

SOCIOLOGY



INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY: KEY IDEAS

WHAT IS SOCIOLOGY?

Is the systematic study of social groups, and their influence on, and relationship to, the lives and experiences of individuals

MACRO



MICRO



KEY TERMS

Norms.....

Values.....

Culture.....

Social Identity.....

What are the
benefits of living
in social groups?

Nature vs Nurture

Cry of an enfant sauvage

For five years, Oxana Malaya lived with dogs and survived on raw meat and scraps. When she was found she was running around on all fours barking. Elizabeth Grice hears her incredible story

She bounds along on all fours through long grass, panting towards water with her tongue hanging out. When she reaches the tap she paws at the ground with her forefeet, drinks noisily with her jaws wide and lets the water cascade over her head.

Up to this point, you think the girl could be acting - but the moment she shakes her head and neck free of droplets, exactly like a dog when it emerges from a swim, you get a creepy sense that this is something beyond imitation. Then, she barks.

The furious sound she makes is not like a human being pretending to be a dog. It is a proper, chilling, canine burst of aggression and it is coming from the mouth of a young woman, dressed in T-shirt and shorts.

This is 23-year-old Oxana Malaya reverting to behaviour she learnt as a young child when she was brought up by a pack of dogs on a rundown farm in the village of Novaya Blagoveschenka, in the Ukraine. When she showed her boyfriend what she once was and what she could still do - the barking, the whining, the four-footed running - he took fright. It was a party trick too far and the relationship ended.

Oxana is a feral child, one of only about 100 known in the world. The story goes that, when she was three, her indifferent, alcoholic parents left her outside one night and she crawled into a hovel where they kept dogs.

No one came to look for her or even seemed to notice she was gone, so she stayed where there was warmth and food - raw meat and scraps - forgetting what it was to be human, losing what toddler's language she had and learning to survive as a member of the pack.

A shameful five years later, a neighbour reported a child living with animals. When she was found, at the age of eight in 1991, Oxana could hardly speak and ran around on all fours barking, mimicking her carers.

Though she must have seen humans at a distance, and seems occasionally to have entered the family house like a stray, they were no longer her species: all meaningful life was contained in a kennel.

Judging from the complete lack of written documentation about her physical and psychological state when found, the authorities were not keen to record her case - neglect on this scale was too shameful to acknowledge - even though it has been of huge and continuing interest to psychologists who believe feral children can help resolve the nature-nurture debate.

What is known about "the Dog Girl" has been passed down aurally, through doctors and carers. "She was like a small animal. She walked on all fours. She ate like a dog," is about as scientific as it gets.

Last month, the British child psychologist and expert on feral children, Lyn Fry, went to the Ukraine with a Channel 4 film crew to meet Oxana, who now lives in a home for the mentally disabled.

Five years after a Discovery Channel programme about her, they wanted to see if she had integrated into community living. Fry was keen to find out how far the girl was still damaged - and to witness a reunion with her father.

"I expected someone much less human," says Fry, the first non-Ukrainian expert to meet Oxana. "I'd heard stories that she could fly off the handle, that she was very unco-operative, that she was socially inept, but she did everything I asked of her.

"Her language is odd. She speaks flatly as though it's an order. There is no cadence or rhythm or music to her speech, no inflection or tone. But she has a sense of humour. She likes to be the centre of attention, to make people laugh. Showing off is quite a surprising skill when you consider her background.

"She made a very striking impression on me. When I made her a gift of some wooden toy animals we had used in tests, she thanked me. Superficially, you would never know this was a young woman raised by dogs."

In the film, Oxana looks unco-ordinated and tomboyish. When she walks, you notice her strange stomping gait and swinging shoulders, the intermittent squint and misshapen teeth.

Like a dog with a bone, her first instinct is to hide anything she is given. She is only 5ft tall but when she fools about with her friends, pushing and shoving, there is a palpable air of menace and brute strength.

The oddest thing is how little attention she pays to her pet mongrel. "Sometimes, she pushed it away," says Fry. "She was much more orientated to people."

After a series of cognitive tests, Fry concluded that Oxana has the mental capacity of a six-year-old and a dangerously low boredom threshold. She can count but not add up. She cannot read or spell her name correctly.

She has learning difficulties, but she is not autistic, as children brought up by animals are sometimes assumed to be. She is proud of her huge wristwatch with its many ringtones - but can't tell the time.

Experts agree that unless a child learns to speak by the age of five, the brain misses its window of opportunity to acquire language, a defining characteristic of being human.

Oxana was able to learn to talk again because she had some childish speech before she was abandoned. At an orphanage school, they taught her to walk upright, to eat with her hands and, crucially, to communicate like a human being.

The definition of a feral child (or "wild child") is one who, from a very young age, has lived in isolation from human contact, unaware of human social behaviour and unexposed to language.

