

KS 3 SOCIOLOGY

LESSON 1

WITH SOFIA KAMRAN



CULTURE, IDENTITY AND SOCIALISATION

SOCIETY



Society is not something natural or fixed; it is created by people through their everyday interactions. In its simplest form society is a group of people living in the same territory, sharing common values, beliefs, and ways of life. It is formed through their interactions and relationships. These people also work towards shared goals within that society.

CULTURE



Culture includes everyday practices such as what people eat and drink, how they dress, the language they use, how they spend leisure time, the nature of their homes and families, the work they do, and their religious or spiritual beliefs. It also includes shared celebrations and festivals. In everyday language, culture often refers to “high culture,” including art, music, and literature. It can also refer to “popular culture,” such as media, fashion, and advertising.

SOCIETY AND CULTURE



Society and culture are closely linked, although they are not the same. Society refers to the structure made up of institutions, both formal, such as education and legal systems, and informal, such as the family. Culture, on the other hand, refers to how these institutions operate and the expectations they create about behaviour and roles.

Neither can exist without the other.

Society provides the framework, while culture gives meaning and direction to social life.

IDENTITY AND THE SOCIAL SELF



Identity refers to an individual's understanding of who they are, how they see themselves, and how they believe they are similar to or different from others. This sense of self is heavily influenced by how others perceive and respond to us.

People receive feedback from others about their behaviour, this ability to see oneself from another's perspective shows how identity is socially constructed and shaped through interaction.

VALUES AND NORMS AS ELEMENTS OF CULTURE



Values

Values are the underlying beliefs about what is good, right, and important. They guide how individuals think and act. While people may believe they hold personal values, these are usually shared with others in their society. Values shape norms. For instance, if a society values personal space, this will influence norms about how closely people stand or where they choose to sit. shape social expectations.

Norms

Norms are the expected patterns of behaviour within a society. They vary widely, from simple everyday practices to deeply significant rules about right and wrong. For example, greeting someone may involve a handshake in one society and a bow in another.

Some norms become so widely accepted that they turn into customs, while others are formalised into laws and regulations.

CULTURAL VARIATION AND SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION



Differences of Norms and Values

Norms and values differ across societies, demonstrating that they are not universal or natural. People are not born with them; they learn them through socialisation. For example, ideas about personal space vary widely. In some cultures, standing close during conversation is normal, while in others it may feel uncomfortable. Similarly, values surrounding wealth and possessions differ. In many modern industrial societies, wealth and material success are seen as indicators of status. In contrast, among Indigenous American communities, wealth was traditionally demonstrated through generosity

CHANGES IN NORMS AND VALUES OVER TIME



Norms and values are not only culturally relative but also change over time. During the Middle Ages, social behaviour was far less restricted, people commonly shared beds with strangers, ate with their hands from communal bowls, and showed little concern for privacy or bodily control. However, as state power grew and societies became more organised, expectations of behaviour became stricter.

In contemporary society, change is driven less by state formation and more by shifts in lifestyle, technology, and digital dependence. For example, the rise of smartphones and social media has reshaped norms of interaction, constant connectivity, checking phones during conversations, and communicating through screens are now widely accepted behaviours.

SYMBOLS AND LANGUAGE IN CULTURE

Other important aspects of culture include symbols and language, both of which are closely linked to norms and values. A symbol is something that carries a shared meaning within a culture. For example, a religious symbol, a national flag, or even clothing associated with a particular group can communicate identity and beliefs.

Understanding these symbols is part of cultural knowledge. Language itself is a system of symbols, where words and sounds convey meaning.



SOCIAL ORDER AND CONTROL

People in a society share common norms and values, thus, social life tends to be orderly and predictable. Individuals can anticipate how others will behave and how they will respond in different situations. However, not everyone follows all norms. Societies have mechanisms to deal with this, including expressing disapproval or applying pressure to conform. These mechanisms help maintain social stability



UNDERSTANDING STATUS

Most norms in society are linked to status, which refers to the position a person holds within a society. For example, a student has the status of a learner, while a teacher holds the status of an educator. Individuals hold multiple statuses at the same time. Within a family, a person may be a son or daughter, and also a brother or sister. Status can also change over time. For instance, being a teenager often means having a lower status compared to parents or adults, but this changes as an individual grows older and is recognised as an adult in society.



