

Preface

It has been a great pleasure to work on the second edition of the *Handbook of Socialization*. Since 2007, the first edition's publication date, much has happened in a field that is central to the understanding of human development. Nevertheless, most of the basic questions remain the same. Some answers that might have been tentative a few years ago have become more certain. Others have become even more tentative or have been shown to be wrong. But researchers are making definite progress in understanding socialization processes—that much is clearly evident.

We begin with a brief discussion of the nature of the socialization process, taken directly from the introduction to the first edition. We then move to an overview of the structure of the present edition.

What Is Socialization?

In the broadest terms, *socialization* refers to the way in which individuals are assisted in becoming members of one or more social groups. The word *assist* is important because it implies that socialization is not a one-way street but that newer members of the social group are active in the socialization process and selective in what they accept from older members of the social group. In addition, newer members may attempt to socialize older members.

Socialization involves a variety of outcomes, including the acquisition of rules, roles, standards, and values across the social, emotional, cognitive, and personal domains. Some outcomes are deliberately hoped for on the part of agents of socialization, while others may be unintended side effects of particular socialization practices (e.g., low self-esteem, anger and reactance, and aggression to peers as a function of harsh parenting). Socialization can also occur through many paths (e.g., discipline after deviation, modeling, proactive techniques, routines, rituals, and as a function of styles of interaction

between the agent of socialization and the individual participating in the socialization process). Socialization is ongoing throughout the life course and can be accomplished by a variety of individuals, including parents, teachers, peers, and siblings, as well as by schools, the media, the Internet, the workplace, and general cultural institutions. Finally, and most important, we note that socialization cannot be adequately understood without a consideration of how biological and sociocultural factors interact in a complex and intertwined manner.

The field of socialization research, always an important area in psychology, has made considerable advances in recent years. These advances are partially attributable to more sophisticated methodological, conceptual, and statistical tools, as well as to the inclusion of a wide variety of theoretical perspectives and approaches. For example, although evolutionary theory has been part of the thinking of socialization theorists, particularly attachment theorists, since at least the 1970s, it is having an increased impact on how socialization is conceptualized. Advances in genetics are helping to shed light on the impact of environmental experiences on children, and new work on biological and hormonal regulatory systems, as well as brain function, is enriching analyses of socialization experiences and the nature of their impact on children. In a time when massive immigration is the norm and global interconnections grow ever stronger, researchers have enlarged their focus of interest from middle-class participants of Western European extraction to people all over the world. All of these exciting changes are represented in this handbook.

What are some of the themes that emerge from contemporary research on socialization? The first has to do with the interdependence of biology and experience. As just noted, evolutionary, cultural, genetic, neurological, and biological approaches are currently prominent, and one of the major tasks for future researchers will be to map the interrelationships among these various approaches to the socialization process. The second theme, which emerges in most of the chapters in this volume, has to do with the fact that socialization involves bidirectionality, with targets of socialization having an impact on the actions of agents of socialization. Indeed, the complexity of the interaction is underlined by the fact that it occurs in a developmental context—each member of the dyad or group is responding to the constantly changing behavior of the other members. The third theme has to do with the many contributing factors that interact to produce multiple socialization processes and pathways. The issue is raised in a number of different forms in many of the chapters. The impact of socialization experience is moderated by genetic predispositions and the child's temperament. Interactions between socialization strategies also occur as a function of a whole host of other variables, including the age, sex, and mood of the child; the nature of the parent-child relationship; the domain of behavior under consideration; and the cultural context. Context gives meaning to much of what goes on during the socialization process, and as a result, socialization cannot be understood independent of that context.

The Structure of the Book

Nearly all the chapters in the second edition address the same content areas as in the first edition. Some have had their original content updated and others have been thoroughly reworked with new perspectives and a different focus. Additional chapters have been

added on socialization during adolescence, socialization in the workplace, neuroscience, and moral development.

Chapter 1, on the history of socialization research, remains virtually unchanged. We are indebted to Eleanor E. Maccoby, a pioneer in the area, for an insightful overview of the history of socialization research that was up to date as of 2007. We present that chapter again, because it still provides an excellent backdrop for the material that follows.

In 2007, after looking at socialization across the life span, we grouped chapters into those that concentrated on events in the family and those that concentrated on events outside the family. This distinction has been more difficult to make in the second edition: Although most contributors still maintain that the family, parents in particular, are the most important agents of socialization, they are also more likely to include in their chapters material on the influence of other agents of socialization. Thus, we can no longer maintain the intra- and extrafamily division. Accordingly, after a section that focuses on different problems and issues that seem more prevalent at certain points in the life span (early childhood, adolescence, emerging adulthood, old age), we move to a section with chapters that address socialization in the context of different relationships and settings (socialization involving equal agency, different domains or relationships, siblings, diverse family structures, peers, school, the media, and the workplace).

We struggled with the ordering of sections in the first edition, particularly with where to insert the material on biological approaches. In the first edition, we placed them at the beginning, just after history. In this second edition, we have inserted biological approaches immediately after those chapters that focus on core principles of the socialization of behavior, cognition, and affect over the life span and across relationships and settings. This ordering is meant to reflect that, to a considerable extent, findings with respect to action, thought, and feeling drive the kinds of questions that biological researchers address. We have placed the section on culture immediately after that on biology, noting that biology and culture are two framing contexts for understanding behavior, cognition, and affect. Within the section on biology, we have included evolutionary and genetic approaches, as well as work on temperament, hormones, and the brain. Within the section on culture, we have included discussion of processes accounting for cultural variation in socialization, the development of cultural repertoires, the role of culture in emotion socialization, and acculturation.

Finally, we present chapters that focus on the socialization of specific outcomes: gender, cognition, emotion, achievement, prosocial behavior, and moral development. In some sense, this last section serves as an overview of the book, because it calls on principles and mechanisms that have been discussed in earlier chapters as they are applied to specific behavioral challenges facing agents of socialization.

In conclusion, the study of socialization remains an active and exciting area of research. We are grateful to the writers of the chapters gathered together in this book for capturing that activity and excitement.

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