
Shutterstock

CHAPTER 6

Socialization and Social Interaction

SYNOPSIS

What Is Socialization?

- Sociobiology and the Nature-Nurture Debate

The Effects of Social Isolation

- Feral Children
- Children in Institutions
- Abused and Neglected Children
- Deprived Monkeys

The Development of a Self

- George Herbert Mead: Mind, Self, and Society
- Role-Taking: Significant Others and Generalized Others
- The "I" and the "Me"
- Charles Horton Cooley: The Looking-Glass Self
- Erving Goffman: The Presentation of Self
- Maintaining the Self
- Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development
- Development of a Personality

Major Agents of Socialization

- Family
- Schools
- Peer Groups
- Religion
- The Mass Media

Socialization of Gender Roles

- Infant and Childhood Experiences
- Gender-Role Socialization in Schools
- Gender-Role Socialization in Peer Groups
- Mass Media and Socialization of Gender Roles

Socialization in Adulthood

- College and Marriage
- Parenthood
- Career
- Resocialization

Focal Point

TRANSGENDER SOCIALIZATION AND IDENTITY: THE CASE OF JOHN/JOAN

David Reimer (born Bruce Reimer) was one of a pair of identical twin boys born in August 1965. At the age of 7 months, David suffered a circumcision accident leading to penile ablation. As a result, he would undergo a vaginoplasty and, at 17 months old, he would be socially reassigned to female (Turban & Shadianloo, 2018). This decision was reached after David's parents were referred to Johns Hopkins University Medical Center, where Dr. John Money—a psychologist who specialized in working with transgender people—was receiving a great deal of publicity. It was Money who presented the Reimers with the option of reconstructing their son's genitals and administering treatments that would ultimately make him biologically female.

Up until that time, gender reassignment through genital reconstruction had been rare, although not unprecedented; gender reconstruction for intersex children (those born with ambiguous genitals) was considered a viable medical option. Today, gender reconstruction of intersex children at birth is highly controversial, since it is not clear with which gender the individual will identify as an adult. At the time, however, the Reimers' choice to begin transgender procedures did not seem unreasonable to them.

David was 22 months of age when he began the process. It is important to mention, however, that until that time, he had been socialized as a boy—during a period of life in which, arguably, some of the most profound gender imprints on our identity are formed. On July 3, 1967, the Reimers renamed "Bruce" to "Brenda"; they were instructed to never discuss or doubt their decision to have their son undergo gender reassignment. The transformation to female was to be absolute and unequivocal. From that moment on, the Reimers raised their child as a girl. Not only did they socialize David as a girl but they also embarked on a series of hormonal treatments for David that would have run through adolescence and resulted in female physical characteristics, such as the development of breasts.

In 1997, John Colapinto wrote an article in *Rolling Stone* magazine about David. The story became known as the "case of John/Joan." The article revealed that, despite Dr. Money's insistence on maintaining strict feminine gender role socialization to achieve what he felt would be a complete gender transformation, "Brenda" had never fully embraced "her" identity as a female. David had continuously tried to exhibit the same type of masculine behavior as his twin brother.

He rejected hormone therapy at puberty and transitioned back to living as a male, eventually changing his name from "Brenda" to David. He went on to get married, and his marriage lasted for 14 years. However, the trauma of his childhood continued to plague him as an adult, and David committed suicide in 2004. Today, there are more resources available to help transgender people transition successfully and to help them deal with the problems they may encounter during the process and afterwards. TheTrevorProject.org is one such resource.

While David's case did not support Money's hypothesis that gender is purely a result of socialization, we now know that issues pertaining to gender identity are also much more complex than sexual anatomy would suggest. Gender identity, as opposed to *gender assigned at birth* (typically based on a visual examination of external genitalia), has been one of the most hotly debated issues of our time. A recent example is the widespread attention given to Caitlyn Jenner, the 1976 Olympic decathlon champion (born Bruce Jenner). In 2015, Caitlyn revealed that she had been compelled to live as a male her entire life because of her anatomy even though she has identified as a female for most of that time. Gender is not as binary as it was once thought to be, nor is it solely determined by sexual anatomy.

Moreover, what stories like David Riemer's and Caitlyn Jenner's show us is how harmful it can be when gender roles or gender identities are rigidly imposed on children. Even for cisgender children (those for whom gender identity matches gender assigned at birth), strict gender roles can be damaging. In a recent study of adolescents in 15 countries (including the US), researchers found not only that hegemonic gender norms were pervasive around the globe but also that negative consequences of these norms included child marriage, dropping out of school, pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), exposure to violence, and depression for girls, and exposure to violence, death by unintentional injury, substance abuse, and suicide for boys (Blum, Mmari, & Moreau, 2017). The researchers concluded by saying:

> As young people grow up to become men and women, they engage with and construct their own gender-based … understandings of what it means to be a boy or a girl. This process is amenable to change by fostering gender equitable approaches that have the potential to improve the well-being of adolescent boys and adolescent girls in the short and long terms (p. S4).

In other words, people of all genders might benefit if we could become less rigid in our understanding of gender roles and gender identities.

6.1 WHAT IS SOCIALIZATION?

Socialization is the lifelong process through which people are prepared to participate in society at every level: individual, interpersonal, group, organizational, and institutional. It shapes our identities and the skills, norms, values, and beliefs that underlie our actions and interactions. This learning occurs in all interactions from the minute a baby is born. Individuals must learn about their culture, including its rules and expectations. In the United States, most people learn to speak English and to eat with a fork. They learn that cereal, bacon, and eggs are breakfast foods and that sandwiches are appropriate for lunch. They find out that some people do work that is defined as important and those who do not or will not work are of less value. They discover that particular countries and people are friendly and others are hostile. Women learn to smile when they are tense and to cry at good news as a release of tension. Men learn that they should not cry, although some still do at times.

Sociologists are interested in socialization because by studying how people learn the rules of society, we hope to understand better why people think and act as they do. If we understand why we think and act as we do, we can change our values, our beliefs, our expectations, and our behavior in ways that might otherwise never occur to us. The study of socialization is a very liberating part of a liberal education. In order to understand socialization, however, we must look to our earliest social interactions.

Shutterstock

Socialization is a lifelong process that begins the moment a baby is born. It is believed that physically healthy children cannot develop normal social behavior without social interaction.

Sociologists believe that even physically healthy children cannot develop normal social behavior without social interaction. Why do children develop so little when they are isolated from others? The controversy over the extent to which behavior results from predetermined biological characteristics or from socialization is known as the **nature-nurture debate**. This debate has continued for centuries, but it began to draw more interest as the field of sociobiology emerged.

It would be misleading and an oversimplification to suggest that socialization can be directly understood as resulting only from obvious social forces such as family, age, gender, peer groups, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and others. Socialization includes the complex interplay of social, cultural, psychological, and biological processes and is a concept that has been undergoing change and refinement within the fields of sociology and psychology since it was first developed (Morawski & St. Martin, 2011).

