendly approach these interpretations are not set in stone; even the strictest teacher may relax their approach at certain times.

Roles, values and norms provide an important social *framework* within which relationships can be ordered and made broadly predictable.

beliefs

A further layer of *cultural structuring* involves beliefs: fundamental, deep-rooted, ideas that both shape our values and are, in some respects, shaped by these values.

While all values express a belief, beliefs do not necessarily express a value. They are, in this respect, more general behavioural guidelines in the sense they involve things like ideas, opinions, convictions and attitudes that may or may not be true (something may be objectively untrue but still believed).

What matters is that something is *believed* to be true. While beliefs in modern societies are many and varied they perform a significant structuring role when they are combined into *systems of interrelated beliefs* or *ideologies*.

ideology

A system of interrelated beliefs

Joseph (1990) argues all ideologies are constructed around a set of basic and fundamental beliefs whose ultimate purpose is to explain something, such as:

• the meaning of life (scientific and religious ideologies).

• the nature of family organisation (familial ideologies).

• the superiority / inferiority of selected social groups (such as sexist or racist ideologies).

While the content of ideologies is obviously important, of greater interest here is their *function.*

All ideologies, for example, include elements of *propaganda*, as those who believe in a particular ideological viewpoint seek to convince others about their way of thinking.

In some forms propaganda may be crude and unsophisticated, such as the anti-Jewish propaganda produced by the German Nazi party before and during the 2nd World War, while in others it may be highly sophisticated.

The advertising propaganda surrounding Apple technology, such as the iPhone and iPad, has been both subtle and convincing: Apple is now one of the largest corporations by value in the world (in 1996 it was estimated to only be weeks away from bankruptcy…).
For our purpose the importance of ideologies is less whether they are objectively true or objectively false and more the extent to which they're believed.

Henderson (1981), for example, takes the concept of ideology a little further when she argues

"*An ideology is a pattern of ideas, both factual and evaluative [based on values], which claims to explain and legitimise the social structure and culture of a particular group in society*".

In other words, ideologies provide *justifications* for behaviour in that they "*justify social actions which are in accordance with that pattern of ideas*"; treating men different to women, for example, is justified in some eyes by *patriarchal ideologies*.

This suggests ideologies have a *social solidarity role* in that they bring like-minded people together (as with the very different examples of German Nazis and Apple fanboys) - although we should balance this by noting how the clash of strongly-held ideological beliefs, economic, political, religious and so forth, is also a source of great conflict.

Ideologies are important building blocks in *the social construction of reality* because they play an over-arching structural role in any society.

This follows because they represent complete systems of belief - something Chibnall (1977) suggests that is important because

"*Ideological structures permit events to be "mapped", i.e. located within wider contexts and related to similar events*".

Ideologies, in this sense, are *mental maps* that tell us not only where we've been - our cultural history - but also where, as a society, we want to go in terms of things like economic, political and cultural development.

Ideologies are powerful structuring agencies in any society because they function to pull-together the various strands of our individual and cultural existence and give them coherence; they help, in other words, to map the social world by giving it a sense of meaning, stability and order.

power

Power is an important, but often elusive, concept because it can be defined both:

• *actively* - Dugan (2003) suggests, it involves "the capacity to bring about change".

• *passively*; Lukes (1990), for example, argues one definition involves the power to "do nothing" by the ability to make others believe nothing has to change.

Power also has many sources; Weber (1922), for example, distinguishes between two types:

• coercive power where people are forced to obey under threat of punishment

• consensual power (authority) where people obey because they believe it right to do so.

Authority can be further sub-divided into:

• charismatic power, whereby people obey because they *trust* the person issuing a command.

• traditional power based on custom and practice - 'the way things have always been done'.

• rational / legal power that expresses the idea people expect commands to be obeyed because their position in an authority structure gives them the right to demand compliance.

Power also has a number of dimensions. Lukes, for example, defines power in terms of decision-making: it involves:

• the ability to make decisions, teachers, for example, can decide what their students do in the classroom.

• prevent others making decisions - a teacher can stop their students doing things they might like to do (such as gaze out of the window).

• remove decision-making from the agenda - the ability, as we've suggested, to "do nothing because others are convinced no decision has to be made.

In terms of understanding how power relates to the social construction of reality, Giddens (2001) suggests it involves

'*the ability of individuals or groups to make their own concerns or interests count, even where others resist*'.

Power, in this respect, allows some individuals and groups to impose their definition of reality on others and, by so doing, create a sense of order and stability.

