

I Socialization: Its Purpose and Importance

A. Socialization: the lifelong process of social interaction in which the individual acquires a social identity and way of thinking, feeling, and acting that are essential for effective participation in a society

B. What is the Purpose of Socialization?

1. Socialization Establishes Our Social Identity

2. Socialization Teaches US Role Taking

a. Role: the behavior expected of a person in a particular social position

3. Socialization Controls Our Behavior

a. Internalization: the process of learning cultural behaviors and expectations so deeply that we accept them without question

4. Socialization Transmits Culture to the Next Generation

C. Why is Socialization Important?

1. When children are deprived of social interaction they don't develop the characteristics that most of us see as normal and human

II Nature and Nurture

A. How Important is Nature?

1. How Biology Affects Behavior

a. Sexual Reassignment is possible because gender is determined as much by culture and nurture as by genes and hormones (theory of John Money)

b. When experimented on David Reimer (Brenda) was raised as a female despite male birth. The experiment failed, "Brenda" rebelled and had surgery to reconstruct male genitalia. Later in life David committed suicide, likely due to the physical/mental torments of his childhood

2. Sociobiology and Socialization

a. Sociobiology: a theoretical perspective that applies biological principles to explain the behavior of animals, including human beings

B. How Important is Nurture?

1. How Behavior Affects Biology

a. The kind & quantity of nutrition received in the womb; the pollutants, drugs and infections you were exposed to during gestation; your parents' eating habits & stress level all have lasting impacts on children

b. Childhood mistreatment can blunt biological development and lead to behavioral and emotional problems

2. Culture and Socialization

a. Margaret Mead studied three tribes and determined that attributes long considered masculine (aggressiveness) or feminine (emotional) are culturally, not biologically determined

C. Is the Nature-Nurture Debate Becoming Obsolete in Sociology

1. People have at least 52 characteristics that are partially inherited such as aggression, leadership traits, and cognitive ability. Our social environment can enhance or dampen these characteristics

III. Sociological Explanations of Socialization

A. Social Learning Theories: people learn new attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through social interaction, especially during childhood

1. Direct and Indirect Learning

- a. direct - reinforcement/punishment for a particular behavior
- b. indirect: modeling (imitating the behaviors of influential people)

2. Learning and Performing

- a. learning through observation of others without modeling them

3. Critical Evaluation

- a. Siblings should have similar beliefs/personalities if learning is so critical
- b. Learning theory ignores birth order and only emphasizes early socialization

B. Symbolic Interaction Theories

1. Charles Horton Cooley: Emergence of the Self and the Looking-Glass Self

- a. self: an awareness of one's social identity
- b. looking-glass self: a self image based on how we think others see us, which emerges from social relationships
 - i) Phase 1/Perception: How we think others perceive us
 - ii) Phase 2/Interpretation: How we think others judge us
 - iii) Phase 3/Response: We experience self-feelings based on whether phases 1 & 2 were positive or negative

2. George Herbert Mead: Development of the Self and Role Taking

- a. Two parts of the self: "I" = creative, self-centered, unpredictable & "me" = aware of the attitudes of others, has self-control & internalized social roles

b. role taking: learning to take the perspective of others (3 stages)

i) Preparatory stage (Birth - 2 yrs): "I" is dominant; learning is accomplished through imitation and cause-effect

ii) Play stage (2 - 6 yrs): imitation of the words/behaviors of significant others; learning social norms; acting out imagined roles ("me" = stranger)

iii) Anticipatory socialization: the process of learning how to perform a role they don't normally occupy

iv) Game stage (6+ yrs): understanding connections between roles; taking the role of the generalized other (people who do not have close ties to the child, but who influence his/her internalization of society's norms/values)

c. "Me" never controls "I", but does become stronger over time

3. Erving Goffman: Staging the Self in Everyday Life

a. Impression management: We provide information and cues to others to present ourselves in a favorable light while downplaying our less appealing characteristics

i) Setting: we try to control where interactions take place

ii) appearance: we try to control clothing and titles

iii) manner: we try to control the mood/style of behavior

4. Critical Evaluation

a. It is unclear why some children have a positive looking-glass self and become successful despite negative cues

b. Impossible to measure "self", "me" ≠ "I" due to vagueness

c. The extent of socialization depends on a child's social context

d. reference groups: groups of people who shape an individual's self-image, behavior, values, and attitudes in different contexts

e. Interactionists credit people with more free will than they actually have & tend to downplay/ignore macro-level factors that affect our development

IV. Primary Socialization Agents: individuals, groups, or institutions that teach us what we need to know to participate effectively in society

A. Family

1. How Parents Socialize Children: Learning techniques & managing the environment

2. Parenting styles: authoritarian (harsh, unresponsive, & rigid), authoritative (warm, responsive & involved), permissive (warm & responsive), Uninvolved (indifferent & neglectful)