ASCRIBED AND ACHIEVED STATUS

In the past, most statuses were ascribed. This means they were assigned at birth and individuals had little or no control over them. Examples include status based on gender, age, or ethnicity. Even today, some aspects of status are still ascribed.

In modern societies, there is a growing importance of achieved status. This type of status is gained through an individual's own choices and efforts. For example, the type of job a person has or the level of education they achieve can influence their status in society.



ROLE

Each status comes with a set of expected behaviours known as a role. A role includes the norms that guide how a person should act in a particular position. For instance, the role of a student involves attending classes, participating in learning, asking questions, and following classroom expectations such as sitting attentively and listening to the teacher. Or the role of a mother in a child's life, she not only raises and nurtures the child but also plays a central role in teaching norms and values, helping shape them into responsible and successful individuals in later life.



STEREOTYPES



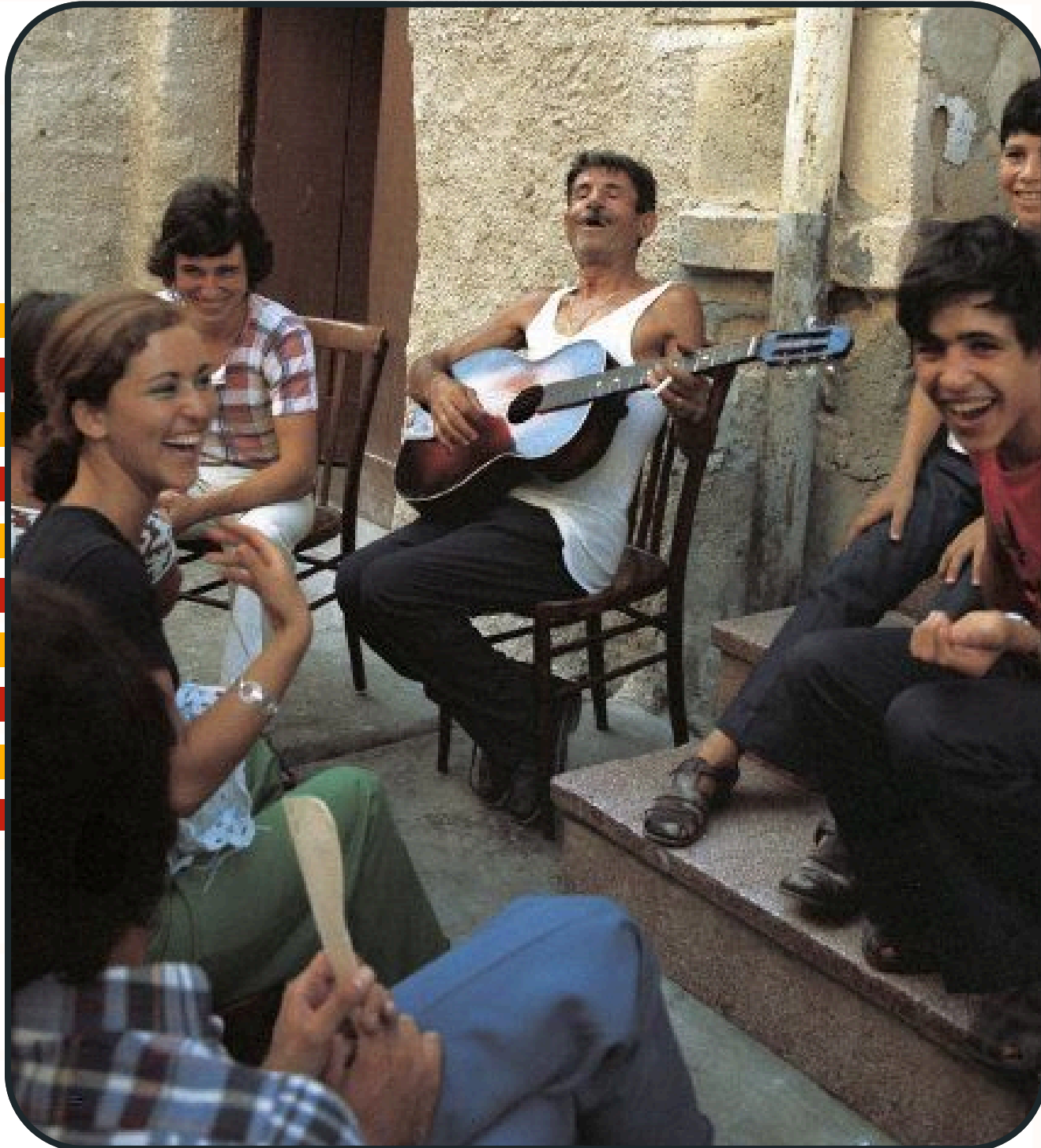
Stereotypes are simplified and generalised beliefs about a group of people. They are learned through socialisation and often reinforced by the media. Although they may contain a small element of truth, stereotypes are usually exaggerated and fail to represent individual differences. They can be positive or negative, but both types can influence how people are judged and treated, especially when there is little personal experience to challenge them.