However, when thinking about the significance of power as a cohesive force, Foucault (1983) argues power in *contemporary* societies is different to power in *past* societies because it is opaque or 'difficult to see'; people are *unaware* of the actual power others, such as governments, hold over them - something that comes about because the way people *think* about and *experience* power in everyday life has changed.

In the past social control was mainly based on 'raw (*coercive*) power' - from a monarch exercising supreme power to prison systems that maintained total control over the body.

In modern societies power, for Foucault, is exercised in increasingly subtle modes of domination, such as the expansion of technological surveillance - both "from above", such as CCTV, and "below" - modern smartphones, for example, used to film people's everyday behaviour that is then publicised through social media.

Foucault further argues that both knowledge about the social world and the language we use to express such knowledge are aspects of belief systems that control behaviour by dominating how people *think* about the world.

If, for example, we believe in ideas like "male" and "female" this conditions how we behave both *as* males and females and *towards* other males and females.

Although, as the above suggests, reality is socially constructed, the actual construction process itself involves a complex relationship between beliefs, ideologies and power on the one hand - the over-arching structural elements of culture - and the *day-to-day construction process* built on ideas about roles, values and norms.

the "i" and the "me"

Just as basic human skills have to be taught and learnt, the Symbolic Interactionist George Herbert Mead (1934) argued the same was true of more-advanced social skills - an idea he explored by noting that how we behave is conditioned by the *social context* in which behaviour occurs.

Mead argued self-awareness - the ability to "see ourselves" as others see us and react accordingly - is learnt and it is the ability to develop a concept of self that makes humans different to animals.

For Mead "The Self" (an awareness of who we are) has two related aspects:

• An "*I*" aspect based around your opinion of yourself as a whole. You respond to the behaviour of others as an "I" and Mead called this "*the unsocialised self*".

• A "*Me*" aspect that consists of an *awareness* of how other people expect us to behave in any given situation - something he called "*the socialised self*"

These ideas can be illustrated in the following way.

If you accidentally put your hand in a fire, the "I" aspect of the Self is expressed by how you react to the pain.

The "Me" aspect, however, specifically conditions how you *choose* to express that pain; this will be conditioned by things like:

• who you are - whether you are male or female, adult or child and so forth.

• where you are - alone at home or in a public place.

• who you are with - such as family, friends or strangers.

If you are a young child, for example, your reaction to being burnt may be to cry.

If you are a young man, you may feel crying is not a socially-acceptable reaction - so you may swear loudly instead. Swearing loudly may be acceptable if you are at home by yourself, but may not be acceptable if you are fixing a stranger's fire as part of your job.

Similarly, if you had been messing around with friends when you burnt your hand, their reaction to your accident may be to laugh and make fun of your pain.

Laughter would not be an appropriate reaction if it was your child that had burnt their hand.

SHORTCUTSTV

HOME   SOCIOLOGY   PSYCHOLOGY   CRIME   BLOG

BLOG

WELCOME TO THE SHORTCUTSTV BLOG

Saturday, December 23rd, 2017
This is the part of the site we use to post anything we think might be of interest to teachers and students of Sociology and Psychology – from announcements about new Sociology, Psychology and Criminology films, to teaching and learning Notes, PowerPoints, web sites, software – just about anything that piques our interest, really.

In January 2021 we passed *700 individual Blog posts* and to make it easier for you to find a particular post on a particular topic we've added a range of functions (on the bar to the right) that should help:

· *Search Box*: if you're looking for something specific among our many, many, posts. It's not very clever so try to Keep It Simple.

· *Recent Posts* displays the most recent posts (yes, really). Not the most useful widget in the world. Obviously.

· *SCTV Archive*: This is actually useful if you want a quick way to look back through the posts we've made by month / year. Just click the selection you want from the drop-down list.

· *Popular Tags*: identifies the most popular keywords used in posts (the larger the word, the more posts there are about it). Just click the word to see the posts…

· *Top Posts and Pages*: identifies the posts that have had the most views so you can benefit from the Wisdom of the Crowd. Or something.

SCTV Blog
Search
Search   Search

Follow Us
You'll be notified every time we post a new resource.
Email Address
Follow

Categories
Select Category

Recent Posts
Augmented Reality: A Variable-Sum Game? May 15, 2022
Media Methods and Representations:

The ShortCutstv blog currently hosts nearly 800 posts giving teachers and students free access to a wide range of Sociology resources - from textbooks to knowledge organisers, revision resources, book chapters teaching notes and a whole lot more…

textbooks

simulations

knowledge organisers

teaching notes

book chapters

revision resources

Subscribe to the ShortCutstv A-level Sociology Blog and never miss another post…

the presentation

If the social context of an act changes both its meaning and how people react it follows that an awareness of self is constructed and developed socially. It also follows that who we believe ourselves to be - our sense of identity - is also, as Goffman (1959) argues, constructed socially through the ways we present ourselves to others.

