

- Proposals for actions capable of linking the reconstruction of societal relations in daily life at a local level with global projects of social transformation

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Online Resources

- Annual Review of Critical Psychology. <http://www.discourseunit.com/annual-review>
- Anticapitalist Initiative. <http://www.anticapitalists.org>
- Counterpunch. <http://www.counterpunch.org>
- Envisioning a Post-capitalist order. <http://www.postcapitalistproject.org>
- Marxism & Psychology Research Group. <http://discoveryspace.upei.ca/mprg>
- Marxists Internet Archive. <http://www.marxists.org>
- Monthly Review. <http://www.monthlyreview.org>
- Occupy Movement. <http://www.occupy.com>
- Radical Psychology Network. <http://www.radpsynet.org>
- Revolutionary Left Forum. <http://www.revleft.com>
- Socialist Register. <http://www.socialistregister.com>
- Socialist World. <http://www.socialistworld.net>

Socialization

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Introduction

Socialization refers to the developmental processes through which individuals acquire the values, behaviors, and motivations necessary to become competent members of a culture. Postulated in this form in the mid-twentieth century, socialization remains a central concept in psychology. As a theoretical entity, it has been the subject of extensive empirical examination and debate. It is a normative concept that distinguishes between normal and non-normal ways of being in the social world. As a normative as well as broad conceptual category, socialization has entered into lay discourse and is regularly applied to explain and manage practical affairs; it has been influential in education, parenting, and political affairs. Socialization has been advanced to explain a plethora of psychological matters,

including race relations, gender roles, moral decision-making, citizenship, self-control, affect management, and self concept, among others. While it once had a distinctly different meaning, psychologists appropriated the term to explain processes within individuals. This essentially psychological definition has borrowed liberally from extant psychological theories with the result that socialization consists of a bricolage of psychodynamic, behaviorist, cognitive, and sociological theories. So constructed with a variety of theory perspectives, socialization evolved as a capacious entity, one that has been repeatedly refined and reconfigured in accord with psychology's changing conceptual priorities. Given this theory hybridity and given the sociopolitical significance of understanding how individuals come to be competent members of sociality, socialization persists and has survived even recent nativist critiques of nurture models.

Definition

Socialization is a common term in sociology, political science, education, and anthropology as well as psychology where it is used to describe the processes whereby individuals attain the behaviors, norms, beliefs, and ideologies that are needed for competent participation in society. Socialization is utilized to explain both behaviors of individuals (how persons become successful members of a society) and societal conditions (how social, political, and cultural practices are continued). From its earliest appearance in psychology, socialization processes have been explained by drawing upon and frequently combining a set of theories that posit distinctly different conceptions of human nature. These include psychoanalysis, behaviorism, motivation theory, personality theories, ethology, and culture theory. Emerging as a means to explain how individuals are intimately and ontological linked to the social world – how they acquire the know how to successfully participate in complex social events – socialization harbors a paradox in assuming that individuals are individuals only in terms of their social existence

(a paradox recognized by William James and George Herbert Mead). Further, owing to its multiple theoretical origins, socialization is a capacious idea that can be (and has been) used alternatively to demonstrate individuals' conformity to social demands or their independence from such demands. Socialization similarly is extended to explain the central importance of either parenting techniques or peer interactions. As a plastic concept, socialization has been deftly incorporated in the research programs of cognitive psychology, behaviorism, psychoanalysis, object relations theory, ethology, and comparative psychology. In these utilizations, socialization stands as a normative concept, assuming that individuals are either effectively or ineffectively socialized (Maccoby, 2007). These various utilizations share as well as focus on early development, tacitly or explicitly presuming that early childhood to be a critical time in the formation of social knowledge and skills necessary for adequate functioning in the social world. Less attention has been given to socialization across the life span and to "resocialization" of individuals who were poorly socialized. Research on socialization periodically shifts focus, sometimes attending to environmental conditions and sometimes to the cognitive or innate capacities requisite for socialization and at other times to the dynamic interactions between agents and objects of socialization (usually to parents and children). Researchers has submitted these various and varying dimensions of socialization to rigorous experimental testing, yet throughout these studies socialization itself is nearly always assumed not empirically tested.

