



**Dr. Nandini
Chatterjee**

Professor, Department of Home Science
University of Calcutta

Dr. Nandini Chatterjee is a Professor in Social Science. Her areas of interest in research are Women's Studies, Qualitative Methods, Social Problems.

E-mail: nandinichatterjee24@gmail.com

Sociology is the scientific study of societies and human behaviour. The basic premise of sociology is that human behaviour is largely determined by the groups to which people belong and by the society in which they live. A perspective is a point of view or a distinctive way of viewing something. Sociology offers a unique perspective on human beings, recognising that human behaviour consists of far more than individuals acting independently on each other. The sociological perspective emphasizes the powerful role the group that group membership and social factors play in shaping behaviour. Sociologists focus on social interaction and social relationships rather than on individuals. Each person is born into a particular group in a

given society, and life becomes a progression from one set of groups to another. Most of us begin our lives in a family, which provides us with social standing in a community and makes available certain fundamental opportunities in life – to learn, mature and become independent. As we grow later we develop friendships and enter school. Aspirations and desires that will shape our choices later in life are nurtured by each of these very important groups. As adults, we may develop our own families or establish intimate ties with other adults. In a sense, we are never really alone because we constantly remember, reflect upon and imagine how others have responded to us. The sociological perspective then, concentrates upon human groups and their multiple influences on human behaviour.

A key element on the sociological perspective is the acute recognition that beliefs, values and behaviours are relative to particular groups or societies and can be understood only in the context of those affiliations. The members of a group or society share a view of reality that determines what they believe to be right or wrong, proper or reprehensible. This means that tremendous diversity exists in human behaviour from one social setting to another. The social practices can be completely understood unless it is viewed in the context of the shared view of reality found in a particular culture. Within our own society, there is also considerable variation in beliefs, values and behaviours from one group to another. Both within our own society and across cultures, has led sociologists to realize that beliefs, values and behaviour can be understood only within the social context where they occur. The sociological perspective, then

is a form of consciousness because it leads to a unique awareness of the world. This awareness also enables people to approach their own lies with introspection and insight.

The Social Context of Personality Development

Every society has to socialize its young. By this term it is indicated that the child, considered biologically, has to be brought to the position where he behaves in a way appropriate to his place in that society. He has to learn how to control his impulses or natural tendencies, and to attain the many basic skills both interpersonal and technical, necessary for him to take his place in that society bearing in mind his age and sex. In all societies much of this is done without formal teaching although in no society are things left entirely to chance. In societies other than the simplest ones, the school plays a considerable part in this process. At the outset it must be stressed that anthropologists and sociologists have made many studies of the patterns of arrangements made for socialising the child, but far fewer of the effects of these practices on child behaviour.

Cultural Influences

It is now well known that the culture pattern in which a child is brought up does shape the developing personality even although we do not know its exact effects. The work of Malinowski and Mead showed the great variability of behaviour in different cultures, so what had been thought of as essential 'human behaviour' was shown to be the product of that particular culture patterns in which the individual was reared. There are many reasons why both culture, and variables specific to a society, should be taken into account in attempting to estimate the effect of socialisation procedures. In the first place it is difficult within a single society to distinguish the effects on the child of other people's behaviour and the meaning the child gives to these behaviours.

Second, although we cannot define the phrase, 'child rearing practices' precisely – in a general way it means all the interactions between parents and their children – it is important to try to find out if given child rearing practices are only effective with certain other conditions existing within the cultural context. Third, the range of behaviors found in any one cultural context is limited. But having made a study of cross cultural studies of socialisation practices it must also be said that the behaviour of individuals will never be predictable from culture alone. There will always remain individual differences in biological make up and hence in impermanence; cultural impacts on the child will always come through particular people who have their own specific set of behaviors and practices; while each child has his unique experiences.

So far it has been assumed that perhaps child rearing practices are the cause and antecedents of personality and culture. There is also evidence that child rearing practices can be the product of the certain aspects of the culture.

Maternal behaviour is very important for the social and emotional development of the children. (by Bowlb). During the first three years of life maternal love was associated with

children who were happy, Colin showed an interest in the environment and made an effort when given a task.