In this respect he proposed a ***dramaturgical model of self and identity*** where social life is seen as a series of dramatic episodes and scenarios.

People, in this respect, are *actors* sometimes write and speak their own lines (our personal identity) and sometimes simply follow lines already written - the influence of social identities that tell people how to behave in particular situations and roles.

Our knowledge of how society defines things like masculinity and femininity, for example, gives us clues about how we are expected to behave if we are male or female.

As Barnhart (1994) puts it: "*Interaction is viewed as a performance, shaped by environment and audience, constructed to provide others with impressions" that match "the desired goals of the actor*".

of self

The idea of creating an impression is also significant in relation to how we present ourselves in different situations and contexts.

When we adopt a particular identity we "perform" to others in ways that, Goffman suggests, attempt to "manage the impression others have of us".

Identity performance, therefore, is directed at achieving desired ends (what we want from others); when you want to create a favourable impression with someone you "act" in ways you believe they will like. Every social encounter, therefore, is just one more part of the act. This isn't to say we simply use people for our own particular ends; rather, in the majority of social encounters other people are used, Cooley (1909) suggests, as a looking-glass self. People are like mirrors that reflect "our self as others see us"; when we "look into the mirror" of how others behave towards us we see reflected an image of the person *they* think we are.

The presentation of self always involves two characteristics.

Firstly, *interpretation*: identities are *broad* social categories whose meaning can differ, both *historically* and *cross-culturally*.

Secondly, *negotiation*. Identities, because they are socially created, are always open to discussion; what it *means* to be male, female, young, old and so forth is constantly changing as people "push the negotiated boundaries" of these identities.

social control

Socialisation represents a process through which a society tries to bring *order, stability* and *predictability* to people's behaviour. If a child is socialised into "a right way to do something", such as eating with a knife and fork, there must also be a "wrong" or deviant way (such as eating with their fingers) to be discouraged.

Socialisation, in this respect, is a form of *social control* that Pfohl (1998) characterises thus: "*Imagine deviance as noise - a cacophony of subversions disrupting the harmony of a given social order. Social control is the opposite. It labours to transform the noisy challenge of difference into the music of conformity*".

Social control relates to the idea human behaviour involves a life-long process of rule-learning, underpinned by sanctions - the things we do to make people conform.

• Positive sanctions (*rewards*) are the pleasant things we do to make people behave in routine, predictable, ways; these range from smiling, through praise and encouragement to gifts.

• Negative sanctions (*punishments*) are the reverse and these range from not talking to people if they annoy us, putting people in prison or even the ultimate negative sanction, perhaps, killing them.

Social controls take two basic forms:

1. Formal controls involve written rules, such as laws that apply equally to everyone in a society and non-legal rules that apply to everyone playing a particular role in an organisation (such as a school or factory). Sanctions are enforced by agencies of social control, such as the police and legal system. While formal written rules tell everyone within a group *exactly* what is and is not acceptable behaviour rule infringement (deviance) brings with it the threat of formal sanction - such as a fine or imprisonment for breaking the law or being sacked for breaking a company's organisational rules.

2. Informal controls exist to reward or punish acceptable / unacceptable behaviour between people in everyday, informal, settings (such as the family) and don't normally involve written rules and procedures. Rather, they operate through *informal enforcement mechanisms* that include things like ridicule, sarcasm, disapproving looks, personal violence and so forth.

Such controls mainly apply to the regulation of *primary* relationships and groups, although there are exceptions because primary relationships can occur in secondary groups - a teacher, for example, may also be a friend or even a relative.

They also relate to the "unofficial rules" we create in informal groups and while some might be generally applicable (punching people in the face is probably universally unacceptable - unless you're in a boxing ring) the majority are specific to particular groups. Swearing among friends, for example, may not invite sanction, but swearing at your mother or father might.

A final aspect of social control is the idea of *self control*. We don't need to be constantly told where behavioural boundaries lie because we learn the norms - and what might happen if we break them - that apply in certain situations. If you continually skip your sociology class you may be asked to leave the course and if you don't want this to happen, you control your behaviour to obey the attendance norm.

Countdown to Culture...

