

Socialisation as a Process Involving Provision of Psychosocial Need and Including Consequences of Privation

Valerie Saunders

Windsor Girls' School, UK

Abstract

Kuhn (1962) has argued that when scientists work within a paradigm, not only do they tend to work with data that support and refine that paradigm, but they perceive the world in a way that is consistent with that paradigm. Moreover, scientists are not objective in paradigm choice, but are swayed by scientific fashions of the day. Because careers depend on it there is a vested interest in maintaining that paradigm. This results in scientists ignoring evidence that does not fit their chosen paradigm. This is exactly what has happened in psychiatry.

There is an acute need for a paradigm change in psychiatry as it has been revealed by various studies and over time, that psychiatry is often not fit for purpose, that many psychiatrists themselves frequently do not understand the difference between normal and abnormal behaviour, nor do they understand causes of abnormality, leading to inadequate and inappropriate attitudes and treatment of afflicted people. Moreover research into mental health issues often is based on false assumptions such as psychoses (e.g. schizophrenia) are caused by genes, when evidence clearly demonstrates that this cannot possibly be true.

This is coupled with a conservatism that is generated by its traditional attachment to medical science, which is the study of the human body and as such, its paradigm is totally unsuited to dealing with the human mind. This paper is an attempt to provide such a change and cause progress towards a more pragmatic approach regarding issues surrounding concept of and response to abnormality and mental health.

Here, a hypothesis is being elucidated that provides ideas based on evidence that all forms of deviance or abnormality are caused by inadequate and inappropriate socialisation, in physiologically normal humans, thereby locating issues surrounding mental health and therefore deviance, away from medical science and more rationally in the social and behavioural sciences.

And while the author does not deny that there are occasions when examination of physiological influence is important, such as for a brain damaged patient, for most afflicted people, environment is the overriding factor in causation. Indeed, it has been suggested by some geneticists that the nature – nurture debate is over: it is nature through nurture.

Deviance by an individual is caused by inadequate and inappropriate socialisation. It includes the psychoses, addictions, autism, anxiety states, murder, child abuse and domestic violence among other. It involves situational, that is, relationship and household structures, leading to inadequate development of personal characteristics in the dependent human.

The hypothesis has been formulated as a result of: having a background in social sciences, reviewing relevant literature (including biographies of serial killers, literature on child abuse, among other), conducting unstructured and semi structured interviews with several groups of people including homeless and unemployed males as well as very successful people, having lived and worked in three different countries with disparate cultures, and life experiences as a parent and a class room

teacher. As such ideas are mostly based on evidence derived from observation and conversations with others.

An appraisal and elucidation of all human psychosocial need has been devised through consideration of all aspects of social structure as described by sociology, knowledge and understanding of disparate societies through knowledge and understanding of anthropology as well as knowledge and understanding of psychology, in tandem with the findings from interviews.

Hypothesis

All deviance (that is, failure to conform to social norms and values of a particular society, or failure to function adequately) including addictions and various forms of violence, among other, is predictable and preventable in the physiologically normal human. All anxiety states and psychoses in particular, including delusional states, schizophrenias, and affective disorders, as well as autism, are caused by psychosocial privation of varying types and intensities.

Privation is the absence of provision of any need, such as attachment, for example, from the beginning. Any theory regarding psychosocial causes of mental dysfunction or distress must, of necessity, have some pre-conceived concept of essential human psychosocial needs, and the consequence of absence of such needs, before any systematic model of cause and effect can be hypothesised and proven.

Socialisation involves the internalisation of norms (learned, expected behaviour according to role) and values of a social or tribal group by a developing human. This is achieved through use of psychological phenomena such as operant and classical conditioning, and causing social learning (observation and imitation) and cognitive learning (self-solving of problems) by caregivers leading to provision of essential psychosocial needs. Basic (primary) socialisation occurs in the first five years of life while secondary socialisation occurs during school years.

In post-industrial bureaucratic societies, where households mostly consist of isolated nuclear or single parent families, it is usually biological parents who inculcate norms and values in their children through these mechanisms during the primary socialisation stage, while schools, parents and significant others contribute during secondary socialisation.

Adequate parenting is a learned skill. When parents in isolated nuclear family households lack adequate skills there are few, indeed inadequate, supporting and compensatory adult relationships within the household to mitigate consequences leading to the inadequate provision of psychosocial need in children.

There are three basic principles or rules describing process during socialisation. They consist firstly, of the provision of adequate and appropriate attention and secondly, the provision of adequate and appropriate direction by primary caregivers. The third principle of socialisation is the timely provision of attention and direction according to psychosocial and therefore biological need. These three principles are

irreducible and common to all humans in all places regardless of culture or era.

Attention can be defined as any direct behaviour that has an impact on another. It can include physical contact (such as hugging or beating), verbal contact (such as words of love or abuse), or non-verbal contact such as a gesture or look that acknowledges the existence of another. Absence of all attention eventually causes death in the very young. Primary socialisation is the most important stage of child development as its effects are probably permanent. Parents of those who become deviant, such as psychotic or multiple murderers, as adults, do not pay adequate and appropriate attention to their children during the primary socialisation phase.

Direction is a particular form of attention enabling knowledge and culture transfer that results in the internalisation of norms and values. As for the concept of attention, any direction must be adequate and appropriate. That is, direction must be sufficient for good enough functioning to occur as well as being of a suitable quality so that the individual will mature into an adult able to adequately participate in any social institution as an autonomous adult.

At home and in schools, every moment parents and or teachers are inculcating their particular norms and values in the developing child, and they may well be different. Teaching a child to clean its teeth of tie shoelaces or explain why something should or should not be done, are examples of direction. When a parent ignores a child, the covert message is that the child is not important and can lead to low self-esteem. When a teacher tells a child off, or shows a child how to solve a problem, then values are also being transmitted, namely that the child is important enough for the teacher to make the effort.

Time is also important to the process. In the event that a child's psychosocial needs are not adequately met, or not met at all and within a certain time frame, there is in all likelihood, a biological consequence. An example is the inadequate linguistic development of a child named Genie, who was deprived of human contact and linguistic development until aged twelve and who was never able to learn grammar. My own observations of autistic children are that they are a further example of children whose needs have not been provided within a critical biological timeframe. It is likely that the biological consequences of not meeting biological threshold timeframes are that responsible neurons are not stimulated atrophy somewhat, or alternatively, synaptic pruning happens. It is then difficult and maybe impossible, to overturn the result of psychosocial and therefore, biological privation.

The basic psychosocial needs of all humans are identical, regardless of gender, ethnicity, social class or any other variable within a given social group. Basic psychosocial needs such as attention are as equally essential as basic physical needs such as food. Complex societies such as industrial societies will have a greater range of resources to be distributed than more simple societies such as those with a non-monetary economy. However, not all such resources are essential for a continued and satisfactory existence. The distribution of needs and resources will vary according to norms and values of any society, which will depend on each society's knowledge and resource base and which may not be in a rational and egalitarian way that benefits all members equally.