Social class also influences child development by social class is meant the manner in which people are ranked in the hierarchy of power and prestige. Middle class parents have different expectations for their children than unskilled workers.

Regardless of social class, most parents do look to the future when considering the qualities they value for their children. But the varying social groups see their offspring playing different roles in adult life. Thus middle class parents and lower working differ in respect of the traits they want their children to develop in the present. American studies (Kohn) suggest that middle class parents emphasize internalised standards of conduct yielding self-control, while working class parents stress qualities that ensure respectability ex. Obedience. Thus working class mothers tend to put more value conformity to certain rules and judge a child's actions in terms of their immediate consequences, whereas middle class mothers tend to judge their child's actions in terms of feelings, interactions and maintain.

It is also fair to say that among middle class parents there is a great degree of permissiveness in respect of the child needs and desires, but greater pressure is placed on the child in respect of a high level of performance in school work and achievement generally. So while we find greater freedom for the middle class child in respect of some aspects of his behaviour, much more is expected of him in other ways.

The points however must be stressed the statements made above are generalisations. Some working class parents do have middle class values in matters of behaviour and achievement's while some affluent families have two cars in the garage but few books in the home. Wiseman has produced evidence that parental attitude to school to education and the books are of more importance in respect of scholastic attainment in the primary school than are social class and educational level. He has also show that among secondary school children that the quality of maternal care is of great importance to the attainment of children. Also individual characteristics good role models, and opportunities in later childhood and adolescence, are all of value in personality Cohen first proposed what has become known as the status deprivation theory. In essence this claims that everyone in essence is everyone is sensitive to the evaluations of others, especially those in authority. Inability to gain status, or loss of status, may mean a serious adjustment problem for some young people. Middle class values such as individual responsibility, skill, ambition, respect for property and so on are expected of everyone in a democracy. But in Cohens, view social class differences in outlook coupled with differences in housing standards leave money youngsters ill equipped to measure up to and accept middle class values and standards. Because of this they are not held in high esteem by teachers and other representatives of authority which in turn leads to their losing their self-esteem.

Cloward and Ohlin think somewhat differently. They argue that deviant personalities in delinquent subcultures arise from the fact that there are not the opportunities for advancement

among children in the lower social classes. Boys who want only higher incomes and are not concerned with getting into a higher social class – and so do not seem to be concerned about middle class esteem react against the unjust distribution of opportunity and become hostile to society. This is known as the opportunity structure theory.

According to Miller the quality of relationships between mother and child, other close adults which can give security and a sense of personal status to the child, the socialize provided in the early years affecting qualities of character; the biological equipment of the child which makes it easier or more difficult to tolerate frustration.

It is difficult to know what is meant by the term ‘maternal deprivation’ although much has been written about its effect on personal development. Yarrow in an excellent view of the relevant literature discuss, four kinds of deviation from what may be broadly called normal maternal care. These are: separation from a mother or mother substitute, distortion in the quality of mothering. Rejection, over protection, ambivalence multiple mothering and institutionalisation.

It is known that severe sensory deprivation before the first birthday, if it continues long enough, can lead to marked failure in intellectual development. Before we can speak with certainty about maternal deprivation and personality development we also need to know about the child’s constitutional characteristics the exact nature of the deprivation, its intensity and how long it continued. In addition we need to know far more about the extent to which the situation can be reversed if action is taken early enough.

Readings:

Bandura, A. and Walters, R.K. Social Learning and Personality Development. New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston 1963

Casler, L. ‘Maternal Deprivation: A critical Review of the Literature Monogr, Soc Res, Child Development, 26(2) 1961

Kaplan, B (Ed.) Handbook of Social Psychology, Chap 17 (Reading, Mass, Addison Wesley 1954)

Merrill, F.E. Society and Culture Chap 7 – 10. London: Prentice Hall, 3rd ed. 1954.

Newcombe, T.M and Harley, E.L (ed) Readings in Social Psychology Parts III and VIII New York: Henry Holt, 1958

Sargent, S.S and Williamson, R.C.

Social Psychology, Chapter – 6 New York: Ronald Press 1966

WHO, Deprivation of Maternal Care: A Re-assessment of its effects (Public Health Papers, No. 14 1962)