6.1a Sociobiology and the Nature-Nurture Debate

Sociobiology is the study of the biological and genetic determinants of social behavior (Wilson, 1975). Sociobiologists are biologists by training—although some sociologists and other social scientists support their views—and believe that social behavior is determined by inborn genetic traits, which influence human behavior in much the same way that animals are influenced by their genetic inheritance. An example would be the claim that sexual preference, such as the human tendency to have only one or a very few mates, is determined genetically (Van den Berghe, 1979). Sociobiologists would also make a case for sexual orientation being genetically determined, although isolated behavior (for example, sexual encounters outside of a person's usual orientation occurring when partners of the preferred gender are not available) may be environmental. They would also argue that altruistic behavior (performed to benefit others without regard for oneself) and warlike behavior are biologically based, although these and other behaviors may be modified by social experience.

Socialization
The process of learning how to interact in society by learning the rules and expectations of society

Nature-nurture debate
A longstanding debate over whether behavior results from predetermined biological characteristics or from socialization

Sociobiology
The study of the biological and genetic determinants of social behavior

Most sociologists criticize the sociobiological viewpoint on the grounds that behavior varies greatly from culture to culture. Sexual behavior, for example, varies enormously. Altruistic behavior also varies widely and is entirely lacking in humans and monkeys who have been raised in isolation. As for warlike behavior, it is completely absent in many societies. According to Hoffman (1985), who was a specialist in the study of socialization, geneticists do not pay enough attention to environmental and socialization factors in their studies. Thus, when they draw conclusions from their studies, they do not know what effects the environment or socialization might have had.

In addition to the doubts of sociologists, many physiologists believe that there is no genetic basis for human behavior. Biological drives, or **instincts**, which are patterns of reflexes that occur in animals, are very powerful. Insects and birds perform many complex behaviors even when they have been reared in isolation. Honeybees perform complicated dances to show other bees where food is located, and birds build intricate nests in the same manner as others of their species—each without having had any environmental opportunities for learning. So far, no powerful and fixed drives or instincts have been discovered in human beings. Humans who have been raised in isolation do almost nothing, as we will discuss later in this chapter.

Shutterstock

Researchers believe social learning shapes sexual behavior in humans.

Sexual behavior in human beings, long thought to be a biological drive, varies so much from society to society and from time to time that researchers, such as Lauer and Handel (1983), are now convinced that it is greatly shaped by social learning. In the Victorian era, it was assumed that women were much less interested in sex than men, and men were advised to limit their sexual "expenditure," rationing sex even within marriage (Victoria and Albert Museum, 2013). In the 1950s and '60s, women who were studied in an Irish community dubbed "Inis Beag" (a pseudonym) expressed no sexual desire and engaged in intercourse only as a duty. Men in the community avoided intercourse before hard work because they thought it sapped them of their energy. On the other hand, young people on the Mangaia Island in the South Pacific are encouraged to explore their sexuality freely, are expected to have sex with multiple partners over the course of their lives, and are encouraged to orgasm multiple times a night. Appropriate sexual behavior, then, is learned in the context of a particular culture.

Instincts

Biological or hereditary impulses, drives, or behaviors that require no learning or reasoning

Despite these criticisms of the sociobiological approach, there has been a recent resurgence of interest among a growing faction of sociologists. Arcaro and Kilgariff (2002), for example, argue that incorporating evolutionary psychology with traditional sociological perspectives is essential for developing a unified body of sociological theory. Sanderson (2001), a contemporary social theorist, feels that if sociologists ignore the importance of biology as an explanation of behavior, "they are going to look increasingly foolish both within the academy and to the larger educated public."

Shutterstock

In addition to food and warmth, babies need physical contact and stimulation to grow.

Money (1980), who was a psychologist, believed that the nature-nurture controversy is based on an illusion—that environmental factors become part of our biology when we perceive them. When a piece of information enters our minds, it becomes a part of the body. Money contended that the information in our brains shapes our behavior and that distinctions between nature and nurture are irrelevant.

Although few sociologists emphasize the sociobiological perspective, most believe that human behavior can be limited by our physiology. For example, we can tolerate just so much heat, cold, or hunger. However, the way in which we

respond to our physical limits—or how we behave under any other circumstances—is learned from interacting with other people. This interaction occurs in a manner different from other animals because of the way humans use language and other symbols. Understanding this, what happens if these things are missing from our environment?

6.2 THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL ISOLATION

Normal human infants are born with all the muscles, bones, and biological organs needed to live. They are utterly helpless, however, and cannot survive without human interaction. Babies need not only food and warmth to survive but also physical contact. When an adult interacts with an infant, the child is stimulated by tone of voice, touch, and facial expression. Observations of infants and children who were comparatively isolated from human contact have shown that a lack of social interaction can have very serious consequences.

6.2a Feral Children

The importance of social interaction is evident in studies of feral children—those who have grown up in the wild. Several feral children were reportedly found in Europe during the past few centuries, and while it is possible that these children were born with intellectual disabilities or autism spectrum disorder, their isolation is still believed to have had a profound impact on their development. Probably the most famous case was Victor, the wild boy of Aveyron, who was found in the wilderness in France in 1800 (Shattuck, 1980). It is not known when the boy was separated from other humans or how he survived in the wilderness until he reached puberty, but since he did not know any language, he might have been separated from humans while very young.

The boy's behavior seemed very strange to those who found him. When given a choice of food to eat, he rejected most of it. He liked potatoes, which he threw into a fire and then picked out with his bare hands and ate while they were very hot. He could tolerate cold as well as heat, and he was happy to be outdoors in the winter without clothes. He was an adept tree climber, and the wind and the moon excited him.

A young doctor took an interest in the boy and taught him to eat a wider variety of foods, to sleep at regular hours, and to wear clothes. It was determined that he could hear noises and make sounds, so an effort was made to teach him to talk. Within 9 months, he was able to match the letters of the alphabet, but his spoken language never progressed beyond meaningless monosyllables. He learned to say a word for milk, but only after he had been given milk—he never used the word to ask for it. After five years of training, he had not learned to talk. He did, however, learn to cry occasionally and to hug his teacher. He survived for 22 years after the training stopped, living a quiet life in a cottage with a housekeeper but never advancing his learning.

A more recent case occurred in 2002 in Romania. Traian Caldarar was raised in an abusive family, and his mother eventually fled the abuse without him (Leidig, 2002). Unable to get him back, the mother lost contact and believed another family adopted him. However, little 4-year-old Traian had not been adopted. Instead, he had fled from his abusive father as well. With nowhere to go, Traian lived with a large number of stray dogs roaming the Transylvanian countryside. Three years after he went missing, Traian was discovered at age 7, eating a dead dog and displaying animalistic behaviors. He suffered from many diseases, including rickets and severe malnutrition. Traian's size was that of a 3-year-old; he had forgotten how to speak. He was reunited with his mother a couple months after he was found.

