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Below is an example of how we hope it will be formatted. Again, we totally realize that you're volunteering your time, so if it doesn't quite look like this, but the meaning still comes across, we will be more than happy!

Example:

PENN: Hello, and welcome to the Social Breakdown, the podcast where we break down our complex world one topic at a time using our sociological imagination. We are your hosts, Penn.

OMAR: Omar.

ELLEN: And I'm Ellen.

PENN: And today's topic is a super fun. I've been looking forward to doing this episode for a while now.

ELLEN: You really think this is fun?

ELLEN: Hello, and welcome to the Social Breakdown, the podcast where we break down our complex world one topic at a time using our sociological imagination.

ELLEN: We are your hosts.

OMAR: Omar

ELLEN: And I am Ellen, and today's topic is going to be Socialization. We are going to basically define it and then have a particular focus on who the agents of socialization are, and then what are some arguments that we hear when people critique how much we sociologists love to use the word "Socialization". So, like I said, we use the word "Socialization" quite a bit on this show in context like, Oh, well, it's because you're socialized into thinking this way, or you're socialized into behaving this way. And the three of us really take the term for granted. I think most of us in sociology do. So I'm happy we're going to be talking about this because we do need to define it a little bit more clearly to those who are new to sociology.

OMAR: Yes, this is one of my absolute most favorite terms, and one of my most favorite aspects of talking about sociology, especially at the Social 100 level. I think it's one of those things that we all have some sort of insight or experience with because, you know, we live in the world. But we don't really understand the nuances and intricacies of how powerful socialization processes are. So, I'm excited for this conversation today.

ELLEN: Yeah, it's kind of like that invisible hand that's puppeteering everyone around, but we're not aware of the invisible hand until it's pointed out to us. So the goal of this episode is to point it out. So, let's go ahead and let's define what socialization is. So, Craig Calhoun, who, if you're not familiar with him, is a pretty big staple in the world of sociology, particularly textbooks. Shout out to Craig Calhoun, wherever you are. But, Craig Calhoun defines socialization as “the process through which individuals internalize the values, beliefs, and norms of a society and learn to function as its members.” So, socialization is really this ongoing process that starts before you're even born and continues until your last dying breath. And it's what teaches you how you should act and “should” (“should”... we should put in, you know, air quotes to make it more appropriate). So, we're being socialized at all points in our lives.

OMAR: Some of my students get caught up on this a lot of like...how does socialization even happen before you're born?

ELLEN: Yeah.

OMAR: Well, we have this whole process of like gender reveals and people want to ask the gender of people's kids and like their names and the colors. And, you know, there's a whole big to-do.

ELLEN: Industry!

OMAR: Yeah. Huge, huge industry, you know, that makes millions and billions of dollars. And then, of course, you know, the discussions that families have, you know... my son's not going to be this way. Or...my daughter is going to be this way or that way. Though it's happening before the person enters into the world. But we're already priming the social environments that this person is going to be brought into. So then once, you know, this child is born, He, She, or They, you know, you're already giving John the blue shirt and you're going to give Becky the pink shirt. You're already imbuing our conceptions of reality onto someone who has not even been brought into the world yet. So, of course, then you grow up very early on with understandings of, you know, gender and color and different types of associations, even down to like the toys people buy for their kids.

ELLEN: Yeah. So even as we grow into adulthood, as much as sometimes we hate to admit it, because we think that we're these, like, concrete people who have autonomy and all these things, even as adults, we're also being socialized. And we call this “adult socialization”. So this is

especially true if you find yourself in a new context or a new environment. Say you're moving to a new country, a language, and a culture that you're unfamiliar with. You have to be re-socialized into it or go through adult socialization to become more comfortable and understanding of what's going on in this new place around you. The same is true for starting a new job in a new company, right? You have to be re-socialized into understanding what that company values, what their beliefs are, and then what their workplace norms are. So we see various examples of this throughout our professional lives, throughout our kind of physical lives, and then also in the social groups that we join. Say you join a new online community, even though that's all on the computer and it's not very tangible in that sense, you're still learning how that online community behaves and what is okay and what is not okay to say on that particular message board, which, if you're part of Reddit, certain ones on Reddit, right? There's nothing that's not okay. That's kind of the beauty of it or the terror of it.

