Social Interaction and Socialization Virtual Exploration: Web Resources about How People Become Social

This Virtual Exploration is designed to introduce you to relevant resources on the world wide web and to use the web to supplement and extend what you have learned in class. Although the websites have been carefully selected, please keep in mind that it is always important to evaluate critically all web resources. You are encouraged to bookmark and explore these sites further on your own.

This tour is constructed so that each time you click on one of its links, a new window will open. This way you can use your toolbar to switch back and forth between these tour instructions and the website you are exploring. Unless you are instructed otherwise, you may enter your responses online and may email your responses to your instructor or to yourself. Be careful not to close the Tour window, because that will result in your responses being lost. You may want to print out these instructions and copy the answers by hand as you go along, so that you don’t run the risk of losing your work part-way through if you accidentally close the wrong window or if your computer freezes up.

Socialization is a process that begins at birth and continues throughout the rest of our lives. From the perspective of society, we are "barbarians" when we are born. As we come into contact with other individuals and groups we learn various rules of behavior—norms—and we learn to conform to particular roles. This process is referred to as socialization and it helps us to define who we are and how we are expected to behave in social situations. This exercise explores several fundamentals of the socialization process and variations in socialization patterns between groups and societies.

Beginning in infancy we develop social relationships with others, in particular, with those who are our primary care-takers (e.g., mother and father). Through these primary relationships we learn how to interact with others. If our primary relationships are neglected or severely disrupted, social development is impaired. An important study conducted by Harry Harlow and his associates examined the importance of social interaction between infant rhesus monkeys and the effect of being reared apart from other monkeys. Click here for a brief summary of the study.

1. The text and the accompanying graph show that over time, the infant monkeys came to spend more time with the
   - Wire surrogate mother that fed
   - Cuddly surrogate mother that did not feed

2. How did the surrogate-raised monkeys react to their children?
   - Lovingly and gently
   - Abusive and indifferent
   - Frightened and cautious

Close The Experiment window and return to the Social Interaction and Socialization Virtual Exploration.
Exploration.

As infants mature, they develop motor abilities that allow them to communicate with individuals in their social environment through vocalizations and gestures. Additionally, children begin to develop higher cognitive processes that allow them to think about the social interactions that they engage in. Jean Piaget’s work on cognitive development led him to identify a series of stages that virtually all children must go through in order to go on to higher-level cognitive skills. Read through this brief introduction and answer the following question.

3. At what age do children begin to acquire the ability to think about abstract concepts like justice?
   - 18 months
   - 7 years
   - 12 years
   - 18 years

Close the Developmental Stages window and return to the Social Interaction and Socialization Virtual Exploration.

While there is substantial variation in the personalities found in all cultures, the "culture and personality" school of anthropology emphasized how each culture produced certain fundamental personality traits in most of its members. Ruth Benedict is famous for her view of the "isomorphism" of culture and personality expressed in the famous statement: "Culture is personality writ large." Read through this brief biographical sketch and answer the following question:

4. On the basis of what studies in the 1920s did she develop her theory that "culture is personality writ large"?
   - her wartime analysis of Japan
   - her observations about U.S. culture
   - her studies of Pueblo and Plains Indians
   - her studies of Samoan young women

5. The fact that Ruth Benedict leaned towards "cultural determinism" means that she tended to explain human behavior in terms of
   - biological makeup of individuals
   - genetic differences between groups
   - cultural socialization

Close the Ruth Benedict window and return to the Social Interaction and Socialization Virtual Exploration.

Take this personality test: and see how well it describes your personal traits.

6. Do you feel that the analysis of your personality that this test provides you with is accurate? Discuss briefly in the text box below.
7. One of the basic themes in sociology is the importance of socialization—as a broadly social process—in shaping who we are. Try to think of how aspects of your socialization that were rooted in your social and cultural background shaped some of your traits described in this personality test. Discuss one or two of the most important aspects in the text box below.

Close the Personality Inventory window and return to the Social Interaction and Socialization Virtual Exploration.

The United Nations Children's Fund [http://www.unicef.org/] is a major advocate for the rights of children, rights that have to do with conditions necessary for a healthy socialization process. Click on What We Do and explore the page on UNICEF priorities. In the text boxes below, list separately five current priorities of UNICEF:

8. 
9. 
10. 
11. 
12. 

Now click on Info By Country, then West and Central Africa. Choose a country and read "the big picture" and examine the data presented on the side.

13. What country did you choose?

14. What do the text and statistics tell us about the likely life prospects for a child in this country? How might his or her socialization and life chances be affected by the realities behind these numbers?

Close the UNICEF window and return to the Socialization Virtual Exploration.

One form of communications that is changing socialization and social interaction is the internet. The Pew Internet and American Life project [http://www.pewinternet.org/] has undertaken a continuing series of studies of many aspects of the internet's effects. Click on Reports and choose a topic under the Report Topics heading. Survey the titles. Choose one study that deals with some aspect of social interaction and click on Learn More to read a brief summary of the report.

15. What was the title of the report that you chose?

16. What kind of social interaction did the report study?

17. What were the report’s main findings?
18. Do the report's conclusions fit with your own experiences or observations about how the internet has affected the lives of yourself and others around you?

19. In the textbox below, summarize the main issue and point of view about the media and socialization put forward in the video clip that you chose.

20. Do you agree that this is an important issue and do you agree with the general point of view expressed in the video clip? Discuss briefly in the textbox below.

Close the Media Education window and return to the Social Interaction and Socialization Virtual Exploration.

Summary

In this Virtual Exploration, we have used web resources to review the famous Harlow experiments with monkeys, Piaget's influential work on cognitive development, and Benedict's theory of culture and personality. You have taken an online personality test and thought about both its validity and the ways your personality traits have been shaped by your social background. We have looked at the activities and priorities of UNICEF and considered how social conditions shape life chances for children in central Africa. We have examined research and data on the power of the internet and the mass media in shaping social interaction in U.S. society.

You have completed the Socialization Virtual Exploration! If you had any problems, or if you would like to make any comments, please use the text box below.
Enter the email addresses below to which you want your responses sent. To ensure that you retain a copy of your responses to this tour, enter your own e-mail address below.

Student Name: 
Student e-mail: 

Faculty Name: 
Faculty e-mail: 

Submit  Clear