3-minute, film that identifies and explains 10 functions of culture:

- *Communication*
- *Perception*
- *Identity*
- *Social Solidarity*
- *Social integration*
- *Values*
- *Motivation*
- *Stratification*
- *Production and consumption Norms*

5 Functions of Identity

Short film that identifies and explains 5 functions of identity:

- *Structure*
- *Goals*
- *Personal control*
- *Harmony*
- *Futures*

Introductory
What is Sociology?
Identity
Sociology and Commonsense
Social Constructionism

Methods
Case Studies
Triangulation
Making Friends with Methods
Participant Observation
Self-Report Methods

Family
Childhood and New Technology
Family and Social Change
Family Diversity
The End of Childhood?

Crime
Crime and Gender
Crime and Moral Panics
Crime and the Night-time Economy
Durkheim and the Functions of Crime
Hate Crime
Labelling Theory
Situational Crime Prevention
Space, Place and Broken Windows
Strain Theory
Rethinking Moral Panics

Religion
New Religions, Alternative Spiritualities
Religion: What it is and What it does
Secularisation: The Decline of Religion?

ShortCutstv's Video-on-Demand service brings high-quality, professionally scripted, filmed, presented and edited social science films into the A-level classroom.

The films combine professional presenters with top British and American academic contributors to create short films that can be integrated into the A-level curriculum to enhance student interest and understanding of key ideas, theories and research methods.

All of our films are available to either buy outright or on 7-day rental.

Use the links on this page to view trailers for all of our Sociology and Psychology films.

ADVERT

types of socialisation 2

As **Podder and Bergvall's** (2004) note "T*he human being is a social creature and we need rules for interaction with one another*" and this means social life requires *rules of behaviour*.

These are taught and learned through a *socialisation process* involving two main types:

Primary socialisation occurs, according to **Cooley** (1909), within *primary groups* containing relationships that involve "*intimate face-to-face association and cooperation… fundamental in forming the social nature and ideals of the individual*".

For most of us the first primary relationship we form is with our parent(s), followed by primary attachments to people of our own general age (our *peers*) and, subsequently with other adults (such as people with whom we work).

2. Secondary socialisation occurs within *secondary groups where* socialisation is characterised, as **Berger and Luckmann** (1967) note, by "*a sense of detachment…from the ones teaching socialisation*"; these are situations where the individual doesn't necessarily have close, personal and / or face-to-face contacts with the people responsible for doing the socialising.

Secondary socialisation reflects the idea that we have to learn to deal with people who are not emotionally close to us. In other words, while we may not like or love them, we need to get on with them.

Primary socialisation is necessary because human infants require the assistance of other members of society to develop as both human beings (the walking, talking, bit) and as members of a culture (the learning roles, norms and values bit).

Secondary socialisation is also necessary because, for **Parsons** (1951), one of its main purposes (or *functions*) is to: "Liberate the individual from a dependence upon the primary attachments and relationships formed within the family group". In other words, in modern societies the majority of people we meet are *strangers* and it would be impossible to relate to them in the same way we relate to people we love or know well. This means we need to learn:

Instrumental relationships - how to deal with people in terms of what they can do for us and what we can do for them in particular situations (the opposite of the **affective relationships** we find in primary groups).

Berger and Luckmann (1967), for example, suggest that while primary socialisation involves "*emotionally charged identification*" with people like our parents, secondary socialisation is characterised by "*formality and anonymity*" - you don't, for example, treat a total stranger who stops you in the street to ask directions as your closest friend in all the world…

agencies

Agents of socialisation are people responsible for teaching us "the rules" of social behaviour and interaction: the first *agency* responsible for primary socialisation is usually our *family* and the main agents are *parents* (although immediate relations such as brothers and sisters and wider relation such as grandparents may also be involved). In most societies the family group initially takes responsibility for teaching the basic things we need to learn as part of growing-up, such as how to walk, talk and use culture-appropriate tools (such as knives and forks) and behaviours. Parents are also influential in teaching basic values, such as their perception of right and wrong behaviour, how to relate appropriately to other people such as family, friends, strangers and so forth.

Socialisation, however, isn't simply a process whereby a socialising agent, such as a parent, teaches behaviour that is then copied without question. Although part of a child's socialisation does involve copying the behaviour they see around them (acted out through various forms of play and games, for example), the child is also *actively* involved - they don't, for example, always obey their parents. Children may also receive *contradictory socialisation* messages from differing agents – a kindly relative may reward behaviour that a parent would punish. Many of the things we learn during our initial, family-based, socialisation stay with us for life, mainly because we learn *basic behavioural rules* that can be applied to new and different situations (such as how to behave towards adults – teachers or strangers for example – who are not personally related to us).

