SOCI 223
Traditional Ghanaian Social Institutions

Session 12 – Traditional Modes of Socialisation

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Session Overview

• At the end of the session, the student will
• Understand the rationale behind socialization in traditional societies
• Understand the ways in which traditional rites of passage constitute traditional mechanisms for socialization
• Understand the importance of socialization for both the individual and the society
The key topics to be covered in the session are as follows:

- Topic One – Defining socialization
- Topic Two – The nature nurture debate
- Topic Three – The Goals of socialization
- Topic Four – The various rites of passage as modes of socialization
- Topic Five – Importance of socialization
Reading List

Topic One

DEFINING SOCIALIZATION
What is socialization?

• Roucek (1947) defines socialization as the training process by which an individual, inexperienced in a given culture, learns about and acquires that culture as an aspect of his behavior.

• Leslie, Larson and Gorman (1973) define socialization as encompassing those processes by which an individual learns to take account of social order and to cope with it by some combination of conformity, non-conformity, avoidance and conflicts.
THE NATURE NURTURE DEBATE
The nature nurture debate

• Humans are
THE GOALS OF SOCIALIZATION
The goals of socialization

• The need to inculcate in new members, basic skills ranging from instinctual behavior to the methods of science
• The ability of the individual to attain his/her ideal self
• The inculcation in the individual of the need to go ahead (social aspiration)
• The creation of an awareness in the individual of his/her social roles
THE VARIOUS RITES OF PASSAGE AS MODES OF SOCIALIZATION
Naming (Outdoorining) Ceremony

• During the naming ceremony, the new born is given a drop of alcohol and a drop of water to taste.
• This is to teach the child the virtue of truth, he is admonished to stick by what is right and reject what is wrong.
• The ceremony is also performed on the 8th day. The belief is that, the child having survived till this day, has come to stay and is therefore welcomed into the land of the living.
• NB. If the child should die before the 8th day, no funeral will be performed for him/her.
• The child is also given a name. usually he/she may is named after an ancestor who led a good life. Thus it is expected that the child will take after the good qualities of the ancestor.
Post outdooring

- As the new born grows up, all members of the extended family, neighbors and the entire community as a whole are responsible for socializing the young one.
- Any member of the community can punish the young one when he/she goes contrary to the norms and values of the community.
- The child is taught the need to respect the elders, table manners and general etiquette bordering on the norms and values of the community.
- Proverbs and folktales (the famous ananse stories) are used to socialize the young into conforming to acceptable patterns of behavior.
- Girls are socialized into performing female tasks such as cooking, cleaning, sweeping, washing and other household chores.
- Boys are socialized into male tasks such as fishing, hunting, farming and other energy intensive tasks.
Puberty rites

- This rite is performed exclusively for girls by most of the ethnic groups in Ghana.
- It is performed at menarche and signifies the readiness of the girl for marriage.
- It teaches the value of chastity before marriage because it is performed only for virgins. It is a big disgrace for the girl and her parents if she is found not to be a virgin.
- In some communities, the girl is required to take a ritual bath in a snake pond. A successful bath in this pond confirms her virginity and allows her to enjoy the blessings of the gods and ancestors. Alternatively, an attempt is made to insert a boiled egg into her vagina. An easy entry of the egg means her hymen is broken and thus she is not a virgin.
- The girl is also confined for a period where she is taught how to take care of her home, children and her husband when she gets married.
Marriage rites

• The puberty rites ushers the girl child into marriage
• Amongst the Ewes, the girl child is confined for 6 months prior to the marriage where she is taught everything she needs to know about marriage, how to care for her husband, her children and her home
• She is also taught important virtues such as humility, obedience and fidelity in marriage
• Amongst the Southern Ewes, certain hexes of chastity exist to ensure a woman’s fidelity in marriage. They include gbolo magba or adema, which is a herb planted at the entrance to the house such that an adulterous woman will not be able to enter the house until she confesses. Others are the psychic padlock which prevents any other man from having sexual intercourse with the woman and the fiatekli which exposes the adulterous couple by keeping them locked up in the sexual act
• After the marriage ceremony, the marital bed is laid with a white bedsheets. This is to show proof of the girl’s virginity and is expected to have blood stains on it after the first sexual act of the girl with her husband. This proof is very important and brings respect to the girl and her parents for having brought up their daughter in the right way
Not for males

• The puberty and marriage rites are often times exclusively for females. Males do not take part in these rites because:
  – Their biological make up is such that there is no way of determining their readiness for puberty rites since they do not menstruate
  – Their virginity cannot also be proven due to the nature of their biological make up
Mortuary rites

- This is a form of socialization for the living
- The rites allows the smooth transition of the dead person’s spirit to the land of the dead where they can rest and continue with the vocations they were practicing in the land of the living
- One needs to qualify for these rites as it is not performed automatically for anyone who dies
- To qualify, one should have led a good and righteous life, must not have committed any serious crime such as murder, adultery, robbery or broken any serious taboo and should have died a natural death
- This thus ensures that members of the community lead good and exemplary lives and go according to the norms and values of the community in order to avoid their spirits being perpetually trapped between the land of the living and that of the dead
Importance of socialization

- It enables the individual to be accepted in the society
- It facilitates the individual’s potential for future growth
- It provides emotional satisfaction to the socialized individual since he/she is able to get on well with his peers and the opposite sex
- It enables the individual to fit into other cultures
- It prevents the individual from engaging in deviant acts
- It ensures cultural continuity as values and norms are passed on from generation to generation
- It enables the individual to adapt to social changes as he is able to understand and appreciate social issues
- It enhances the attainment of future goals