THE RELATIVITY OF CULTURE



Human cultures differ widely across societies, and what is considered normal or acceptable in one culture may be viewed as unusual or even offensive in another. This idea is known as the relativity of culture, which means that norms and values are not universal or fixed but vary depending on the cultural context. It highlights that behaviours and beliefs can only be properly understood within the society in which they exist, rather than being judged by external standards

AREAS OF CULTURAL VARIATION



Cultural relativity can be seen in many aspects of everyday life. Language differs significantly across societies, shaping how people communicate and interpret the world. Norms related to dress and appearance also vary, with different cultures having distinct expectations about modesty, fashion, and identity. Additionally, ideas about morality, what is seen as right or wrong, are not the same everywhere and are deeply influenced by cultural values.

CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN FOOD PRACTICES

Food provides a clear example of cultural relativity. Different societies have specific ideas about what is acceptable to eat. For instance, certain animals or insects may be considered normal food in some cultures but unacceptable in others. Religious beliefs also strongly influence dietary habits; for example, Muslims avoid pork and alcohol, while followers of Jainism avoid harming living beings and therefore follow strict vegetarian diets, sometimes even avoiding root vegetables.



GLOBALISATION AND THE 'GLOBAL VILLAGE'

In recent decades, increased travel, migration, and the rapid growth of global media have made people far more aware of cultural differences. This has contributed to the idea of a 'global village', a concept popularised by Marshall McLuhan, where societies across the world are closely interconnected despite geographical distance. Today, major international events such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup are experienced simultaneously by global audiences through television and digital platforms, allowing people to engage with cultures beyond their own.

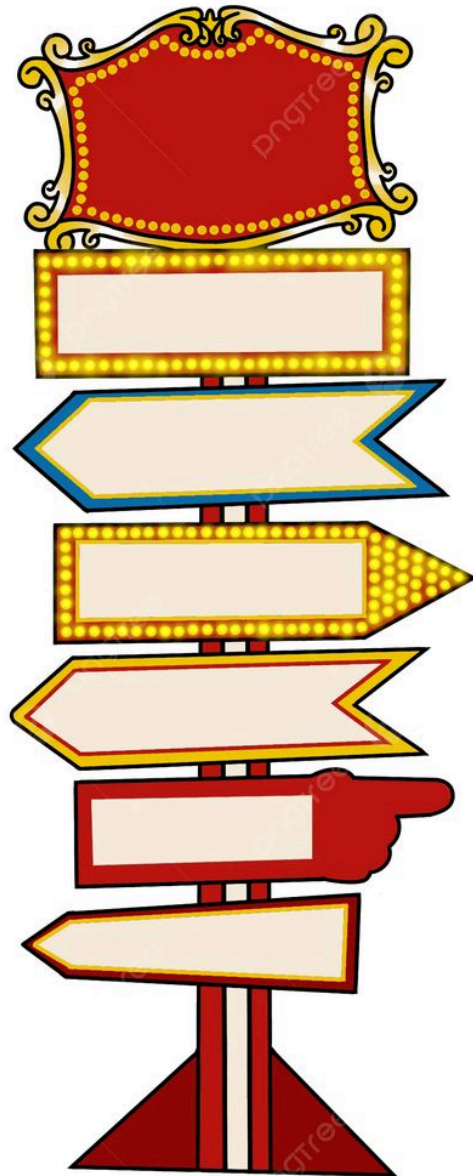


THE NATURE VS. NURTURE DEBATE



The nature–nurture debate explores whether human behaviour, personality, and attitudes are mainly shaped by biology (nature) or by the social environment (nurture). This debate has existed for many years, with strong arguments on both sides. Recent research suggests that behaviour is best understood as a result of the interaction between both nature and nurture, rather than one acting alone. Sociologists focus more on nurture because they are interested in how social and cultural influences shape individuals.