Keywords

Socialization; Development; Individual; Society; Parenting; Internalization

History

Socialization is generously used across the social science in reference to the elaborate processes

whereby individual development is influenced if not shaped by social forces. Prior to this usage, the term had a markedly different meaning, one still registered in some dictionaries. Until the twentieth century, socialization was used to refer to acts of establishing social affairs or a socialistic basis of society (Morawski & St. Martin, 2011). This prior meaning is found in Charles Fourier's utopian writings where socialization refers to that stage of societal development when "competitive industrialization" would be replaced by cooperative social and economic systems (Anon, 1841, p. 505). Karl Marx and Frederick Engels similarly defined socialization as the complex coordination of labor and production in order to realize conditions of common profit, not individual gains. Sociologist George Simmel conceptualized socialization in terms of the "overthrow of the individualistic view" and unambiguously defined it as "the sum of . . . the manifold interactions between individuals" (1896, p. 169).

Early twentieth-century psychology produced a quite different definition. Whereas *A Student's Dictionary of Psychological Terms* published in 1928 defines socialization as the processes of "bringing industry or any institution under social control for the welfare of the group," it also includes a definition of socialization as "learning to get along with others (English, 1928, p. 116). An edition of the dictionary published just 6 years later, while still providing both definitions, gives more attention to the latter one, describing socialization as "the processes by which individuals acquire socially desirable habits and become able to live as members of a social group" (Warren, 1934, p. 254). This new alternative definition, quickly acquiring conceptual elaboration, might have been influenced by sociologist Franklin Giddings' rejection of Simmel's social-organizational conception and his replacement of that conception with an individualist one in which socialization transpires as a process within individuals. Giddings defined it as "the development of a social nature or character – a social state of mind – individuals who associate" (1897, p. 2). Yet Giddings' evolutionary commitments also led to the assertion that

socialization did not begin with individuals; rather, society is a precedent for the production of individuals. It was in the spirit of Giddings' individualist perspective that Floyd Allport widely circulated this "modern" sense of socialization as the means by which individuals' habit is modified to enable them to participate in group life.

Allport's definition of socialization was quintessentially psychological in being an individualist and positivist one: it was clearly modern in its behaviorist commitment, and historical reviews would laud his conception of socialization as the environmental modification of potent reflexes as an enduring one (Clausen, 1968). Soon other researchers would join in and their definitions brought more than behaviorism to explain the socialization process. In their groundbreaking work on aggression, Dollard, Doob, Miller, Mower and Sears (1939) featured a chapter on socialization, uniting learning theory and Freudian psychoanalysis to describe how socialization produces conflict: it frustrates basic bodily and emotional desires, notably that of aggression. Therefore, frustration is an unavoidable effect of successful socialization. Some psychologists married culture and personality theories and behaviorism, and psychoanalysis and cognitive concepts. Many, like Floyd Ruch and Philip Zimbardo (1967), combined theoretical notions borrowed from psychoanalysis, learning theory, and culture and personality theory, along with constructs like identification and imitation. Still other researchers utilized a single theory; for instance, a consistently behaviorist perspective underlies Fred Keller and William Shoenfield's definition whereby the environment functions to socialize persons "by reinforcing the behavior it desires and extinguishing others. . . . It teaches the individual what he may and may not do. . ." (1950, p. v).

After the Second World War, socialization rose to become a central concept in psychology. Otto Klineberg did not include the term in the 1940 edition of his social psychology textbook, but in the second edition, he asserted that socialization to be "an essential characteristic of human

nature” (1954, p. 64). Socialization soon came to be understood as a distinctly psychological phenomenon that accounts for a significant portion of human life. Even sociologist Talcott Parsons conceded the importance and psychological nature of socialization, claiming “human personality is not ‘born’ but must be ‘made’ primarily through families, the socialization ‘factories’ which produce human personalities” (Parsons & Bales, 1955, p. 16). Socialization, therefore, is the origin of appropriate behavior, felicitous social interaction, self-control, moral decisions, political attitudes, identity, personality, gender roles, and citizenship.

