

Lecture 5 Notes: Socialization

1 Socialization

Definition 1: Socialization

The lifelong process by which individuals internalize the norms, values, language, and social identities of their culture, learning to function as members of society.

Society perpetuates itself by transmitting culture to new members. Socialization also shapes personal and social identities through social interaction.

An individual's perception of themselves as distinct entities, based on similarities and differences with others, incorporating traits, talents, and experiences.

Socialization lies on a continuum from *personal identity* (unique traits) to *social identity* (group memberships). Learning is based on other people; therefore a social process since it is based on social interaction.

Definition 2: Self-concept

n individuals **subjective** sense of who they are based on perceived similarities/differences with others.

2 Nature vs. Nurture

Definition 3: Nature

Biological determinism: the view that genetic makeup fully governs human behavior.

Definition 4: Nurture

Methodological behaviorism: the view that human behavior is shaped entirely through environmental learning (excluding reflexes).

Most people agree both factors matter; the relative influence is an empirical question (see epigenetics).

Arguments against nature:

1. Lack of “universal” human traits

2. Requirement of attribution of genetic source to behavioural traits
3. evolutionary fitness
4. also doesn't take into account variations between cultures (universality)

3 Agency and Development

Definition 5: Agency

The capacity of individuals to act independently and make free choices, even within structural constraints.

Bio-ecological theory holds that development is a reciprocal process between individuals and macro/micro environments.

4 Interactionist Perspectives

4.1 Symbolic Interactionism

Emphasizes that self and social roles emerge through face-to-face meaning-making (Verstehen; role-taking).

4.2 Stages of Self Development (Mead)

- **Preparatory Stage:** Imitation of others.
- **Play Stage:** Taking the role of one significant other.
- **Game Stage:** Coordinating multiple roles; understanding the *generalized other*.

Definition 6: Generalized Other

The composite of societal expectations that individuals internalize to guide their behavior and maintain a stable self.

5 Components of the Self

Definition 7: "I" and "Me"

"I": the spontaneous, creative aspect of self (agency). "Me": the socialized aspect, internalizing others' expectations.

Definition 8: Looking-Glass Self

Cooley's concept that self-understanding develops through imagining how others perceive us and responding to that reflected appraisal.

6 Functionalism and Critical Sociology

6.1 Functionalism

Socialization trains members in roles, functions, and predictable interactions; role conflict arises when attainments clash. **Role conflict** is when expectations or functions of different roles are incompatible due to multiple statuses being held at the same time. **role strain** is when incompatible role demands within one status.

6.2 Critical Sociology

Socialization reproduces inequality: norms and expectations vary by class, gender, and race, naturalizing power relations.

7 Statuses and Roles

Definition 9: Status

A recognized social position occupied by an individual (e.g., student, parent), which exists in relation to others.

Definition 10: Role

The expected behaviours, rights, and duties associated with a status.

Definition 11: Ascribed vs. Achieved Status

Ascribed: assigned at birth or involuntarily acquired over life (e.g., race, gender, widow, mother). Achieved: earned through actions (e.g., graduate, lawyer, husband, criminal, etc).

A **status set** is all your statuses. A **master status** is the most influential/predominant status.

8 Agents of Socialization

Principal agents include:

- **Family:** primary agent; teaches language, basic norms. First 7-8 years of life. Functionalism says family's role is to provide support and guidance along path to becoming

productive and responsible members of society. Develops self worth and trust of others in society. Can think of family as “gender factory”, where gender norms are reinforced, based on gender norms.

- **School:** transmits formal knowledge and hidden curriculum (norms, values, beliefs we learn). Aims to maintain differential treatment of groups based on gender norms, socioeconomic norms, and race “norms”.
- **Peers:** Very important source of social comparison and identity formation. Peers typically share a defining characteristic.

Example 1: Becker’s Learning Theory

Howard Becker’s study shows that becoming a marijuana user requires learning technique, perception of effects, and enjoyment; all through peer interaction.

9 Resocialization

Definition 12: Resocialization

A radical process of discarding former behaviors and adopting new ones (e.g., in total institutions like prisons). Can be voluntary or forced.

Example 2: Post-COVID Reengagement

College men redefining masculinity and social skills as they reenter campus life, illustrating voluntary resocialization under disrupted routines.

10 Sample Question

Sample Question 1: Designing a Socialization Study

Select one agent of socialization and:

- (a) Describe its role from Functionalist and Critical perspectives.
- (b) Explain how interactionism accounts for individual variation in internalization.
- (c) Propose a mixed-methods design to measure its influence on role preparation and identity.