

WIRE A NOTE ON Sociability of Individual?

The importance of society in human life cannot be ignored. However, there exists a disagreement between scholars on the nature of society whether reality is shaped for humans by society or are humans shaping reality themselves, using the theoretical concept of society. Whatever the synthesis of this argument may be, one cannot ignore the fact that society is composed of interacting individuals. Members of a society connect in different associations whether they are economic, political, religious or social. But why do men get into association? One explanation is given by George Simmel.

THEORY OF SOCIABILITY BY SIMMEL:

Sociability: It is the quality of being friendly and enjoying spending time with other people. It means liking to talk, interact and be part of social groups.

George Simmel (1858-1918) was a German sociologist, philosopher and cultural critic and is considered one of the founding figures in the field of sociology. His work helped lay the intellectual foundations for modern sociology and influenced a wide range of disciplines including philosophy, psychology and cultural studies.

KEY POINTS OF SIMMEL'S THEORY OF SOCIABILITY:

1- Sociability as playful Interaction:

Sociability is seen as a form of "play" where the interaction itself is the goal. It is not about achieving something practical or serious but rather about having fun and enjoying the social connection.

Example:

A group of friends gathering for a casual dinner, chatting and laughing without any particular purpose other than to enjoy each other's company.

2- Sociability vs. other Social Interactions

Simmel distinguishes sociability from other forms of interaction, such as work-related or necessity-driven interactions. Sociability occurs when people come together purely for the sake of social enjoyment, not for any material or functional reason.

Example:

At a workplace, people might interact to complete tasks (e.g. team working on a project), whereas sociability would occur during a coffee break where employees chat about their personal lives, enjoying light-hearted conversation.

3- Freedom within Social Interactions:

Sociability offers freedom in social exchanges. People can express themselves without rigid structures or expectations. There's a sense of openness and liberty in how individuals interact with each other.

Example:

At a party, people can choose to talk about anything they want, whether it's about a favorite movie, a recent vacation or a funny story without the pressure of focusing on a particular subject or goal.

4- Create Social Bonds:

Sociability helps to create and maintain social bonds. Even though it is not driven by practical goals, it strengthens the sense of connection and mutual understanding between people.

Example:

Two neighbors who occasionally meet for a coffee, chat about their lives, and share stories. Although this interaction is not necessary for any specific purpose, it strengthens their social bond and contributes to a sense of community.

5- Balance b/w Distance and Closeness:

Sociability involves a balance of closeness and distance. It allows individuals to interact in a way that is not too intimate but still meaningful. There is a certain level of detachment that makes sociability enjoyable, as it prevents social interactions from becoming too intense or emotionally taxing.

Example:

During a casual group outing, people can talk about light topics and have fun without delving into deeply personal or sensitive matters. The conversations are friendly and pleasant but maintain a certain level of distance, making the interaction comfortable and enjoyable.

He defined sociation as:

"The form in which individuals grow together into units that satisfy their interests."

He believed that in society different events and phenomena are consecutively in process and it may become difficult for individuals to deal with all these happenings (contents), therefore individuals order the phenomena by impressing patterns/forms on it, which gain a life of their own. He referred to this phenomenon as sociability.

THEORY OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT

It is a psychological and sociological concept that explains how individuals grow and form their sense of self over time, through interaction with others and their environment. It looks at how people develop their environment identity, personality and understanding of themselves in the world.

The theory of self-development was primarily developed by the American sociologist George Herbert Mead. He believed that the self is not something we are born with, but something that develops over time through social interaction. The major argument in Mead's theory of self-development is that self is a product of social experience.

John J. Macdonis is a well-known American sociologist and author. He defines self as "Part of an individual's personality composed of self-awareness and self-image." Mead argued that self cannot develop in isolation rather it develops through social experience which involves an exchange system of symbols.

Symbols as defined by Macdonis are "anything which carries a particular meaning recognized by people who share a culture."

E.g:

A student during lecture session cracks an unnecessary joke. The teacher responds to his joke by using a symbol of thumbs up.

FOUR STAGES OF SELF-DEVELOPMENT

Mead considers the development of self in 4 stages which involve social learning.

FIRST STAGE: 0-2 years

The first stage is imitation, where infants start imitating the behavior of those around them.

Example:

A baby waves their hand after seeing their parent wave. Or mimics words like "bye-bye" without knowing what it really means.

Second Stage: 2-6 years old

The second stage is play, where children start playing roles of significant others. It includes parents, siblings, peers, relatives, teachers who are close and important for socialization. This role-playing helps them in understanding the viewpoints of others.

Example:

A child pretends to be a doctor and gives their teddy bear a check-up copying how a real doctor behaves.

Third stage: 7 years and up

The third stage is game. Children begin to understand and play organized games with rules. They can now see and coordinate multiple roles and understand how people interact in a larger group.

Example:

A child plays a team sport like soccer and understands that each player has a different role and how all the roles work together.

Fourth stage: later childhood and beyond

The person internalizes the expectations and attitudes of society as a whole. They begin to act based on what is socially acceptable, not just what individuals around them expect.

Example:

A teenager chooses not to cheat on a test, not just because their teacher is watching, but because they know society values honesty and fairness.

→ Self-development moves from simple imitation to understanding complex social roles and finally to internalizing society's norms. This process helps a person become a fully socialized member of society.

LOOKING GLASS SELF THEORY BY C.H. COOLEY

He argued that society is like a mirror in which we see our image, that is, we have a self-image based on how we perceive others see us. Mead further differentiated between two parts of self that are I and Me.

I can be defined as the active part of self which initiates an action.

Me represents the passive part of the self influenced by society.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERACTION

"Man is a social animal. He who lives without society is either a beast or God." — Aristotle

- Dependency on others makes individual sociable.
- Social animal means (needs are similar to animal)

We are born as humans but there are certain traits which define us as a social being, of which interaction is an important one. The importance of interaction in defining sociability of human beings can be understood by considering the cases of those who lacked interaction.

Cases of Feral Children:

These children are unable to utter a single word even after teaching them for years.

Example 1:

Akbar (King) did an experiment on some children by keeping them separate from society to know the natural religion of human being, but he failed to do so because after a very long period of time when he tried to assess these children through socialization. They were even unable to speak.

Example 2:

Virtual ^{Custom} interaction cases increased after COVID-19 because of lack of social interaction.

Case of Kasper Hauser: Kasper Hauser was found in 1925 at the age of 17 years from a forest of Germany. He had lived there since his childhood. He was not able to communicate properly and could not even properly walk.

Case of Anna: Anna was an American child who was detained in a room at the age of 6 months in 1934. She lacked social interaction for 5 years and was discovered in 1938. It was found that she was unable to talk, walk and was unresponsive in the presence of people.

Case of Isabella: The case of Isabella was similar to Anna. She lacked social interaction for 6 years and when found was unable to talk, walk and was unresponsive in the presence of people.

Case of Genie: Genie was a Californian girl who was tied at the age of 2 by her father sometimes to a potty chair and sometimes to her crib in a dark garage. She was discovered in 1970 at the age of 13 years and it was found that her mental age was equal to 1-year-old child. Moreover, her language skills did not develop even after treatment.

Case of Amala and Kamala: In 1920, Amala and Kamala were found in a wolf's den in India. Amala died soon after her discovery but Kamala survived till 1929. It was found that she used to walk

on 4 legs and growled like a
wolf.



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