Secondary socialising *agencies* may include schools, religious organisations, the media and so forth and the agents include people like teachers, priests, television personalities and pop stars. In some cases, such as in school, we are in daily, face-to-face contact with the people socialising us, without ever developing a primary attachment to them. In other cases, such as admiring a particular actor or singer, we may never meet them, yet we can still be influenced by how they look, what they do and how they do it.

Although there are a relatively limited number of family roles, both for adults and children, these tend to be played-out over long periods and involve complex forms of role development - especially in societies that allow things like divorce and remarriage. Adults, for example, may have to learn roles ranging from husband / wife to parent / step-parent, while child development involves learning roles ranging through baby, infant, child, teenager and, eventually perhaps, an adult with children of their own.

The ability to develop roles within the context of a group mainly governed, according to Parsons (1951) by affective relationships based on love, affection, responsibility and duty, means mistakes can be made and lessons learned without too much harm being caused.

As Horwitz (2005) argues "*Families help us to learn the explicit and tacit social rules necessary for functioning in the wider world, and families are uniquely positioned to do so because it is those closest to us who have the knowledge and incentives necessary to provide that learning*".

Parents, in this respect, are normally what Mead calls **significant others** - people whose opinions we value. They are influential in shaping both basic values, such as how to address adults and *moral values*, such as the difference between right and wrong.

Although they differ between families, learning basic norms such as how to address family members (*Mum*, *Dad*), when, where and how to eat and sleep, definitions of acceptable behaviour and the like are normally taught within the family.

Sanctions are mainly *informal*, with positive sanctions involving things like:

- facial expressions (smiling, for example),
- verbal approval / reinforcement ("Such a good boy / girl").
- physical rewards (such as gifts).

Negative sanctions are similarly wide-ranging - from showing disapproval through language (such as **SHOUTING**) to physical punishment.

While primary socialisation is often seen as a *one-way process* that passes from adults to children, socialisation is generally more complicated than simply teaching behaviour that is then adopted without question.

Although children are socialised by *copying* behaviour - Hartley (1959) argues imitation of adult family behaviours, such as girls "helping mum" with domestic chores - is a significant dimension of socialisation, they're also *actively* involved in negotiating their own socialisation; children don't, for example, always obey their parents. They may also receive *contradictory socialisation* messages - a relative may reward behaviour a parent would punish.

peer groups

Peer groups, involving people of a similar age, such as teenagers, are both primary agencies - we usually choose friends of a similar age and personal interaction with them impacts on our behaviour, from how we dress and talk to the things we like or loathe - and secondary agencies of socialisation: they may be used as a **reference group** - what Hughes et. al. (2002) call "*the models we use for appraising and shaping our attitudes, feelings and actions*"

Although we may never personally interact with these groups, behaviour can be influenced by things like peer fashions and general behaviour - an example of *peer pressure* as a form of *social control*.

We play a range of peer-related roles, depending on our age group and situation.

"Friend", for example, expresses very personal role play, whereas at school or work we may have a variety of *acquaintances*.

In the workplace too, we're likely to play the role of *colleague* to at least some of our peers.

The values we're taught within a peer group will vary with things like age and circumstances and peer group norms often relate to ideas about age-appropriate behaviour; young children, for example, are not allowed to smoke or buy alcohol in countries like the UK and USA,

Conversely, it's generally not considered age-appropriate for the elderly to take-part in extreme sports or wear clothes considered more-appropriate to younger age groups.

Peer group sanctions are generally informal - things like disapproving looks and disparaging comments. This is mainly because peer group norms vary considerably, with the same behaviour in different situations producing different responses.

Swearing at your grandmother, for example, will probably be met with disapproval; swearing among friends may actually be a norm. Approving gestures and language, laughing at your "jokes" and seeking out your company represent positive sanctions, while refusing to speak to you, rejecting your friendship and physical violence are negative sanctions.

powerpoint presentation

This Presentation identifies a range of primary and secondary socialising agencies - family, peers, education, workplace, media and religion - and provides some simple information / examples for each in five categories:

- Behaviour

- Roles

- Norms

- Values

- Sanctions.

The basic ideas behind the Presentation are two-fold:

Firstly, to develop a simple, consistent, way for students to understand the role and function of different socialising agencies – hence the fact each agency is considered in terms of the same 5 categories – as an early attempt to introduce the notion of ***transferable concepts***.

This is the idea that if you can remember a concept or, in this instance, set of related concepts, that can be applied in one context (such as the family) you may also be able to apply the same concept/s in another context (such as the media). It doesn't always work, but in a lot of instances it does.