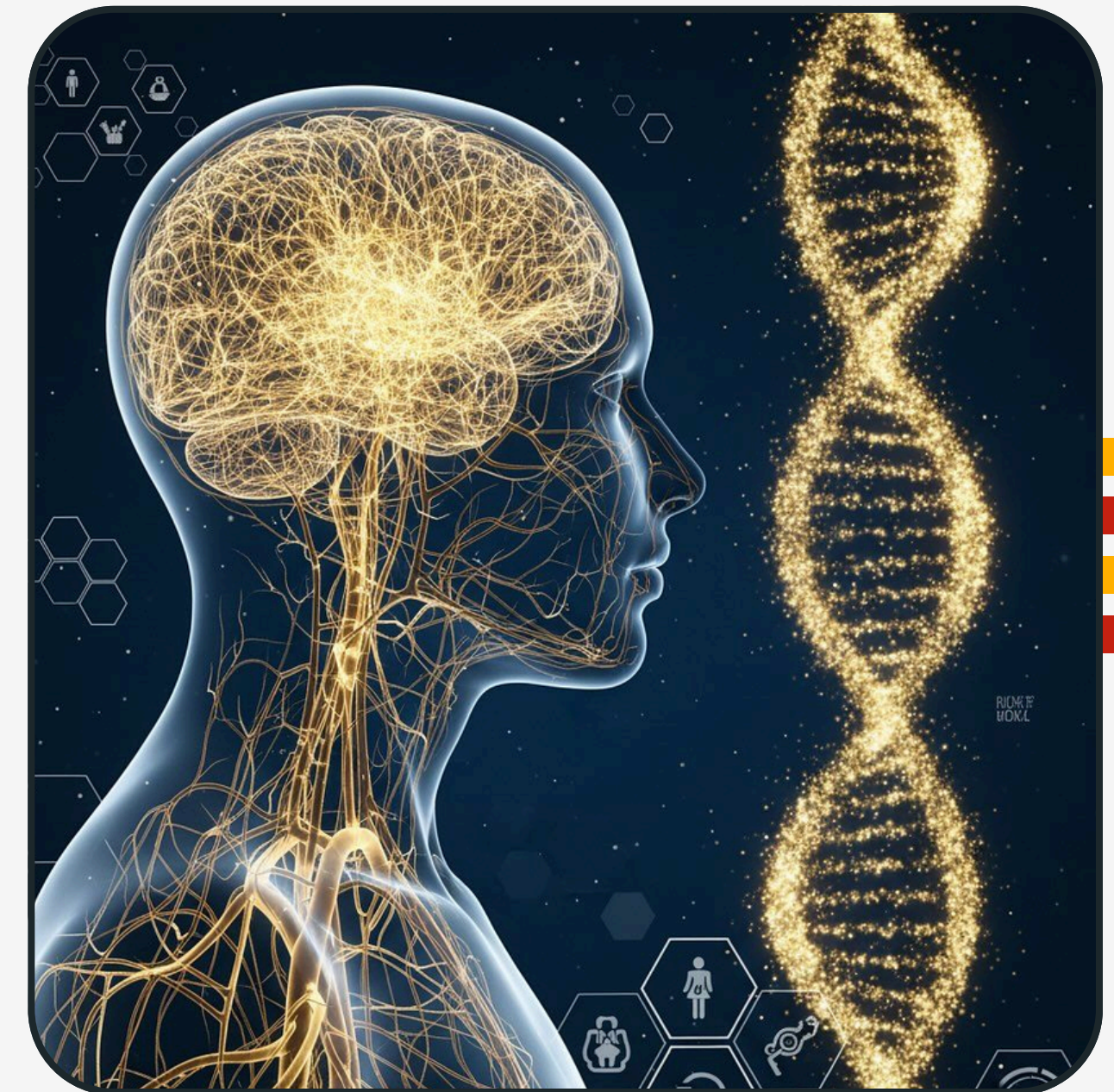
DETERMINISM: EXTREME POSITIONS



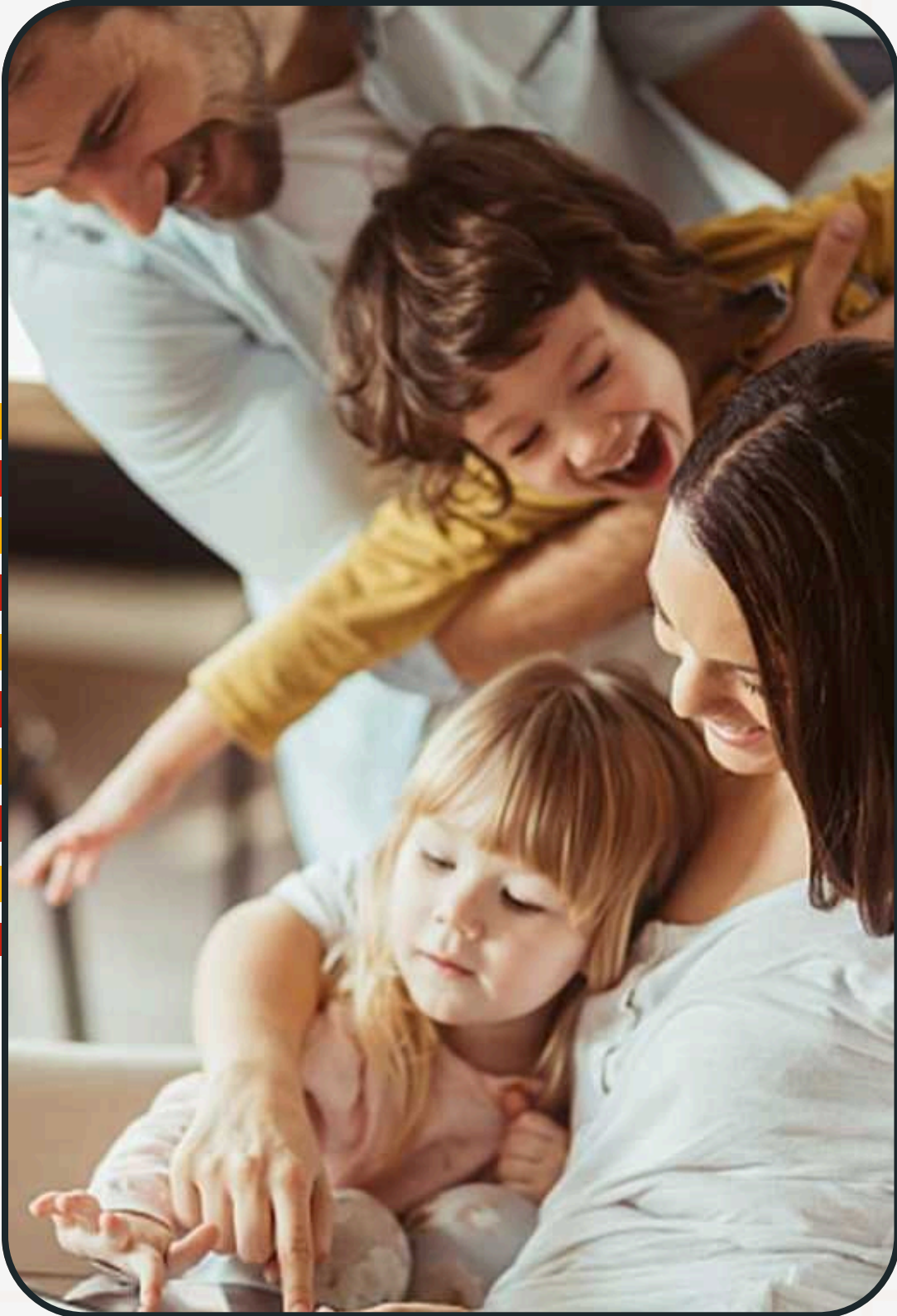
The most extreme views within this debate are known as determinism, where behaviour is seen as being controlled by one dominant factor. Biological determinists argue that human behaviour is largely determined by genetic inheritance and natural instincts. In contrast, social determinists believe that behaviour is shaped primarily by social forces such as culture, norms, and values.