While sociologists, researchers, and other specialists believe it is possible for children to live among wild animals, they are less likely to believe that wild animals raise children. Instead, it is more likely that children, such as the wild boy of Aveyron and Traian, somehow learn to adapt when subjected to isolation.

6.2b Children in Institutions

In the early 1900s, children were often placed in orphanages when their parents died or were unable to care for them. While the children's basic needs were met within the institutions, staff usually had little time for personal interaction beyond routine feedings, baths, and health care. When children showed signs of developmental delays, it was believed the cause was their family background—not the environment or the care they received at the orphanages. In the 1930s, psychologist Harold Skeels began to suspect that lack of social interaction, rather than background, was the cause of developmental problems in the children. It began in 1932, when Skeels transferred two infant girls to a women's mental ward; both girls improved remarkably within the first 6 months of their transfer. In fact, he hardly recognized the girls upon his return. He discovered that two older inmates had been acting as "adoring aunts" to the girls (Shaw, 2009). He wondered if perhaps the one-to-one relationships with loving, affectionate adults were responsible for the girls' remarkable improvement. He proposed an experiment.

Skeels and fellow researcher Harold Dye placed 13 children, with IQ scores ranging from 35 to 89 (indicating various levels of intellectual disability) with young women at an institution for the mentally disabled (Shaw, 2009). Not all these children were placed in wards with conditions as favorable as the one where he had transferred the original two girls. A contrast group was later selected of children who had remained in the orphanage until at least age 4. Their IQs ranged from 50 to 103. The contrast group received treatment from the caregivers that was considered normal for an orphanage at the time. Because of the workload of the caregivers, children typically received minimal adult contact that generally included baths, diaper changes, dressing, and feedings (Skeels & Dye, 1939/2002).

During follow-up exams, Skeels and Dye discovered that while the experimental group steadily gained IQ points, the control group was losing them. At a 2.5-year follow-up, the children in the mental institution had gained on average 28 points while those in the orphanage lost an average of 26 points (Shaw, 2009). Twenty years later, the researchers followed up again. Most of the children in the mental institution had completed school (median 12th grade) and all were self-supporting; those left in the orphanage had not fared as well. Most had not completed much school (the median was less than 3rd grade) and 8 were in or associated with an institution. In addition, 11 of the 13 children who had been moved to the mental institution had married, and all were either employed or were housewives (2009). In the contrast group, only one was working and only two had married. Skeels and Dye concluded that "an intimate and close relationship between the child and an interested adult seems to be a factor of importance in the mental development of young children" (Skeens & Dye, 1939/2002, p. 32).

Rene Spitz published a similar study in the 1940s. Spitz observed children who had apparently been healthy when they were born and who had been living in a foundling home for about two years. Nutrition, clothing, bedding, and room temperatures in the home were suitable; a physician saw every child. In addition, a small staff of nurses took care of the physical needs of the children, but other interaction was very limited.

Despite their excellent physical care, 37% of the 91 children in the home died within 2 years of the study, and 21 other children (23%) showed slow physical and social development. They were small, and some could not walk or even sit up. Those who could talk could say only a few words, and some could not talk at all.

Spitz compared these children with infants brought up in another institution, where their mothers were being held for delinquency. Physical care was basically the same as in the foundling home, but their mothers—who had little else to occupy them—enjoyed playing with their children for hours. The infants received a great deal of social stimulation, and their development was normal. Spitz concluded that the difference between the foundling home and the home for delinquent mothers was the amount of attention the children received. This further illustrates the crucial importance of social interactions in child development.

6.2c Abused and Neglected Children

Children who have been isolated from others in their own homes also show a lack of development. Kingsley Davis (1940, 1947) described two separate cases of girls who had experienced such isolation, in the 1930s. Each girl had been hidden in the attic of her family home because each was illegitimate and unwanted. Both were found at the age of 6.

Isabelle had been kept in seclusion with her mother, who was deaf and mute. By all accounts, her mother had tried to look after her but the girl could not talk and was unresponsive to aural stimuli (Gould & Howson, 2011). She scored generally at the level of an infant on most tests. The specialists working with her believed she could not be educated and that any attempt to teach her to speak would fail. Nevertheless, they continued to work with her—and she made remarkable progress. She was able to reach a normal level of development by the time she was 8 and a half years old.

The second child discovered around the same time was a girl named Anna. She was the illegitimate child of an unmarried woman who lived on a farm with a widowed father who did not approve of his daughter's promiscuity and refused to allow her to keep the baby. Anna bounced from home to home but was eventually returned to her mother. Her grandfather banished Anna to the attic where she lived until she was discovered. Her mother fed her but, otherwise, Anna had little if any human contact. When authorities found her, Anna was unable to speak or even walk. After two years spent in institutions, she learned to walk and to understand some words; however, she did not speak herself for 2 more years. Her speech never progressed past the level of a 2-year-old; Anna's full potential would never be realized because she died of hemorrhagic jaundice when she was ten years old.

Shutterstock

Even children who have been isolated in their homes show a lack of development.

Perhaps the most well-known case of an abused and neglected child is that of Genie, a 13-year-old girl discovered in 1970 in Los Angeles, California (Curtis, 1977). Like the previous two cases, Genie was locked, alone, in a room for the majority of her life. During the day, she was strapped to a child's toilet; at night, she was placed in a strait jacket type of contraption made from a sleeping bag and put into a crib that had a metal screen covering. When discovered, Genie could not talk; as a result of severe beatings by her elderly father, she made very little noise. She could not chew, spat constantly, sniffed like a dog, and clawed at things. She had a very strange bunny-like walk, and she kept her hands in a bent position at the front of her body—like paws. Despite physiologically normal eyes, she could not focus on anything more than 10 feet away—a distance that corresponded to the dimensions of the room in which she was kept. After receiving extensive treatment by a team of specialists, Genie's language remained relatively primitive—she could only speak a few words and virtually no sentences. She was able to follow simple commands, but otherwise her development was poor. Genie ended up in a series of foster care homes, and eventually became a ward of the state of California.

The cases of Isabelle, Anna, and Genie provide a great deal of information about the development of children who experience severe abuse and neglect. However, the cases also leave many questions unanswered. Isabelle was able to overcome her early trauma, while Anna's potential progress must be left to speculation. Does this provide us with enough information to believe that children who are rescued from abusive situations by age 6 can overcome their developmental delays? Since Genie was unable to overcome her early problems, can we conclude that there a critical age threshold? To what extent can case studies like these be generalized?