Secondly, and somewhat less ambitiously, the main idea was to present an example or two in each category for each agency (such as Family Values or Religious Norms) that could be used as discussion prompts. Students can use the given examples as a way of both generating their own examples and, if you have the time and inclination, taking them a little more deeply into the topic.

For example, while the conventional way of looking at agencies of socialisation is to divide them into two groups – primary and secondary – is this always as simple as it seems?

Education, for example, is frequently cited as a secondary socialising agency (which it is) – but it may also contain primary socialising elements (embodied in the relationship, for example, between teachers and students, students and students etc.).
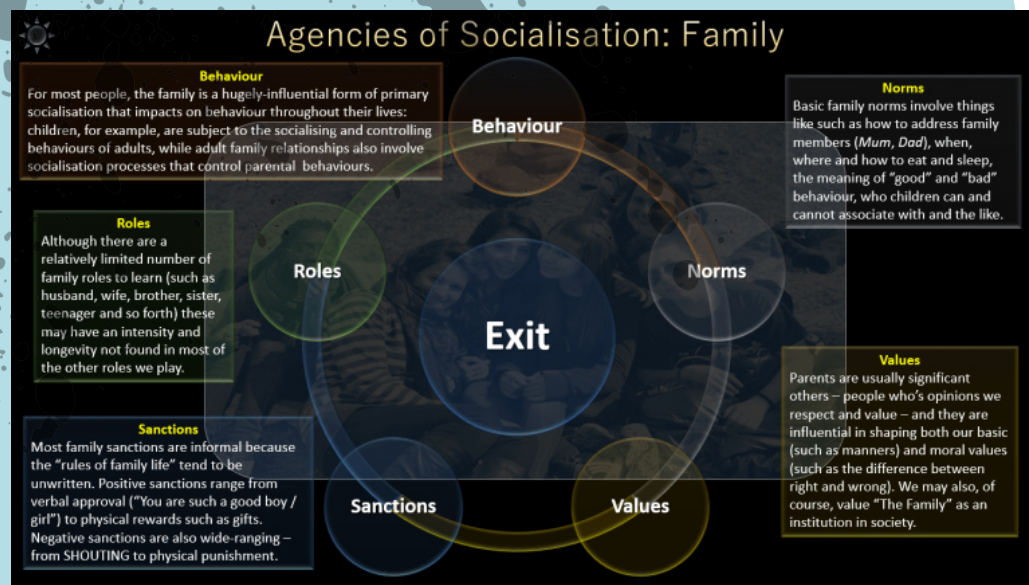
media

The media is a slightly-unusual secondary agency because our relationship with it is *impersonal*; we're unlikely to ever meet those doing the socialising, although it's more than possible for people to develop **parasocial relationships** with various new and old media personalities. That is, we behave *as if* we know these people personally and they become very influential figures in our social development.

While there's no conclusive evidence the media have a *direct*, long-term, affect on behaviour, there is stronger evidence of *short-term* effects. Advertising, for example, aims to make *short-term changes* in behaviour by encouraging people to try different consumer products. Potter (2003) suggests short-term effects include:

• imitation, such as copying behaviour seen on television;

• desensitisation, the idea constant and repeated exposure to something, such as violence or poverty progressively lowers our emotional reaction and

• learning - the media introduce us to new and novel ideas and places.

There's also evidence for *indirect long-term* effects. Chandler (1995) for example argues "*Television has long-term effects, which are small, gradual, indirect but cumulative and significant*".

The same is true for exposure to something like social media. Potter, for example, argues these effects include things like:

• consumerism - repeated exposure to affluent lifestyles and desirable consumer goods suggests "happiness" is something that can bought.

• Fear: "Heavy exposure to negative and violent" media leads some people to overestimate things like the extent of crime and their likelihood of being a victim.

• agenda-setting. Philo et al (1982) argue the media determines how something will be debated; in the UK, for example, immigration is framed in terms of "numbers of immigrants" and Islam is frequently discussed in the context of "terrorism" - the media *sub-text* being "Muslim = terrorist".

The extent to which the media can *impose* its values on behaviour is uncertain, but it does represent a powerful force in terms of supporting or marginalising certain values.

The media has a (loud) voice in debates over nationality (what it means to be "British" or "Chinese" for example) and also promotes certain values while devaluing others; the majority of English newspapers, even in 2022, 6 years after the Brexit referendum, still take a strident "anti-European Community" stance, for example.

Potter suggests this involves a process of *habituation* - the more people are exposed to certain images and ideas the greater the likelihood they will incorporate them into their personal value systems.

