

## **My Sociological Autobiography**

I was born and raised in Ethiopia, an East African country with fascinating cultures and traditions. I've spent my entire life in Ethiopia and have never fully understood or appreciated the significance of my identity and how it affects my daily life. I never questioned why something was the way it was; instead, I simply accepted it without question. It wasn't that I wasn't interested; it was that I lacked the expertise to explore deeper. I had questions, but I ignored them and followed in my parents' footsteps, obeying society's commands. I've never understood why I had to adhere or not adhere to a certain culture, or religion, or act a certain way in various situations. I only paid attention to what my parents said since I was taught that they knew better than me and that I should follow their instructions. I'm not saying that's incorrect; rather, I'm stating that I've never had the opportunity to fully understand why I'm doing what I'm doing.

When growing up, religion was the most essential component of my existence. It was the core of my life's purpose and it reflected how I should conduct my life. I am an Orthodox Christian. My parents constantly encouraged me to keep Jesus's commands. I've been encouraged and pushed to believe in God, pray every morning and night, and follow tradition. Whenever I go to church around the holidays, a large crowd gathers to pray. And many of these folks don't even know each other but feel at ease standing or sitting next to each other, dressed in traditional attire and doing the same rituals. This always used to amaze me. I see now that going to church and participating in the activities allows people to meet new individuals who share the same religious ideas and enjoy the same hobbies. In my life, I have met many people through the church and have had many interesting interactions with them. This demonstrates to me how religion brings people together in social cohesion and encourages them to behave in specific ways. (Griffiths 2015, Sec 15.1). Also, my family and I occasionally travel to different cities for holy water and buy sacred tools on special occasions. Then the next day, we would drink the holy water in the morning. Even though holy water looks and tastes exactly like ordinary water, I was perplexed as to why it was such a big deal. I followed my parents' advice and drank the holy water, which was said to heal and

protect me. Now I understand that it's because it's sacred, and if I believe in God, I should also believe that the water has been blessed.

Religion has substantial societal control since everyone under orthodox religion is obligated to follow it; else, they will be considered disobedient to the religion. Another aspect of religion I noticed is that if people face hardships or catastrophes in their lives, they instantly turn to religion to pray to God and beg for help and guidance. That is either their first or last action. That is because it provides them with the emotional support, they require to entrust their suffering to the ultimate power in the hopes of recovery. Furthermore, I've seen that every time I go to church, I see individuals of all ages participating in the same activities. But I also see individuals who are at the bottom of the economic ladder and those at the top. This illustrates how the church is a welcoming environment for people of all ages, races, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Education is another vital component of my life. Prior to college, I only attended two schools. Ethiopia's educational system is not divided into elementary, middle, and high school like it is in the United States. It is divided into pre-school, which is before 1st grade, and from 1st to 12th grade takes place in one large school. After preschool, I went to a national school with an Ethiopian curriculum, where every student understood how to speak Amharic (the national language), and most of them could read and write, though not well because we were still young. The scientific and math texts we studied had two copies, one in Amharic and the other in English, as English is the most spoken language in the world and our school wanted to prepare us for the future. However, students interacted in class using Amharic as symbolic interactions. Every Ethiopian national school used the same curriculum. Not only that but also the topics studied were part of a global official curriculum. This is because the “official curriculum promotes feelings of nationalism and is instrumental in the development of national societies, constituted of citizens from different regions who would then know the same history and speak a common language” (Giddens et al. 2006, p. 460). We still learned the same math and science courses, but the only difference was how they were structured, or the order in which we learned the topics. However, some

subjects, such as history, concentrated more on Ethiopian and African history than anything else, which I believe was done to foster a shared understanding of our own nation and where we came from, given most of us were Ethiopians. Learning about Ethiopian history made us more appreciative of our nation and provided us with the knowledge we needed to engage in conversations and form relationships with our peers. After fifth grade, I went to an international school. This school has a hidden curriculum that offers a different style of teaching and activities than the one I received at my previous school. This was due to the diverse backgrounds of the students and teachers at this institution. Even though there was a considerable shift between these two schools, they shared some components of learning that were beneficial to me. Participating in extracurricular activities in both schools improved my leadership and public speaking skills, which have helped me and are still helping me, for example, in college to socialize with other college students from various backgrounds. This reminds me of the importance that schools play, as well as the social standards that exist, in helping students develop personal characteristics such as communication and respect, which will serve us well in college, graduate school, and even the workplace.

Furthermore, spending a large amount of time in school has taught me more about how to adapt to society and many life skills than what I gained from reading books and listening to class lectures. In other words, rather than the material retained in the curriculum, more than 70% of my education came from my interactions in the context of school. According to Giddens (2006), “the nature of the discipline and regimentations schools entail, tend to teach students an uncritical acceptance of social order” (p. 461). School rules assist students to prepare for the future and are an important component of education, which is why, for example, shifting to online learning removed many aspects of education. The interactions I had with other students and faculty, including the activities I participated in, accounted for most of the knowledge I retained. This included not only disciplinary actions such as punctuality and respect, but also conversations and the exchange of information about various topics such as sports, movies, and music. If you asked me to recall what I learned in chemistry or biology, I would be unable to recall the majority of what I learned in those classes. However, those classes I took influenced my critical thinking and helped

me enhance my reading, writing, and problem-solving abilities. By viewing education through these perspectives, we can gain a better understanding of its purpose, to build minds and ways of thinking than to consume information.

Because of the variations in what classes to take and how everything functioned, adjusting to college was a bit challenging for me. The curriculum was different, the teaching method was different in terms of strictness and interactions with students. Furthermore, the social norms created inside the class and the attitude toward various subject matters were different, and the rules were also different. This is because schools developed their own social systems. College's beliefs and expectations were founded on societal norms of various actions that had been passed down through generations. As a result, I had to learn how to adjust. Also, there are obvious patterns in how people behave in their relationships with one another. Throughout high school, I developed a personality like that of my peers. We had comparable communication patterns and a similar sense of humor. We created a mentality about what is good, awful, hilarious, not funny, cool, not cool, and so on. In other words, within our group, certain behaviors were expected. Also, I felt obligated to portray myself in a way that other people prefer, or in the way that I think society will accept me. "We often imagine how we appear to others, imagine the judgment that they make of us, and then feel a self-feeling based on this imagined judgment" (Kincaid 2017, p. 2). It was like a subconscious effort. Looking back on my life, that was how I usually saw myself towards others. My personality was shaped by the perceptions I acquired from society. When I first arrived at college, I observed a variety of anticipated behaviors among my peers. They each had their own ideas about what to expect at a separate social gathering. To fit into the customs, I had to develop the appropriate behaviors. "Our 'selves' were more social than it was personal" (Kincaid 2017, p. 2). This informs me that there is no single way to define a personality, which shows that a person's personality is socially constructed rather than inherent. Furthermore, we formed such mindsets because of our origins, with some of us arriving from Africa and others from other regions of the continent. Our previous relationships, gender,

and family are what cause us to be different. This leads to a better understanding of how society influences our behavior.

## APA References

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