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Blind Side and Social Psychological Principles

The Blind Side is based on a heart-touching true story of a high school boy, Michael. It is about his journey from being a silent, diffident kid to being a professional footballer. As a child, he has a broken and unstable home due to a drug-addict mom and an absentee father. He begins going to a new school, and eventually end up into the home of a rather wealthy family called the Tuohys that offers him stability better upbringing. He begins to improve his grades and starts playing football. Eventually, he becomes football fame and many colleges look forward at him for joining their football teams.

I chose this movie because it provides a very deep insight into the psychosocial development of a child and the factors that play instrumental roles in promoting or retarding this development. Blind Side can be related to Social Psychology in many ways. There are many social-psychological principles that are at play in the movie including stereotyping, prejudice, bystander effect, conformity, discrimination, gender roles, unconditional positive regard, and so on.

The movie shows how as several points in his early life, Michael experienced social discrimination. Discrimination can be defined as meting out a prejudicial treatment to someone solely on the basis of their membership in a certain social group. At one instance, during a football match, the referee was showing bias as he didn't call a penalty when Michael was hit by the opponent team’s member on his head. One explanation for this discrimination could be the black color of Michael. Moreover, he had also suffered social isolation because his peers thought he was dumb as he had not developed a normal level of intelligence because of his broken family.

The issues of discrimination persist even today in the American Society. The discrimination ranges from racism to gender discrimination. One form is discrimination against immigrants. Discrimination based on sexual orientation is yet another example. The scenes of police brutality surface more often than not against the black community. In schools and colleges, those who come from humble backgrounds are looked down upon and pushed into isolation.

Stereotyping is a generalized belief about a person because of his or her association with a certain group or category. The movie highlights stereotyping when, at one instance, Sean asks Leigh Anne about Michael that whether or not he has stolen anything. Here stereotyping is at play because Sean assumed that Michael stole something simply because he was black. Stereotyping is a social psychological principle prevailing in almost all societies around the world. One pertinent example is the stereotyping to American people. There are both positive and negative stereotypes associated with Americans by other people around the world. Positive stereotypes include optimism, generosity and hardworking. Negative stereotypes include obesity, obsession with guns, materialism, military zeal, etc.

Another important social psychological principle that was at play in the move was conformity. Conformity can be defined as the tendency of an individual to align their behavior, attitude, and beliefs with the surrounding people in order to in the group. One of the reasons for conformity is the desire to acquire a sense of security within a religious, cultural or same-age group. Non-conformity can lead to social rejection. Michael's younger brother was a student but wanted to join one of the local gangs. Therefore he dropped out of school and changed himself to fit into the gang groups as per their requirement and terms. Another character, Leigh Anne Tuohy, on the other hand, depicts the behavior of non-conformity when she tells her socialite friends that they were all bigots. She chose truth over the comfort that comes with social conformity.

Conformity is extremely entrenched in our society. We conform to expectations of society regarding our gender roles. Our sexual orientation, in majority cases, also aligns with the societal norms. However, not everyone conforms to social pressure and there can be exceptions as well. According to one study, the degree of conformity varies from culture to culture (Smith and Bond). For instance, in comparison to Asian culture, people from Western cultures (U.S., UK, etc.) are more individualistic. People in Eastern cultures, on the other hand, tend to value the needs, norms, and traditions of family and groups.

# **References**

Smith, P. B. and M. H. Bond. "Social Psychology Across Cultures: Analysis and Perspectives." (1992). <https://www.simplypsychology.org/conformity.html>.