6.2d Deprived Monkeys

Perhaps one last study will help us understand the effects of social isolation. Psychologist Harry Harlow conducted studies on rhesus monkeys raised in captivity to determine how maternal deprivation affected their development (please note that these studies are considered, by many, to be unethical and likely would not be allowed to happen under today's laws and regulations governing research using animals). Just a few hours after their birth, baby monkeys were separated from their mothers and placed in isolation cages. Each cage was equipped with a special feeding device to provide nourishment to the baby monkey. The devices were artificial mothers, made of wire frames with a head and a device to dispense milk for feeding. The only difference would be that one artificial mother was covered in a soft terry cloth material, and the other remained bare wire mesh.

Harlow discovered that even when the wire frame mothers provided nourishment, the monkeys would cling to their terrycloth mothers when they were not feeding. Later, Harlow removed the terrycloth mothers from some of the cages and conducted further experiments. He found that when he scared the monkeys, those in the cages with the terrycloth mothers would cling pathetically to them. Yet, when there were no terrycloth mothers, the monkeys would curl in the corner and rock back and forth to try and soothe themselves, rather than attempt to receive consolation from their artificial mother. Harlow's experiments suggested that more than nourishment is needed for attachment to occur; a physical relationship with the mother is also necessary. The isolated monkeys were deprived of the emotional attachment received during mother-child interaction, which often involves cuddling and soothing during times of stress.

Harlow also discovered that monkeys kept in isolation for 8 months or longer were, afterwards, unable to fit in with other monkeys. They did not know how to engage in interaction; as a result, the other monkeys often shunned those previously isolated. Behaviors such as pretend fighting and normal sexual behavior did not occur because the isolated monkeys were unaware of how to engage in behaviors found among other monkeys.

After many unsuccessful attempts to place the isolated female monkeys with male monkeys for the purpose of reproduction, Harlow designed a device to allow some of the females to become pregnant. After they gave birth, the mothers were either neglectful or abusive toward their babies. The neglectful mothers did not harm their babies; however, neither did they feed them, cuddle them, or protect them from harm. The abusive mothers were violent toward their young, often trying to bite, hit, or squash them against the cage floor. In the end, Harlow discovered that when baby monkeys were isolated for no more than 90 days, they could overcome their isolation and live a normal monkey life; however, if isolated any longer, they would be permanently damaged.

What can we learn from studying the cases of "feral," institutionalized, abused, and neglected children? Are there critical periods in a child's life that determine how they will ultimately develop? What about Harlow's monkeys? How much of what we learn about animals can we apply to humans? All animals interact, but humans are considered unique in our ability to create societies, cultures, and social institutions. We are also unique in the way we use language. George Herbert Mead (1863–1931) was the first to describe why language makes humans different from other animals.

6.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF A SELF

How do we know who we are? If asked to describe yourself, what would you say? Do you see yourself as attractive, intelligent, creative, ambitious, religious, politically astute? Or perhaps you see yourself as carefree, atheistic, sports-minded, or funny? What factors contribute to the development of our identities? Do we care what others think about us? Scholars such as George Herbert Mead and Charles Horton Cooley contributed to the study of the importance of early socialization on the individual.

Sociology Students in Real Life

Abigail Bromilow

Graduating class: 2001

Abigail Bromilow

Favorite sociology course: *The Self and Society*

How has sociology helped you in your job or in your life? *"I am a product manager at a technology company, where I design and build software for people investigating financial crimes. To build the best products, you have to deeply understand the motivations and needs of the users. This often requires looking at what they do and not just listening to what they say—which is what a foundation in sociology gave me the ability to do. Sociology has given me the ability to listen to and understand people. At home, at work, with family—the ability to connect and communicate with people is something that influences every part of my life. [The following is] one of my top five [favorite] quotes of all time because it sums up what I took away from my time at Elon [University] better than any words I could come up with.*

'We are all just actors trying to control and manage our public image, we act based on how others might see us.' —Erving Goffman"

6.3a George Herbert Mead: Mind, Self, and Society

The students of George Herbert Mead were so impressed with his insights about human interaction that after his death, they compiled his lectures and published a book, *Mind, Self and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist* (1934). Mead argued that the unique feature of the human mind is its capacity to use symbols, and he discussed how human development proceeds because of this ability. Through language and human interaction, an individual develops a **self**. According to Mead, "The self is something which has a development; it is not initially there, at birth, but arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (1935, p. 135). In Mead's view, language is the key to the development of self. Words in a language have meaning; we use language symbols when we think or talk to ourselves and when we talk to other people. When we see another person in the street, we do not simply react to the person instinctively. We interpret the situation by giving meaning to the other person's behavior. We think, "Is this someone I know, or a stranger? Do I want to know this person, ignore her, say hello to her?" If we say "hello" to the other person, we are using a symbol that means, "I wish to greet you in a friendly manner." The other

Self
The sense of one's own identity as a person

person knows the meaning of the symbol. This is an example of **symbolic interaction**, the social process that occurs within and among individuals as a result of the internalization of meanings and the use of language.

Mead recognized how important it is for people to interact with others in the development of the self. Soon after birth, infants begin learning to distinguish between important objects, such as the source of nourishment and the parent who brings it. Infants also eventually learn to differentiate themselves from their surroundings and from other people. For example, as a father repeatedly brings a bottle to his daughter, she becomes aware that she is the object of her father's attention. She learns to differentiate herself from the crib and other objects. She learns that she is a separate object receiving both the bottle and her father's attention. Infants also develop expectations about their parents' behaviors and about their parents' roles. They expect their parents to bring the bottle.

Shutterstock

In the play stage, children may enjoy playing dress-up and may pretend to be mother, father, etc.

6.3b Role-Taking: Significant Others and Generalized Others

Mead described the process of **role-taking**, or figuring out how others will act. The ability to take a role is extremely important to children. In fact, **play** is a way of practicing role-taking. Children often play "house" or "school," taking the role of **significant others**—mother, father, or any other person important to them. By taking the roles of these significant others, children can better understand their own roles as children, students, sons, or daughters.

Mead believed that children develop role-taking skills during play and ultimately learn to take the role of others through the process. He identified three stages in which the self emerges through play; they have been labeled: *preparatory*, *play,* and *game*. In the *preparatory stage*, children are only capable of imitating the people in their lives. They are not yet aware of their sense of self but are learning to become social through meaningful interaction with others. In Mead's second stage, the *play stage*, children begin to take the role of others significant in their lives. Children enjoy playing dress-up and may pretend to be mother, father, a firefighter, a teacher, etc. In the *game stage*, the child is older and is capable of understanding, simultaneously, not merely one individual but also the roles of several others. The child now has the ability to put her- or himself in the place of others and act accordingly. Once the child can do this, Mead contends, he or she can "take the attitude of the generalized other" (Mead, G. H., 1935 , p. 261)

By practicing the roles of others in play, children learn to understand what others expect of them and how to behave to meet those expectations. As adults, when we take roles, we figure out what others are thinking and how others will act; then we can act accordingly. Often, however, we do not have the opportunity to play out the role of others—except in our imagination.