OMAR: Absolutely, and that ties nicely back into your comment earlier about (quote unquote) how people “should” act because socialization processes really aren't about trying to crunch or whittle down, like, individuals. It's really about how we are going to organize individuals to function en masse. How are we going to get millions and millions of people to be (quote unquote) “orderly” in a school system? Now, we shouldn't take a function as a value. This shouldn't be interpreted as positive or negative. It really is just, how are we going to get people to organize themselves, where everyone's kind of doing an orderly thing? If there were no rules to traffic, it would be...

ELLEN: Chaos!

OMAR: Very dysfunctional, as getting a bunch of individuals in a car and saying, “Go ahead and drive”. So, we're socialized into those rules. We're socialized into the practice to make driving functional. We can argue all day if the way traffic lights work and the right side of the road versus the left side of the road and turning right on red, if all those things are good. But that's why socialization is really, really important. Understanding people en masse.

ELLEN: Absolutely. Yeah. Next time, I think we want to move over to the agents of socialization. So these are the institutions and people around us that are the forces that really socialize us. So Omar, do you want to go over these agents?

OMAR: Yes. Yes. And I think it's important, before I kind of go into this list is that a lot of these people or roles that people embody are also part of the institution. So, for example, the first one that we want to mention is families and parents, and how families and parents, or our guardians, socialize us as we grow up. They tell us what they think is appropriate and different behaviors and thoughts. We're going to understand a lot of the agents of socialization. So in this example, let's say the stereotypical mom and dad are also part of the family. It's not like you have an external person telling you how to be as like the son or daughter in your family. It's usually the person who's also embedded in that larger structure. So you have the parents who are also representative of the family. And these two things together set up the expectations for us, set us the values. But as Alan said a moment ago, it's not really about

individual autonomy or self. Sure, your particular mom or dad might have very specific things about their family. But largely, if you look at how things are patterned, very much in American society, families are like, you know, authoritarian, hierarchical. The mom and the dad are at the top, the kids and everyone else is at the bottom, and everything follows suit.

ELLEN: For sure.

OMAR: So, that's our first introduction into socialization, the first very primary group that we are a part of and are socialized into. And then the very next one is the education system and our teachers. They socialize us with how to be a part of school, you know, raising our hands and walking in a line. And these things are reinforced then through the family. So, it's not like you're also then removed from other socialization circles. These things compound on top of each other. So you got the families and the parents, they set up the expectations about school and your education. And then once you're in the school, you know, you have teachers in the education system refining our expectations around values. Of course, this trickles into things like pop culture and media, which help us socialize and tell us about how to act and navigate social situations, certain types of fads, or things that people want to consume. So, all of these like different modalities. So you got like the family institution, you've got the education system, you've got pop culture and media, like all of these things are happening simultaneously. Just, you know, a typical day in high school, you wake up, you talk to your parents or guardians or whoever's in the house. Then you go to school, and then you're swamped with all the media influences and pop culture, listening to music, seeing people's brands on their shirts. You're seeing all of these things happen in real space. Now, all of these things are massively important, and they obviously dictate and influence how we behave beyond, you know, our own personalities or beyond our own biological makeup.