Through an interpreter, Oxana tells Fry that her mother and father "completely forgot about me". They argued and shouted. Her mother would hit her and she would pee herself in terror. She says she still goes off by herself into the woods when she is upset. You have to wonder which voice, animal or human, she uses when she gets there.

Although she knows it is socially unacceptable to bark, she certainly can, as the opening footage of the documentary *Feral Children* demonstrates. Lisa Plasco, executive producer, says: "She has been educated away from all those aspects of her past. But privately, I think she might [bark]. The sound level may have been enhanced in the film, but she certainly made those noises."

It was a similar show of canine behaviour that scared off her recent boyfriend. "To be confronted with what she was," says Fry, "put him off."

Oxana seems to be happy looking after cows at the Baraboy Clinic's insalubrious farm, outside Odessa. "It was dirty, terribly rundown and primitive," says Fry, "but in Ukrainian terms, very desirable."

Her carers are good people with the best interests of their charges at heart, though there is no therapy as such. Oxana is doing things she is good at."

It was here that the reunion with her father was staged a few weeks ago. Of her mother, whom Oxana has not seen since infancy, there is no trace. "We knew she very much wanted to meet him," says Plasco, "and we facilitated that but we didn't orchestrate it."

Fry was anxious about the way the meeting was conducted: Oxana standing alone as her estranged father and half-sister, Nina, whom she had never met, came slowly towards her, cameras rolling. A crowd of her friends, agog, watched the spectacle from a distance.

"I thought it was a good idea for them to meet but a very risky way of going about it. I felt anything could happen. It could have split them apart permanently. It was very tense. There needed to be someone beside her, holding her hand."

In the film, they stand awkwardly apart and it is ages before anyone speaks. Oxana breaks the silence. "Hello," she says. "I have come," replies her father.

The exchange is moving in its halting formality. "I thank you that you have come. I wanted you to see me milk the cows." Nina is the one who starts sobbing and Oxana puts her arm round her.

Oxana has a romantic notion of returning to live with her impoverished father, but it is doubtful whether that will happen. Fry's guess is that she will go for a holiday, see the reality of life there and return to the familiar.

Is Oxana capable of a life beyond the institution? Fry is doubtful. "She doesn't have the social or personal skills. She has had boyfriends but she doesn't have the ability to form long-term relationships or to understand give and take. She would rather fall out than compromise. She is a very vulnerable person and there is no protection for her outside that institution."

Oxana Malaya

Oxana Malaya (born Nov 1983) was found as an eight year old feral child living in Ukraine in 1991, having lived most of her life in the company of dogs. She picked up a number of dog like habits and found it difficult to master language. Oxana's alcoholic parents were unable to care for her. They lived in an impoverished area where there were wild dogs roaming the streets. She lived in a dog kennel behind her house where she was cared for by dogs and learned their behaviours and mannerisms. She growled, barked and crouched like a wild dog, sniffed at her food before she ate it, and was found to have acquired extremely acute senses of hearing, smell and sight.

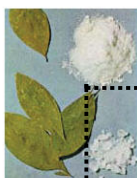


What examples of non-human behaviour did Oxana display?

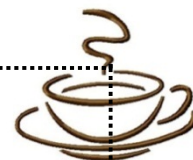
Why did she not act like a 'normal' child?

Is loving a child natural or learned behaviour? Why?

Oxana was found aged eight. Do you think she will have been able to learn how to be human?



SOCIOLOGY OF COFFEE



What do we mean by coffee culture?

The term 'Coffee Culture' varies dependant of the society studied. Evaluate the term in relation to 'American coffee Culture', 'Amsterdam Coffee Shop culture, Peru, Slough and Italy?

PERU

Chewing of coca in Peru has been part of Peruvian culture for over 3000 years. Peru is a very poor country and many of its farmers work at high altitude. Chewing coca is a way of helping to stave of hunger and exhaustion.

The International Narcotics Board wants coca to be designated as a drug because of the powerful effect it has on people. If this happened, chewing coca would become a criminal activity. On the other hand, many see coca as a useful medicine with many benefits.

Peru makes more money from growing coca than it does from growing marijuana.

SLOUGH

There are 20 coffee shops in the centre of Slough (as listed in Yellow Pages).

There are 46 within a five mile radius of the centre of S.



ITALY

If you want to avoid looking like a tourist in Italy, the advice is "Drink Coffee".

Coffee is an integral part of Italian culture – all Italians drink coffee and Italians have devised different ways of drinking coffee:

- Cappuccino
- Latte
- Espresso



Summer Work:

THIS NEEDS TO BE HANDED TO Mrs B or Miss Khan in YOUR FIRST SOCIOLOGY LESSON

Choose one of the following subcultures to study:

1. Rastafarianism
2. Orthodox Jews
3. EMOS/GOTHS

Try to find out the following: symbols, traditions, dress, language, norms and values, diet and beliefs