A child who responds differently to each person in his or her life would never develop a sense of self. In order to develop a sense of self, the child learns to see others not as individuals but as **generalized others**, the organized community or social group that provides reference for his or her own conduct. Mead used the example of a baseball game to illustrate the concept of *generalized other*. A child playing baseball develops generalized expectations of each position on the team: pitchers throw, fielders catch, batters hit and run, regardless of the individuals playing those positions. These generalized expectations become incorporated into the child's sense of self.

Symbolic interaction
The social process that occurs within and among individuals as a result of the internalization of meanings and the use of language

Role-taking
Assuming the roles of others and seeing the world from their perspective

Play
According to Mead, a way of practicing role-taking

Significant others
Important people in the lives of all people, but especially during childhood socialization

Generalized others
The assumption that other people have similar attitudes, values, beliefs, and expectations, and therefore that it is unnecessary to know a specific individual in order to know how to behave toward that individual

6.3c The "I" and the "Me"

Once a child has an idea of the generalized other, he or she can begin to develop a personality—an individual way of behaving. The child learns to meet the expectations of the group in some situations but may argue with the group on other occasions.

The child interprets the situation and then decides how to act. That is what makes each person unique.

To analyze each person's unique ability to respond to the generalized other, Mead theoretically divided the person into two parts: The "**I**" and the "**me**." The *I* represents the acting person, as in "I attend class." It is not self-conscious. When taking a test in class, the *I* concentrates on the test, not on the self.

The *me* represents the part of the self that sees itself as an object, the part that is concerned with society's expectations, such as, "Society expects *me* to go to class." It is the *me*, seeing itself as an object, that says after class, "You really did great on the exam!" or after the party, "You really made a fool of yourself!" The socially constructed *me* spends a good deal of time talking to the *I*.

We use the generalized other to shape our own personality throughout life. We may decide, for example, that attending class is a waste of time or that multiple-choice tests are unfair. We may choose to go along with norms or argue against them. To do either, however, we must understand the expectations of the generalized other—the school, in the case of class attendance or test type. We develop our own **mind**, our own ability to think, based on the expectations of the generalized other.

Mead believed that the human mind is entirely social and develops through interaction. Although we are born with a brain, Mead argued, we do not learn to use our mind to think and develop ideas until we have learned the expectations of our society. We learn these expectations mostly through language, and then we use language to talk to ourselves and to develop our own ideas. We get ideas about the usefulness of class attendance and multiple-choice tests. We also get ideas about what we are like, what we want to become in the future, or the relative attractiveness of the person sitting next to us. It is easy to understand that we would not think about class attendance if there were no classes to attend. It is not as obvious, but according to Mead just as true, that the relative attractiveness of the person sitting next to us is based on what we have learned from society about attractiveness. We have learned what color of hair and skin, what size of nose, and what height and weight are valued by society. Based on this, we establish our own definition of attractiveness in others and in ourselves.

APPLYING MEAD'S ROLE-TAKING

Although many of Mead's theories are useful in providing an understanding of how one's *self* develops, his concept of role-taking is particularly helpful. All of us find it difficult to understand the feelings, attitudes, and ideas of every person with whom we interact, so we find more efficient ways to deal with people. We develop a sense of self and a generalized other. Role-taking is important not only for self-development but also for our personal and professional relationships because it helps us understand the perspectives of others. For clinical sociologists, therapists, and other counselors who help people deal with problems, role-taking is an important *verstehen* technique. *Verstehen* is a term used by Max Weber to refer to a deep imagining of how things might be and feel for others. For example, a client undergoing drug counseling may explain his or her fears and feelings of inadequacy to the therapist; however, unless the therapist can see things from a drug user's point of view, the therapy might be cold and meaningless to the client.

Clinicians, counselors, and therapists may also ask their clients to engage in role-taking as part of their treatment. Marriage counselors sometimes help husbands and wives confront their marital problems by having them switch roles temporarily so that they can feel what it is like to be in the other's position. By having the husband take the role of wife and the wife take the role of husband, each spouse may learn to see himself or herself the way the other spouse does. Each spouse's role-taking might help in developing more sensitivity to the partner's needs.

I
The acting, unselfconscious person

Me
The part of the self that sees self as object, evaluates self, and is aware of society's expectations of self

Mind
The process of using a language and thinking

How can you use role-taking in your career or occupation? By engaging in role-taking, you will probably improve how you relate to, organize, and lead other people. As a teacher, you might find examples to which students can better relate if you can imagine how the students see the subject matter. For example, teachers sometimes show movies explaining serious topics; however, if a particular movie is old, the students may find the fashions dated and the movie quaint, thus missing the point of the movie. As a physician, you might develop a better "bedside manner" if you can put yourself in the place of the cancer patient you are treating. Novels, movies, and even jokes make fun of doctors who become patients and are shocked because they have never previously understood how the patient felt. Doctors do not need to actually fall ill in order to understand their patients, however—they only need to practice role-taking.

6.3d Charles Horton Cooley: The Looking-Glass Self

Charles Horton Cooley (1864–1929), like Mead, theorized that the idea of the self develops in a process that requires reference to other people, a process he called the *looking-glass self*. According to Cooley, the **looking-glass self** has three components: (1) how we think our behavior appears to others, (2) how we think others judge our behavior, and (3) how we feel about their judgments. We know that we exist—that we are beautiful or ugly, serious or funny, lively or dull, intelligent or stupid—through the way other people treat us. We never know exactly what other people think of us, of course, but we can imagine how we appear to them and how they evaluate us. Ultimately, "the looking-glass self" concept is based on perception and effect—the perception we believe others have of us, and the effect those perceptions have on our self-image.

Our imagination about our own looking-glass self may or may not be accurate. If it is not accurate, we may think we are clumsy when other people think we move very gracefully. We may think we speak clearly when others think we mumble. We may think we are shy even when others admire our confidence. Whether our ideas about ourselves are accurate or not, we believe them; we often respond to these imagined evaluations with some feeling, such as pride, or humiliation.

Cooley noted that when we refer to ourselves, we are usually referring to our looking-glass self, not to our physical being—such as our heart, lungs, arms, and legs. We usually refer to our opinions, desires, ideas, or feelings (I think, I feel, I want); or we associate the idea of the self with roles (I am a student, an athlete, a friend). This sense of self exists in relation to other people. We compare and contrast ourselves with others; our own sense of uniqueness is based on that comparison. Even the language we use to refer to ourselves must be learned from other people.

In sum, both Mead and Cooley pointed out that the major difference between social theories of the self and psychological theories of the self is that social theories emphasize that society exists first and that the individual is shaped by society. Psychological theories emphasize individual development apart from social processes; that is, the individual develops and then responds to society based on preexisting tendencies to behave in particular ways. (See Jean Piaget, Sigmund Freud, Lawrence Kohlberg.)