ELLEN: Yeah. And I think you made a really good point, Omar, about how each of these agents are reinforced by one another to some degree. And ultimately, what the goal of each of these agents is to create a person, create a human who is able to function appropriately and follow the standards of that particular society. And so, like you were talking about, you'll see the way that we socialize young children build upon each other to create, say, a good worker or a good adult. And so, going back to you, you gave two examples early on. One is driving a car and one is as a student at elementary school, standing and walking in line. We don't realize it, but when we're kids and we're taught, okay, we have to stand in line behind our classmates. Sometimes, some kids are told to put their hands behind their backs and walk so that they're not being distracted and touching the walls. They have to walk on the right-hand side of the hallway so that when other classes pass, you know, you're not running into each other. These just kind of seem like just arbitrary rules, ways to get students to pay attention or to follow rules, right? But in reality, what it's doing is that it is enforcing, yes, rules to these kids, but also teaching them the rules of the road later on.

OMAR: Exactly.

ELLEN: It's not something that we necessarily connect when we're, you know, 10 and then 16 when we're driving down the road. But, if you see throughout, kind of, your life, you'll see patterns of learning some skill, say in school, you're supposed to use a planner and mark down your due dates. And then seeing that same type of behavior expected of you as an adult when you're at the workplace, and you have to mark down in your work calendar that you have a due date for a specific project that you're getting paid for, right? So it's reinforcing, totally reinforcing. And that's these themes that will run across your entire life if you recognize, kind of, those themes cropping up.

OMAR: Yes. And that brings us to the final point here. This doesn't mean that there's like some small group of people that are like, "Oh, if we make the rules in the school system, we can get them to learn the rules on the road better". It's really not about that. It's really about how we have a much larger culture of when we order things that need to be sequential, things need to be separated, and things need to have a hierarchy. So a lot of this structure or foundation of socialization practices gets adopted in families, gets adopted in schools, gets adopted on the road, gets adopted in politics. But within them, of course, there are lots of nuances in and of itself. So, society can be very reinforcing in that way.

ELLEN: Yes.

ELLEN: Do you have an idea for a great new podcast?

OMAR: Maybe.

ELLEN: You can bring your idea to life and start your podcast today with Libsyn, which is actually the service that we here use at The Social Breakdown. Our podcast has been with Libsyn for about five years now, since 2017. And We. Love. It.

OMAR: Yes, we do. Libsyn has everything you need to plan, launch, and grow your own podcast. Libsyn provides some of the best resources created by expert podcasters who will show you everything you need to know, like what equipment you should use, how to record great audio, and how to get your show onto Apple Podcasts and other popular platforms, and much, much more.

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ELLEN: So, it's a weird thing to transition. Now, back to the idea or back to the concept of socialization. So, like we mentioned, sociologists love to use this word, love to refer back to it, to

blame it for a lot of things. But some people are more critical of the powers of socialization. And so, there are arguments against, you know, just how powerful it is, primarily coming from philosophers and then also from psychologists. So, we wanted to highlight, kind of, some of the basic arguments you hear. The first one is, some may argue that sociologists place way too much power or influence on socialization. And instead, they ought to focus more on the influence and factors of human nature. So, this is, again, the nature versus nurture argument. These types of people would say, well, okay, sure, society does kind of push us to do certain things, but what about, like, inherited traits? What about personalities? And what about inherent desires within humans? Everything that we do, everything that we think or hold in value can't just be because we were told to do that. Some of it may just be kind of programmed in us from the beginning.

OMAR: Another argument against socialization, or just the effectiveness of socialization, is that there's too much power attributed to socialization, which strips away some of our own autonomy and can make us feel powerless to a degree. So, this is very similar to what Ellen was saying, but at the individual level, thinking about either, like, personal intent, or are my ideas genuinely my own?

ELLEN: Yeah.

OMAR: The argument against socialization is that it removes us from that. The fact that question is, "Is it nature versus nurture"? You're already in a problem because a sociologist would never discount the importance and just the reality of, like, biology or DNA. So, it's not to say that it's socialization and not biology. It's that socialization is just so powerful that it can sometimes be more significant than your biology.

ELLEN: I like that way of putting it.