In relation to norms, the media has a *boundary-marking function*; it publicises acceptable and unacceptable forms of behaviour to reinforce perceptions of expected behaviours.

This is true of both old media, such as television, and new media such as Facebook (Meta?), Twitter and the like.

This idea does, however, work both ways; the media can try to:

• *preserve* particular ways of behaving (through campaigns to "save the family", for example) and

• *promote changes* in behaviour (such as campaigns against racism).

In this respect the media employs a range of positive sanctions that involve the use of praise, flattering pictures and uncritical features, whereas negative sanctions involve things like being pictured in an unflattering pose, critical articles or behaviour being held up to public ridicule.

education

Education involves two kinds of curricula:

• a formal curriculum that specifies what children are explicitly taught in school; this includes both *knowledge* of particular subjects, such as history or biology and *skills*, such as learning to read, write or solve mathematical problems.

• an informal or "hidden" curriculum (Jackson, 1968) involving the things we learn from the experience of attending school, such as how to deal with strangers and deference to adult authority.

School is also a place where we "learn to limit our individual desires" – to think about the possible needs of others rather than our own immediate and perhaps selfish needs. It's also one of the first times children are separated from their parent(s) for any length and it provides both *opportunities* (to demonstrate your talents to a wider, non-family, audience) and *traumas* - the need to learn, for example, how to deal with people who are "not family" or *authority figures* such as teachers.

Parsons (1959) argued school plays a particularly significant role in secondary socialisation for two reasons:

1. It "emancipates the child from primary attachment" to their family and functions to ease children away from the affective relationships found in the family by introducing them to the instrumental relationships they will increasingly meet in adult life.

2. It allows children to "*internalise a level of society's values and norms that is a step higher than those learnt within families*". Through interaction with "strangers" in the educational system the child begins to internalise (adopt as part of their personal value system) wider social values. This process functions to loosen the hold of primary groups, such as the family, in order to gradually integrate children into adult society - something that also promotes social solidarity and value consensus.

Like any institution schools involve a range of roles, such as teacher and pupil, that are linked into a range of related roles called a role-set - something that further extends the idea of cultural relationships because we become locked-into a range of *expected behaviours*. A pupil, for example, plays this role in relation to other roles with a school that include:

• other pupils in their class.
• pupils of different ages.
• their subject teachers.
• teachers of other subjects.
• caretaking staff.
• administration staff.
• parent(s) / guardian(s).

Schools project a range of values, from the idea pupils should work hard to achieve qualifications to ideas about individual competition for academic rewards, teamwork especially in sports, conformity to authority (not questioning what is being learnt and why it is necessary to learn it) and achievement on the basis of merit; pupils "achieve what they deserve". In many education systems one "covert value" is that academic ability, such as a talent for writing essays, is more highly valued than vocational ability, such as bricklaying. Many of these values relate not just to education but also to the wider social world, especially that of the workplace.

Bowles and Gintis (2002), from a Marxist perspective, argue for a *correspondence* between school norms and workplace norms: "*Schools prepare pupils for adult work rules by socialising them to function well, and without complaint, in the hierarchical structure of the modern corporation*". This correspondence theory is evidenced through school norms like:

• the daily need for attendance.
• always being in the place pupils are supposed to be at certain times.
• the right of those in authority to give orders that must be obeyed.

These ideas are backed up by positive sanctions that include the gaining of grades, qualifications and prizes, as well as more-personal things like praise and encouragement.

On the *negative* side, schools use detentions, suspensions and exclusions; failure to achieve qualifications or gaining a reputation for a lack of intelligence also function as negative sanctions, at least from the viewpoint of teachers, if not always from that of the pupil.

religion

Whether or not we see ourselves as "religious", religion plays a significant role in the general socialisation process in many societies, particularly in relation to ceremonial functions, such as marriages, christenings and funerals. It can also be argued important moral values have been strongly influenced by religious values; many of Christianity's "10 Commandments", for example, are reflected in legal systems around the world.

In terms of moral beliefs, few people would argue you should be allowed to kill people or that theft is desirable. On the other hand, many of the world's major religions, from Christianity to Islam, are frequently characterised, particularly by feminists, as promoting *patriarchy* through both their general organisation - many religions have an exclusively male clergy - and the gender values they promote. Swatos (1998), however, argues many contemporary religions are undergoing fundamental changes that make them more "female friendly": God, for example, portrayed as loving and consoling rather than as authoritarian and judgemental and clergy seen as "helping professionals" rather than 'representatives of God's justice'.