In the postwar political atmosphere, it was marshaled to help explain the functioning of fascism, communism, and democracy alike, and considerable research equated good parenting with adopting democratic styles (Maccoby, 2007). Socialization research during this period lucidly demonstrates how the “relation of the individual to the social is a political and moral as well as a scientific subject” (Smith, 1997, p. 747). Psychologists were expressing deep concerns about coercive state powers and deployed socialization to show the connections as well as conflicts between necessary social control and individual freedom (largely discussed as the freedom to escape undemocratic powers). Given its normative dimension, socialization became linked with anxious questioning about human nature. How vulnerable is the individual to coercive socialization? Is there anything about human nature that enables individuals to resist oppressive social and political structures? Can they revolt? Or will they identify with pathological social systems? These sorts of questions also guided ontological queries about whether human nature was simply whatever a social system produced and, if so, how we can avoid dystopic societies. In sum, does being socialized differ from being civilized? The ferment surrounding socialization’s normative and inescapably political implications motivated critique and ultimately led some researchers to make conceptual modifications. Sociologist Dennis Wrong (1961) chided social scientists for their rendering of an “oversocialized” individual who reflexively

internalizes norms, adopts a positive self-image, and consistently conforms to social expectations. What is more, the oversocialized individual apparently depicted in socialization research is amazingly disembodied, desexualized, and nonmaterial. Whereas Wrong proposed reconsideration to Freud’s conceptualization of human nature, other researchers turned to close examination of underappreciated biological and cognitive components of socialization process. For instance, greater attention was given to the agency of the individual who is undergoing socialization, seeing her as “transactor,” “processor,” and “transformer” (Zigler & Child, 1969). Children’s capacities to self-regulate, self-socialize, and even resist socialization forces became the subject of empirical studies as did the bidirectional exchanges between the socializer and individual being socialized (Maccoby, 2007). Influenced by the nascent cognitive sciences, psychologists analyzed the mental structures purported to enable and limit socialization processes. Notable among these investigators, Lawrence Kohlberg hypothesized that socialization proceeds not through passive or observational learning but with “active processes of attention, information-gathering strategies, motivated thinking, and so forth” (1969, p. 349). Soon researchers were positing that crucial to successful socialization were processes of self-actualization, internal self-system, self-monitoring, and self-regulation along with evolutionary mechanisms. Although many lauded such reconceptualizations as a victory of cognitive and nativist perspectives over the presumed naiveté of nurture or “blank slate” perspectives, this analytic juxtaposition erroneously depicts prior socialization research by overlooking how that research acknowledges biological and cognitive components of socialization. As Dennis Bryson (2002) found, postwar social scientists’ “pacification of the social,” including work on socialization, was deeply informed by biological precepts and discourses.

Research on socialization remains attentive to self-regulatory processes and cognitive capacities. In addition, substantial work is being committed to deciphering the different strategies used

by those who socialize the young and to the varieties of socializing forces, including parents, educators, peers, and the media. Prominent in contemporary research are debates over which social forces are most determining of socialization outcomes, specifically debates over parental versus peer group socialization (Harris, 1995). Also under scrutiny is the extent to which actions like moral decision-making are hardwired (and hence universal) or are meaningfully influenced by environment factors.

Traditional Debates

With conceptual roots in a range of theoretical perspectives, socialization has been the subject of numerous controversies over theory. Most common among the criticisms is the argument that socialization holds to a “blank slate” model of mind (nurture model) and hence denies any influences of biology or genetics (nature model). Wrong (1961) panned what he perceived as the “oversocialized” individual posited by socialization, noting that it ignored bodily and material conditions. Others have defended socialization against such bald critiques, claiming that socialization involves more than environmental factors and is not a behaviorist, concept, adding that many formulations incorporate biological and cognitive factors. Among the critical claims that socialization is a blank slate notion have been concerns that socialization represents individuals as passive and conforming; however, even early research appreciated the active involvement of the objects of socialization and by the late 1960s researchers considered how socialization involves regulating and decision-reference systems. Similarly, evolutionary thinking has long been part of socialization research and continues to be so (Hastings, Utendale & Sullivan, 2007; Maccoby, 2007; Morawski & St. Martin, 2011). Yet another criticism tied to perceptions of socialization as a purely nurture perspective asserts not only that individuals are depicted as passive learners but also that strategies of socializing agents are underappreciated (Waksler, 1991). However, there exists ample evidence of

long-standing empirical work on the various strategies of socializing as well as on the active involvement of all actors (Maccoby, 2007).

The periodic conflation of socialization with idealized nurture models has generated enduring controversies that pit concepts of humans as autonomous and cognitively complex against notions of humans as more or less passively shaped by environmental forces. Diligent researchers have identified the false dichotomies underlying such controversies; for example, Gibbs and Shell (1985) found this to be the case in moral development research. The historically based ambiguity or bricolage of socialization’s base assumptions about human nature fuels these persistent debates.