Looking-glass self
The process through which we develop our identity through imagining how we appear to others

Self-fulfilling prophecy
A prediction that comes true because people believe it and act as though it were true

APPLYING COOLEY'S "LOOKING-GLASS SELF"

Related to Cooley's "looking-glass self" is the **self-fulfilling prophecy**, a concept developed by Robert Merton. A *self-fulfilling prophecy* is a prediction that becomes true because of our actions. It works by causing us to act as if a particular definition of a situation, others, or ourselves were true—even if it is not. The prophecy is then brought about by this false definition and the behavior it

evokes. The "self-fulfilling prophecy" concept, in turn, is related to an idea known as the "Thomas Theorem," stemming from the work of sociologist W. I. Thomas. Thomas stated that "if [people] define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." This does not mean that events simply come into being because we will or imagine them. Rather, it means that people act in accordance with how they define situations, and by their acting, bring about certain outcomes.

A classic example is a bank failure. Banks operate under the reasonable assumption that all the depositors will not want all their money back at the same time. Banks do not merely keep our money in a vault; rather, they invest it so they can make a profit and pay us interest. However, if all the depositors believed a rumor (or a prediction) saying the bank was going to fail, they might all rush to get their money from the bank at the same time. The resultant bank failure might not be due to any economic or management problems but rather a self-fulfilling prophecy.

We now return to how the self-fulfilling prophecy relates to the looking-glass self. Suppose, for example, you imagine that others think you are a funny person. It does not matter whether they really think you are funny; what matters is that you imagine they think you are funny. Because of this belief, you make an extra effort to become funny by learning and telling new jokes, doing amusing things at parties, and generally cultivating your sense of humor. ("Because I am a funny person, I should know a lot of good jokes. I had better be prepared.") Your belief about how others perceive and judge your behavior—your look-glass self—has become a self-fulfilling prophecy, shaping your behavior.

The knowledge that the looking-glass self often becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy may be useful in a variety of ways. First, it might be applied in some occupational settings. How, for example, could this knowledge improve your effectiveness as a teacher? If you are aware that people see themselves as they think others (especially significant others) see them, you might try to be especially sensitive to how you react to students when they ask questions in class, when you speak to them in your office, or when you make comments on their papers. If students think they are being put down or are perceived as unintelligent, they may prematurely give up on learning a subject. Conversely, if students develop positive views of themselves because they think you, as the teacher, see them as intuitive, creative, and interesting, they may strive to cultivate those qualities even further, and this may play an important part in their interactions with others. As a parent, as well as a teacher, the implications of the looking-glass self on adolescent self-approval are significant (Gamble & Yu, 2008).

6.3e Erving Goffman: The Presentation of Self

Presentation of self
The way we present ourselves to others and how our presentation influences others

Dramaturgical approach
An approach to the study of interaction in which interaction is compared to a drama on stage; the importance of setting and presentation of self are emphasized

Throughout life, our socialization influences the way we interact with one another. Erving Goffman (1959) was interested in the process of interaction once a self has been developed. Every interaction, Goffman believed, begins with a **presentation of self**. The way we present ourselves gives other people cues about the type of interaction we expect. In formal situations, we usually greet friends with a handshake or a remark, whereas in informal situations, we may greet friends with a hug or a kiss. If we are with friends, we talk and laugh, but on a bus or in an elevator, we do not speak to strangers and we keep a social distance even when space is crowded and we cannot keep physically distant. Psychologists refer to our manner of presentation as "body language." We give cues about ourselves in the way we present and use our bodies in interaction.


Shutterstock

Erving Goffman believed every interaction, such as the greeting of friends, begins with a presentation of self.

In an attempt to analyze how interaction takes place, Goffman (1959) compared social interaction to a drama on stage—a comparison known as the **dramaturgical approach**. Whenever we interact, we prepare ourselves

backstage and then present ourselves as if onstage, according to what we have learned in the socialization process. Goffman believed that all behavior, even the most routine, is neither instinctual nor habitual—it is a presentation. Most people in the US prepare to present themselves by showering, washing their hair, and using deodorant—in our society, cleanliness and a lack of odor are important. Complexions must be smooth—so men shave, women put on makeup, and adolescents use cosmetics to cover up acne. Suitable clothing is selected so that we can present ourselves formally in formal situations and casually in casual situations. A formal setting such as a church, a more informal setting such as a classroom, and a casual setting such as a basketball arena—all require very different presentations. In some settings, one can race for a front-row seat, talk loudly, wave to friends, and eat and drink. In other settings, these behaviors would be quite inappropriate.

In illustrating the dramaturgical approach, Goffman described a character, called "Preedy," as he presented himself on a beach in Spain. Preedy very consciously tried to make an impression on the people around him. It was his first day on vacation, and he knew no one. He wanted to meet some people, but he did not want to appear too lonely or too eager, so he presented himself as perfectly content in his solitary state.

The following excerpt from Goffman (1959) describes Preedy's behavior:

> If by chance a ball was thrown his way, he looked surprised; then let a smile of amusement lighten his face (Kindly Preedy), looked round dazed to see that there were people on the beach, tossed it back with a smile to himself and not a smile at the people, and then resumed carelessly his nonchalant survey of space.
>
> But it was time to institute a little parade, the parade of the Ideal Preedy. By devious handlings he gave any who wanted to look a chance to see the title of his book—a Spanish translation of *Homer*, classic thus, but not daring, cosmopolitan, too—and then gathered together his beach-wrap and bag into a neat sand-resistant pile (Methodical and Sensible Preedy), rose slowly to stretch at ease his huge frame (Big-Cat Preedy), and tossed aside his sandals (Carefree Preedy, after all).
>
> The marriage of Preedy and the sea! There were alternative rituals. The first involved the stroll that turns into a run and a dive straight into the water, thereafter smoothing into a strong splashless crawl towards the horizon. But of course not really to the horizon. Quite suddenly he would turn on to his back and thrash great white splashes with his legs, somehow thus showing that he could have swum further had he wanted to, and then would stand up a quarter out of water for all to see who it was.
>
> The alternative course was simpler, it avoided the cold-water shock and it avoided the risk of appearing too high-spirited. The point was to appear to be so used to the sea, the Mediterranean, and this particular beach, that one might as well be in the sea as out of it. It involved a slow stroll down and into the edge of the water—not even noticing his toes were wet, land and water all the same to him—with his eyes up at the sky gravely surveying portents, invisible to others, of the weather (Local Fisherman Preedy). (p. 5)

Notice how much Preedy could say about himself without uttering a word. Whether anyone enters the water in as calculated a manner as Preedy is questionable, but whoever watches someone like Preedy will form an opinion of him from his presentation. As Henricks (2012) notes regarding Goffman's explanation, there "is the tension between the understandings that other people and groups have of us (our identity) and how we understand that same person (our self)" (p. 66). The example of Preedy illustrates this

tension and the intentionality of our actions in trying to maintain a certain image to others and to ourselves. Henricks further notes, "Goffman's work … is mostly about the ways in which people create and sustain focused lines of action. As actors in situations, we want to see ourselves—and be seen by others—in certain, agreed-upon ways" (p. 67). Can you think of some situations in your life when you acted as Preedy did, being consciously aware of trying to manipulate the impression that others have of you?

