SS2700

Sociological Autobiography

The person I am today has been shaped by many factors ranging from where I have lived to my family and even how I view myself. These factors are all part of my socialization into the world in which I live and this socialization leads to the various opinions, values, and views I have about the world. Understanding where my views come from and how my life experiences differ from others will allow me to better understand why people act or think in a certain way. One way I can do this is by analyzing part of my socialization and how that is shaped by social factors. The part of my life that I have chosen to look at is hockey and the many years I spent playing and learning the game while growing up and the social factors surrounding it.

When I was young I always had an interest in sports because of my older cousins and my parents who were avid sports fans. I was always encouraged to try new sports whether it was baseball, soccer, or my favorite sport hockey. I was exposed to sports in various ways when I was young like playing baseball in the yard at my grandparents or watching hockey games on TV with my dad. My family has played a large role in how I was socialized to enjoy sports and learn from them because my interest was backed with positive reinforcement from my family. An example of this is when I decided that I wanted to try hockey my parents got me a pair of skates and a stick which as a little kid I was excited to have and use. Family is the first place that we learn norms and how to function so it makes sense that I would enjoy sports because they are part of my family’s norms and encouraged.

 My exposure to sports has led me to have an understanding of the norms and rules involved in them most specifically hockey. Things like shaking hands after a game or a center being kicked out of a faceoff are norms in hockey that I understand due to the fact that I have been exposed them. People that don’t know hockey and are new to the game might not know how to act or interpret certain situations like when a penalty is called or what to do when someone wants to fight. These are things that fit into the norms of hockey and are easily understood by someone that has been exposed to the game like me. For example if my team got called for a too many men on the ice penalty I would understand that it is perfectly normal for someone that had nothing to do with it sit in the box for two minutes. Compare this to someone that does not understand the game who might get mad that their team’s player is in the box for seemingly no reason.

I have also learned several values that were encouraged by playing hockey including sportsmanship, respect, commitment, and motivation which are all things my family also encouraged. From a sociological standpoint institutions like my family and team have taught me various values and encouraged them through interactions. For example hockey was one place that I learned that sportsmanship was important. This was due to the fact that I was not only encouraged by my family and coaches to be a good sport but also myself. I realize now that part of the reason I came to value sportsmanship was because of the looking glass self concept. This is the idea that my understanding of how people viewed me shaped me as person and that I would act in a way that I want to be perceived. This was true when it came to sportsmanship and hard work because I never wanted to be looked at as the kid that was always mad or didn’t try. As I got older I became more aware that people viewed me in this way and that this was how I wanted to be perceived. This drove me to try and become the best person I could and follow the values that others saw as good.

 Hockey is something that I have always enjoyed and been able to play while growing up and part of the reason for this was due to the fact that I come from a middle class family. Hockey is an expensive sport but I was able to play because my parents could afford it based on our social class. Looking at this is now I realize that because both of my parents have good jobs and college degrees I was given an advantage that afforded me opportunities like playing hockey. However it was something that I had to enjoy and put effort into for my parents to justify spending the money because otherwise it was a waste that my parents weren’t willing to pay for when I was young due to the fact that my mom only worked part time. When I was young I didn’t understand why everyone didn’t play hockey but as I got older I realized it was partially because of the social class that I was in. Looking at this now I understand that social class afforded me the opportunity but wasn’t the only reason I was able to play.

The other reason I was able to play hockey was because of the value my parents placed on spending time with my brothers and me compared to spending time at work. Hockey is a sport that requires a large amount of time spent carting kids around to practice, games, and tournaments. In my case my parents felt that it was more important for them to spend time with us and giving us opportunities to play sports over them working more. Growing up my mom only worked part time in order to be home with my brothers and me more as well as my dad making sure his schedule allowed for him to take us to games when my mom couldn’t. This is something shaped heavily by sociological factors because as a society most people value family and spending time with family. Thinking about this in terms of social factors most parents are encouraged to spend time with their kids if they can afford to. This however is not always the case because in most families both parents work full time due to the economic stresses placed on them. For my family we were lucky enough to be able to afford to only have one parent work full time allowing for me to have more opportunities to play sports like hockey.

Hockey has been an important part of my life that has shaped me in many ways that I might not have thought about until looking at it from a sociological perspective. Factors like my family’s encouragement or being exposed to sports were things that I knew shaped how I socialized but never really thought of in terms of sociology. Now that I have I understand that social factors play a large role in these I understand how my experiences and views have been shaped by these factors even when it comes to playing a sport like hockey. Ultimately I have come to understand just how much social factors have shaped my life in ways that I didn’t really think about before.