A second notable source of debate ensues from socialization’s normative premise. From its inception, socialization has been assumed to have an optimal outcome: competent social performance. Individuals, therefore, are either adequately or inadequately socialized. This normative premise ultimately implies an instrumentalist view that appropriate socialization produces competent if not optimal functioning in a given social environment. Research on gender roles illustrates serious problems, conceptual and empirical, with this normative premise. Until the late 1960s, psychologists believed that individuals should be socialized to perform gender roles consistent with their assigned gender (male or female). In other words, such gender socialization is a desired process. Some researchers challenged this assumption by demonstrating not only the ways in which these normative gender roles are not optimal and sometimes are dysfunctional but also the ways that gender roles constitute ideologies that sustain sexist practices and mask actual gender-related behaviors. Presumed appropriate gender role socialization, it was observed, did not produce optimally functioning individuals (Bem & Bem, 1970; Chesler, 1972). An eventual result of these conceptual and empirical reassessments, contemporary studies of gender role socialization no longer cleave to normative assumptions about appropriate or optimal gender roles. Yet concerns surrounding the normative premise of socialization continue, and

one proposed solution involves identifying evolutionary bases of socialization. For instance, prosocial behaviors can be seen as not relative to specific environments or as ideologies but, rather, as evolved strategies that are advantageous to survival (Hastings et al., 2007). Such evolutionary claims, however, still need to account for cultural and context-specific variations in the behaviors valued as prosocial ones.

Other disputes have arisen from researchers' emphases on different agents of socialization, and the debates have practical as well as theoretical implications. Most recent among these arguments is research suggesting that peer or group socialization has far greater effects than parental forces (Harris, 1995). This recent debate echoes an earlier one over the relative socializing influence of the media, notably television.

Critical Debates

Within psychology's current intellectual focus on the biological or unconscious bases of human thought and action, socialization survives and quietly circulates as a residual concept though without substantial theoretical or empirical attention. In other words, socialization serves as a handy, commonly understood tool for explaining individuals' exhibiting of socially dominant beliefs or behaviors. Perhaps owing to this auxiliary usage, socialization has not gained notable attention within critical psychology. This abeyance also might be underscored by the emergence and modest flourishing of cultural psychology, which emphasizes the cultural contexts that influence psychological experiences, thoughts, and behaviors. As such cultural psychology research sometimes engages critical questioning of mainstream assumptions of normative social behavior and presuppositions of autonomy, agency, and relation of the individual to the social group. Future critical inquiries could importantly contribute by exploring how socialization concepts have remained in the background of contemporary psychology, how institutional practices still aim for properly socializing individuals to fit normative goals, and how

psychological science has yet to generate satisfactory understandings of the relation of the individual to the social world.

International Relevance

Socialization is an established concept around the world, most often related to child development and education. The contemporary, distinctly psychological understanding of socialization was largely developed in North America, whereas its more social and socialist meanings were developed in Europe, and some researchers have found continued national differences in conceptions of socialization (Brezinka, 1994). More common are cross-cultural studies that compare differences in childhood and family structure related to socialization (Georges, in Berry). When employed to examine culture-bound phenomena, the socialization concept sometimes retains a western ethics that twins individual autonomy and social belongingness.

Practice Relevance

From its nineteenth-century usage in social science and political economics, socialization has been extensively used to explain and reform social life. Twentieth-century understandings of socialization as psychological processes that transpire within individuals to produce their productive social participation have been applied extensively to education, child development, citizenship, immigration, and prosocial behavior. Recent research has focused on the strategies that increase the probability of desired normative behaviors.

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Solipsism

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Introduction

Solipsism has been constantly referred to in philosophical and religious traditions when the question of truth was at stake. Whether or not the experience of the individual subject is enough in order for a truth to be established has been a crucial question.

Definition

Solipsism is a kind of conception of the world through which one considers that there exists only one [thing](#) that is the subject who is watching the world.

Keywords

Wittgenstein; Pascal; monadology; Bodhisattva

Traditional Debates

As a corollary of the general definition mentioned above, solipsism has also been understood loosely as an attitude which denies any other subjective position than oneself. What is important in solipsism, however, is not so much the