The dramaturgical approach helps us understand that how one appears is at least as important as what one actually does or says—and often, it is more important.

6.3f Maintaining the Self

Once we have presented ourselves in a particular role and have begun to interact, we must maintain our presentation. In class, a student cannot begin to shake hands with fellow students, wander around the room, or write on the blackboard. It would not only disrupt the class but would also spoil the presentation of that student, who would be considered disruptive, strange, or worse. If students or others want to maintain the definitions others have of them, they must maintain a performance in accord with the definition.

Sometimes we inadvertently do not maintain our performance, so we try to give an **account** to excuse our behavior (Scott & Lyman, 1968; Simon & Manstead, 1983). If we are late and want to avoid giving the impression that we are always late, we make excuses: "I am usually very prompt, but I had car trouble." "I thought the meeting was at eight o'clock, not seven o'clock."

We also try to maintain our presentations by using **disclaimers**—that is, disclaiming a role even while we are acting in that role. "I usually don't drink, but this punch is so good," disclaims the role of drinker. Examples of phrases that tell the audience that the self is not what it appears to be are "I am not prejudiced, but …" followed by a racist remark, or "I am no expert, but …" followed by a remark only an expert could make.

Often, the audience accepts a person's excuses or disclaimers, and the interaction proceeds smoothly. Sometimes, however, the drama does not work out so well. We may present ourselves in the role of someone who knows how to act in social situations but not live up to those claims. We may fall down a flight of stairs as we make our grand entrance. We may stand up at a meeting to give a report, claiming to be an expert—but with trembling hands and factual errors that do not support this claim. The speaker and those in the audience may attempt to ignore the errors, but at some point, the speaker may get too flustered to continue the pretense of living up to the role or may become embarrassed and laugh, cry, faint, or blush. When a group can no longer support the claims made by an individual, the whole group may become embarrassed or angry (Goffman, 1967).

Implicit in interactions is the assumption that presentations will be maintained. Each person agrees to maintain the self and to support the presentations of others. If people's presentations are not supported, this may be followed by an emotional response. For example, in some situations, I may become embarrassed. If my presentation is ridiculed, I may get angry. In another situation, if someone seems to fill your image of the ideal romantic love, you may fall in love with that individual. If the person then is cruel, unfaithful, or behaves in some other way that tarnishes your image of him or her, you may grow angry and fall out of love.

Not only do we learn behavior in the process of socialization and interaction, we also learn appropriate feelings about others and ourselves. We learn self-esteem by understanding how others evaluate us; we learn when to be embarrassed, when to be angry, and when (and with whom) to fall in love. If we are angry with someone who deserves our respect, we feel guilty about our feelings. If we love someone whom others define as entirely inappropriate, we become confused. Again, we have expectations about maintaining these performances of self—both our own and others'—and we respond emotionally when these expectations are not met. This happens in all our roles and in all the groups in which we are involved.

Account
An effort to maintain the self by explaining the reasons for, or facts surrounding, a behavior

Disclaimer
An aspect of maintaining our presentation of self in which we deny behavior that contradicts how we wish to be viewed

thinking SOCIOLOGICALLY

1. What is required for babies to develop into full human beings? What are the components that make us human?
2. Think of times you have seen your looking-glass self inaccurately. How has this shaped your actions?
3. Think of a time when your presentation of self was not maintained. How did you respond emotionally?

6.3g Kohlberg's Stages of Moral Development

As very young children, we begin the process of moral development—or learning the difference between right and wrong. Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg spent many years studying children and the process of moral development. He proposed a number of stages through which people pass in their moral development:

Shutterstock

Children begin the process of learning the difference between right and wrong at a very young age.

- *Pre-Conventional* During the pre-conventional stages of moral development, which typically occur in childhood, Kohlberg argued that people act according to what authoritative figures expect from them. They view what pleases or displeases those in authority, such as their parents and teachers. Morality is external, and people are simply trying to avoid punishment or gain rewards.
- *Conventional* During the conventional stages of moral development, which typically occur in adolescence and adulthood, people have internalized what has been taught to them. They began to view right and wrong in terms of what is socially acceptable. Instead of avoiding punishment, they want to follow society's rules, such as obeying the law, so others will see them as "good." This can lead to somewhat rigid adherence to the rules, however, and the morality of a given rule is rarely questioned.
- *Post-Conventional* In the post-conventional stages of moral development, individuals are more concerned with the rights of individuals than with the laws of society. A person's basic rights to life, liberty, etc. are more important from a moral standpoint than laws that would deprive individuals or groups of these things. Such a commitment to justice requires that unjust laws not be followed.

Kohlberg argued that individuals could only pass through one stage at a time and in the order listed. They did not skip stages, and they could not jump back and forth between stages. Kohlberg believed that moral development occurred through the process of social interaction.

6.3h Development of a Personality

Sigmund Freud believed that personality consists of three elements: id, ego, and superego. When a child is born, there is the *id*, or the child's inborn drives for self-gratification. For example, when the child senses hunger, he or she will cry until fed. Freud referred to the id as the pleasure-seeking component, which demands immediate fulfillment of basic instinctual needs that remain unconscious most of the time. The

second component is the *ego*, which strives to maintain balance. The ego's job is to act as a mediator between the id and the superego and to prevent one or the other from becoming too dominant. The third component is the *superego*, or our conscience. The superego has internalized the norms, values, and beliefs of our culture or society. Unlike the id, the superego is not inherent but is learned from our social interactions with others.

6.4 MAJOR AGENTS OF SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is found in all interaction, but the most influential interaction occurs in particular groups referred to as "agents of socialization." Among the most important are family, schools, peer groups, and the mass media.

6.4a Family

The family is considered the primary agent of socialization. It is within the family that most children encounter the first socializing influence, and this influence affects them for the rest of their lives. For example, families give children their geographical location, as Easterners or Westerners, and their urban or rural background. The family also determines the child's social class, race, religious background, and ethnic group. Each of these factors can have a profound influence on children. They may learn to speak a particular dialect, to prefer particular foods, and to pursue some types of leisure activities.

Shutterstock

The family is considered the primary agent of socialization. It can determine social class, religious beliefs, language, and how family members view themselves. This influence will affect them for the rest of their lives.

Families also teach children values that they will hold throughout life. Children frequently adopt their parents' attitudes about the importance of education, work, patriotism, and religion. Even a child's sense of self-worth is determined, at least in part, by the child's parents.