Religious values are, of course, powerful forces for those who believe and these range from religion as a "design for living" - one that provides help and guidance to live a life in accord with god - to religious beliefs and values as a source of conflict:

• between religions, such as the history of conflict between Christians and Muslims dating back to the 11th century.

• within the same religion; Northern Ireland, for example, has experienced major conflicts between Protestant and Catholic Christians.

Religious values are frequently displayed through styles of dress, such as the Muslim "Hijab" or Sikh turban, something that indicates both *religiosity* (a measure of people's commitment to religion) and ethnic identity. They are also expressed through notions of patriarchy and social control.

Although, as Steggerda (1993) notes, Christianity promotes concepts of love and care that are attractive to women and Daly (1973) argues that in a "male-dominated world" religions provide women with a sense of shelter (a "home and haven"), safety in a threatening world and belonging (a sense of personal identity), the price they pay for these benefits is submission to patriarchal authority.

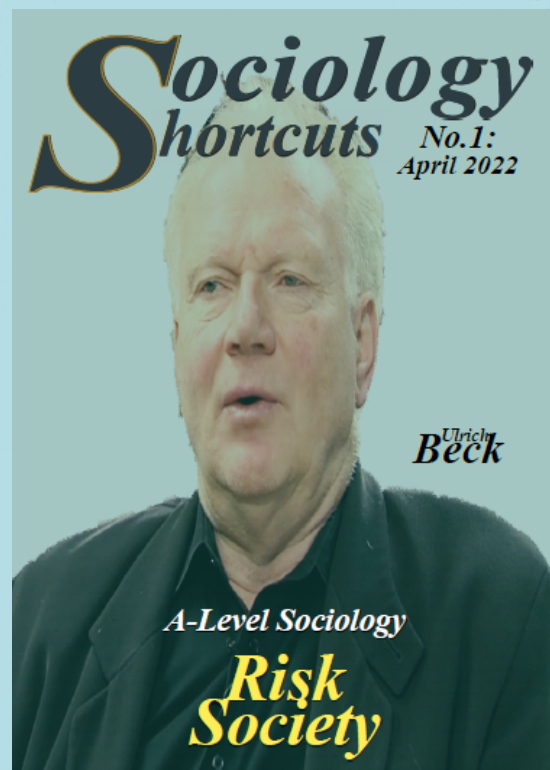The power of religions to apply positive sanctions to believers is evidenced in different ways:

• Hinduism, for example, involves a belief in *reincarnation* (after death you are reborn into a new life) based on how well you observed religious laws in your previous life; the reward for good behaviour in one lifetime is rebirth into a higher social position.

• Notions of *sin* in Christian religions can also be significant features of religious control, because the believer is encouraged to live a life free of sin in the hope of heavenly reward.

Negative sanctions on the other hand are many and varied; Catholicism, for example, has the sanction of excommunication (exclusion from the Church) whereas some forms of Islam specify a range of punishments for those who break Shari'ah law. Such punishments may also be applied to "non believers" in theocratic societies, such as Iran, where government is dominated by religious authorities.
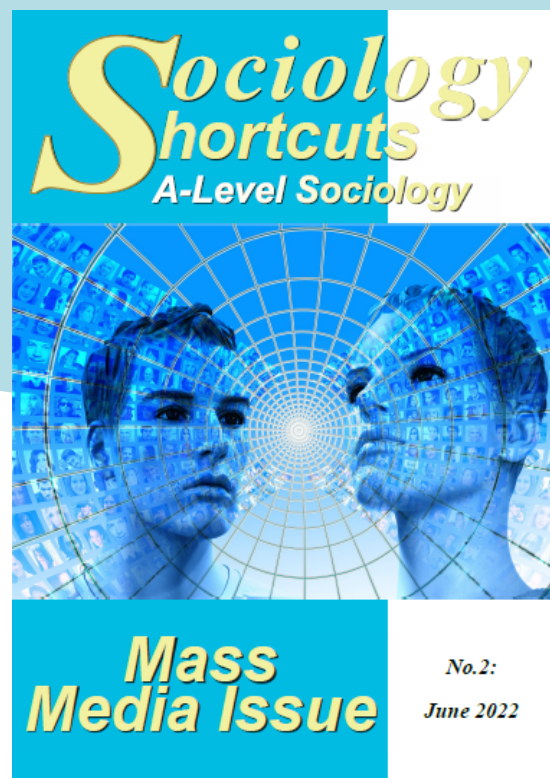
Picture Credits

Back issues

Issue 1: April 2022

Issue 2: June 2022

ShortCutstv

shortcutstv.com

Say Hello (or Wave Goodbye)

Facebook

Blog