OMAR: And we have, like, predispositions, right? Like, you might have a predisposition to be a little bit more temperamental, but someone's temperament or their personality does not always fully explain their general human behavior. So, for example, think about mass shooters. We wouldn't just simply reduce this act to, oh, well, this person, you know, is an angry Individual. And there's a lot more to someone's, like, social experience that could explain things like someone committing a murder or a crime rather than just, you know, well, no, they have this gene or, you know, they have this personality. You know, there's a lot that kind of goes into that.

ELLEN: Okay. I think that's it. That's all we've got for you about socialization. This is a short and sweet one. But I think it's one that, you know, it flows throughout all of the episodes that we've produced already. This threads throughout every single social course that you're going to take, every single social paper that you're going to read, whatever it may be, right? Socialization is an element in it. And we can't, we can't take it for granted. So that's why we wanted to highlight it for you all today.

OMAR: Last thing, I just want to say, for my personal opinion, I would argue that it's like 80% socialization, 20% biology, personality, you know, inheritability, if you want to call it that.

ELLEN: Oh, okay.

OMAR: 80/20. I would even, in some situations, I would even say 90/10.

ELLEN: Really?

OMAR: Yeah.

ELLEN: I don't know what numbers I'd put to it.

OMAR: Now that 10 is really powerful. I'm not diminishing it, but the apparatus of socialization is so much larger than someone's own individual personality or biology.

ELLEN: That's signals Quick Breaks. This is going to be a random topic that is very current and very newsworthy that I'm going to throw at Omar, who has to then break down the topic in five words or less. On this fateful day, President Joe Biden, and I'm saying that with the most Joe Biden tongue, has just announced, or actually, yesterday, he just announced that he is forgiving \$10,000 of student loans for people who earn less than \$125,000. And then also for Pell Grant recipients, they also receive a larger chunk of loan forgiveness. So, Omar, break it down.

OMAR: Okay. Important, but politically risky.

ELLEN: Really? Why risky? Because, in all, you know, in my mind, this is a totally political move to win votes in the upcoming election in November. So why is it risky?

OMAR: It's risky because, and now, trust me, I'll be the first one to tell you that I'm all about loan forgiveness. Like, I have way too much. I have way too much student loan debt, but I think we need to put it in context, like student loan debt. And that is a couple of things. One, the people who are in college or who went to college are obviously all for loan, student loan debt. But we actually represent a very small minority of people in the United States who need loan forgiveness. And the numbers don't really skyrocket until you talk about graduate school, which is even a much smaller subset of the population. And the vast majority of people who have loan debt are Democrats. So when you're talking about people who are Republicans, they're going to be very much against this idea because their perspective is, "Why do I have to put money into the elite?" You know, this isn't really talking about.

ELLEN: Yeah, why do I have to pay taxes to do this for you?

OMAR: Yeah, this isn't really helpful for the entire country. And then second to that is \$10,000. Like, what? That's obviously not enough, but that was what was only able to pass. The original version was \$50,000. And that just seemed to people to be political suicide. So I feel like when I

say it's politically risky, I say it's politically risky only because you're going to give Republicans a really good stronghold to be like, you're not taking the issues of our constituency seriously, because most of us are not college-educated.

ELLEN: Yeah, there's a feeling of favoritism there.

OMAR: Yeah, so it's dicey.

ELLEN: Thanks for listening to The Social Breakdown. We really appreciate it. If you're interested in socialization and want to get more information about the works that we cited today, we only cited Craig Calhoun, but we'll hit him up. You can check out our website, thesocialbreakdown.com. That is thesocialbreakdown.com. We will list Craig Calhoun and other related books that, I guess, we can look for, discussed in today's episode, as well as provide links to other relevant materials. You can find us on Facebook or Twitter and send in your questions to @SOCbreakdown. That is @SOCbreakdown. And you can subscribe to our podcast wherever you get your podcasts. Be sure to tune in next time. Until then...

OMAR: Stay social.

ELLEN: Think social.

OMAR: And read them books, baby! And please collect your \$10,000 when you get forgiven.

Yeah.

Hit it.

Yeah.