Essay: “Death in Gaza”

Sociologists argue that all human beings – regardless of the culture they grow up in – are shaped and molded by their immediate surroundings and the people they encounter. To demonstrate this, they focus on the processes of socialization, which refers to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. What is most important here is the recognition that although the actual content of each culture that is being learned - the cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, norms, customs and traditions – might be different, the *processes* through which this learning occurs is fundamentally the same. In what follows, I will illustrate this main point by examining the portrayal of three children growing up along the Gaza strip in the movie “Death in Gaza.” Through an analysis of the experiences of Ahmed and his best friend Mohammud – two twelve year old boys – and Najla – a sixteen year old girl – I will indicate how the process of socialization they experienced is no different from the one I have experienced half a world away in the United States.

Sociologists use various concepts to guide their analysis of the socialization process. Here I shall discuss five: looking-glass self, role models, primary groups, significant others, and reference groups.

Although it may certainly change over one’s lifetime, all people develop a self-image. To indicate the process through which this typically occurs, Charles Horton Cooley introduced the term looking-glass self. According to Cooley \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. This is clearly seen in the film. [Give an example for Ahmed and Najla.] The looking-glass self can also be applied to my experiences. [Give a personal example.]

It is certainly the case that some people’s opinions matter more than others, and to explore this fact, George Herbert Mead introduced the term significant others. Mead defined this as ­­­­­­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. In the film, [Give an example for Ahmed and Najla.] Significant others have shaped my life as well. [Give a personal example.]

Another term that sociologists use that focuses on the impact of other individuals is role-models. This term is more restrictive than significant others in that it refers to ­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­­ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. [Give an example for Ahmed and Najla.] Role-models have been important in my life, too. [Give a personal example.]

Social groups constitute one of the most important concepts that sociologists apply to examine how people are molded and why they act the way that they do. There are various types of groups, each with different attributes and functions. A primary group is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. [Give an example for Ahmed and Najla.] Primary groups also have and continue to play an important part in my life. [Give a personal example.] Reference groups are also quite important. By reference group, sociologists are referring to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. [Give an example for Ahmed and Najla.] For me, [Give a personal example.]

As has been indicated in the preceding paragraphs, the processes through which individuals are socialized are universal.