THE NATURE PERSPECTIVE

Supporters of the nature side, including sociobiologists, argue that human behaviour is driven by biological instincts and inherited characteristics. It is well established that physical traits such as eye colour and hair colour are passed down through genes. Extending this idea, nature theorists suggest that behavioural traits like intelligence, personality, and even aggression may also be inherited. From this perspective, behaviour is seen as largely fixed and biologically programmed.



THE NURTURE PERSPECTIVE



On the other hand, sociologists argue that although individuals may inherit certain tendencies, these do not rigidly determine behaviour. Instead, behaviour is shaped through socialisation, the process by which individuals learn the norms and values of their society. People with similar genetic backgrounds can develop very different personalities depending on their environment and experiences. This view also highlights human agency, the ability to make choices about how to behave.

EVIDENCE FROM FERAL CHILDREN

One of the strongest arguments in favour of nurture comes from the study of feral children, children who have grown up with little or no human contact. These children often face significant challenges when introduced to society, particularly in learning language and forming social relationships. Their difficulties suggest that many aspects of human behaviour, including communication and social interaction, are not innate but must be learned through interaction with others. This evidence supports the idea that the social environment plays a crucial role in shaping who we become.



SOCIALISATION



Socialisation is the lifelong process through which individuals learn the norms and values of their culture. This learning takes place through various agencies of socialisation, such as the family, education system, peer groups, media, religion, and the workplace. These agencies help individuals understand how to behave, what is acceptable, and how to function as members of society

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SOCIALIZATION



Primary socialisation mainly occurs in the family during infancy and early childhood. Here, children learn fundamental norms and values, such as manners, language, and ideas about right and wrong.

As individuals grow older, they enter **secondary socialisation**, which takes place through institutions like schools, peer groups, media, religion, and workplaces. In this stage, individuals learn new roles and expectations when they encounter new situations, such as starting school, beginning a job, or entering marriage.

ACTIVE ROLE OF INDIVIDUALS IN SOCIALISATION



Socialisation is not a passive process. Individuals actively interpret and respond to the messages they receive. They think about how others perceive them and may accept or reject certain norms and values. For instance, a young person may experience conflicting expectations from family and peer groups and must decide which values to follow.

KEY AGENCIES OF SOCIALISATION



The Family

The family is the most significant agent of socialisation, especially during early childhood. Children learn language, behaviour, and cultural values by observing and interacting with family members. Family structures vary, including nuclear families, single-parent families, and extended families, leading to diverse socialisation experiences.

Education

The education system plays a major role in shaping behaviour and values. In addition to the formal curriculum, students learn the hidden curriculum, which includes discipline, respect for authority, and acceptance of hierarchy

Peer Groups

Peer groups consist of individuals of similar age and status. They are particularly influential during adolescence, as the desire to belong and fit in is very strong. Peer groups shape behaviour through peer pressure, encouraging individuals to conform to group norms.

KEY AGENCIES OF SOCIALISATION



Media

The media is a major agent of socialisation in modern society. It includes television, radio, newspapers, and increasingly, digital and social media platforms.

The media provides information about the world and influences people's beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours.

Religion

Religion can strongly influence an individual's values and behaviour. Through places of worship and religious teachings, individuals learn moral guidelines and expectations.

In many societies, religion remains a powerful agent of socialisation, as its teachings are often seen as coming from a higher authority.

Workplace

The workplace is an important agent of socialisation in adulthood. When individuals start a job, they learn expected behaviours, roles, and workplace norms. Through training and interaction with colleagues, individuals adapt to workplace culture.

Processes of Socialisation

Socialisation occurs through several key processes that shape behaviour from an early age.

Imitation and Reinforcement

Children often learn through imitation, copying the behaviour of others. They are more likely to repeat actions that are rewarded, a process known as positive reinforcement. Conversely, behaviour may be discouraged through negative sanctions.

Canalisation

Canalisation refers to the way children are guided towards gender-specific behaviours. For example, girls may be encouraged to engage in activities like dancing, while boys may be directed towards sports. This process reinforces traditional gender roles.

Role Modelling

Individuals learn by observing **role models**, people they admire and wish to imitate. These can include parents, teachers, celebrities, or influencers. Positive role models can encourage desirable behaviour.

Conclusion

Overall, socialisation is a complex and continuous process shaped by multiple agencies and experiences. It ensures that individuals learn the norms and values necessary for social life, while also allowing them the flexibility to question, adapt, and shape their own identities within society.