One of the values instilled in the children of most US families concerns the worth of the unique individual. We are taught that we possess a set of talents, personality characteristics, and strengths and weaknesses peculiar to ourselves—and that we are responsible for developing these traits. Our parents tell us that we can be all that we want to be, as long as we work hard and want something badly enough. Ultimately, we are responsible for our successes and failures. This view of the value of the individual is not found in all cultures, however. Many people who emigrated from Southern Europe, for example, believe that one's primary responsibility is to the family, rather than to oneself. The son of a European farm family, for example, is expected to be loyal and obedient to the family, to work for its benefit, and, eventually, to take over the management of the farm when the parents are old. In our culture, however, staying with the family is often regarded as a sign of weakness or of lack of ambition on the part of young adults; when adult children return home to live, both they and their parents often feel uncomfortable (Clemens & Axelsen, 1985; Schnaiberg & Goldenberg, 1989). Some cultures, such as China's, place an emphasis on inculcating both individualist and collectivist values; this indicates that modern and traditional values are part of family socialization of children (Lu, 2009).

As more and more children spend time in childcare instead of in the family, the question of what type of socialization will take place in these organizations is of major concern. Can nonfamilial childcare really replace family care, and will the quality of socialization be maintained in these organizations? (Note the *Policy Debate* in this chapter and its discussion on childcare.)

6.4b Schools

In some societies, socialization takes place almost entirely within the family; in highly technical societies, however, children are also socialized by the educational system. Schools in the United States teach more than reading, writing, arithmetic, and other basic academic skills. They also teach students to develop themselves—to test their achievements through competition, develop self-discipline, cooperate with others, and obey rules, all of which are necessary if a youngster is to achieve success in a society dominated by large organizations.

Schools teach sets of expectations about the work children will do when they mature. The children begin by learning about the work roles of community helpers such as firefighters and doctors; later, they learn about occupations more formally. They take aptitude tests to discover their unique talents; with the help of teachers and guidance counselors, they set occupational goals.

Schools also teach citizenship in countless ways. They encourage children to take pride in their communities; to feel patriotic about their nation; to learn about their country's geography, history, and national holidays; to study government, explain the role of good citizens, urge their parents to vote, and pledge allegiance to the US flag; to become informed about community and school leaders; and to respect school property. At times, what a child is taught in school may conflict with the values taught within the home. For example, a child who is taught to believe that religion is central to his or her life will find it difficult to understand the separation of church and state in public education. Schools can provide the first occasion when children are challenged to question their family's beliefs.

Most school administrators and teachers in the US reinforce our cultural emphasis on the uniqueness of individuals. Thus, they try to identify the unique talents of students through comparison and competition with other students and then attempt to develop these talents so students will become useful to the larger society. Japanese schools, operating in a less individualistic society, assume all students will be able to meet whatever standards the schools set.

6.4c Peer Groups

Peer group
An informal primary group of people who share a similar or equal status and who are usually of roughly the same age

Young people spend considerable time in school, and their **peer group**—people their own age—is an important influence on their socialization. Peer-group socialization has been found to have an impact on so many values, attitudes, and behaviors concerning things such as dating, sexuality, ethnic/racial interactions, delinquency, risk taking, overall adjustment, and many other issues of central importance in the lives of young people (Poteat, 2007; Rivas-Drake, Hughes, & Way, 2009; Ellis & Zarbatany, 2007; Higins, Ricketts, Marcum, & Mahoney, 2010; Criss, Shaw, Moilanen, Hitchings, & Ingoldsby, 2009).


iStock

Peer groups are an important influence on young people's socialization.

Young people today also spend more time with one another outside of school. Unlike young people of earlier decades, few are isolated on farms. Most live in cities or suburbs; increasingly, they have access to cars, so they can spend time together away from their families. The influence of peer groups on a school-aged child's life, including the important sense of belonging, can influence how they react toward themselves. Teenagers' most intimate relationships are often those they have with their peers, rather than those with parents or siblings; they influence one another greatly. In fact, some young people create their own unique subcultures. Coleman and his colleagues (1974), who refer to these groups simply as "cultures," list as examples the culture of athletic groups in high schools, the college campus culture, the drug culture, motorcycle culture, the culture of surfers,

and religious cultures. In part because teenagers are often unsure of themselves, they may prize the sense of belonging they get from their subculture, although the pressures to conform to group expectations can be quite severe. Clothing styles, music, and dating habit preferences begin to form during the teen years; teens who fail to conform to their group's behavior may be seen as "outsiders," which can lead to feelings of rejection.

6.4d Religion

All societies have some form of religion, and how one practices or does not practice religion is largely dependent on social interactions with others. Religion can be an extremely powerful influence on a person's social self. Children whose parents encouraged them to attend church early in life are more likely to rely on faith and prayer throughout much of their adult life as well. Children learn the language of their religion and ideas about what is and is not acceptable behavior, particularly regarding morality.

6.4e The Mass Media

The US **mass media**—television, popular magazines, and other forms of communication intended for a large audience—play a key role in teaching US Americans to consume goods. They devise programs that attract a particular audience and then sell products to that audience. US children spend more than 53 hours a week watching TV, playing video games, or using cellphones and computers (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2010). That is more than the equivalent of a full-time work week. While most advertising takes place on TV, portable electronic devices are also vehicles for advertisements—especially because TV shows can be watched on almost all of them. Thus, younger children urge their parents to buy the cereals, snack foods, and toys they see advertised. An average of 200 junk food ads are shown in 4 hours of children's Saturday morning cartoon programming (Herr, 2009). Teenagers listen to their favorite music on the radio or the internet and buy the products advertised there. At the very least, the mass media teach people what products are available. In addition, by age 13, the average person in the US has seen 200,000 acts of violence on television, 40,000 of these being murders (Herr, 2009).

The mass media also teach values and needs. An advertisement may teach you, for example, that thoughtful, sensitive children send their parents Hallmark cards on special occasions or just to convey, "I love you." You may learn from slogans such as Nike's "Just do it" or Red Bull's "Red Bull gives you wiiings" that ambition is a positive characteristic.

The mass media also teach viewers something about what life is like, although the view presented may be an idealized one. For example, people learn from television comedy shows that the average family in the US is very happy. Everyday problems of living—such as dented automobiles, lackluster sex lives, occupational failures, trouble juggling two careers and childcare, or a shortage of money—are treated as abnormalities on television. In the media, rich people are often miserable; poor people, who usually appear in comedies, have a wonderful time and never seem to worry about money. Because of these depictions, viewers may develop unrealistic expectations about the quality of their own lives, becoming unnecessarily frustrated and discontent. If we can understand that our conception of what is normal is one that we have been socialized to accept by the media, perhaps we would not have such unrealistic expectations of our spouses, our children, and ourselves. With more realistic expectations, perhaps we could become more tolerant of ourselves and of others.

Researchers in the 1990s argued that television shapes not only *what* we think but also *how* we think. According to Healy (1990), television prevents thinking, at least in characteristic ways. Before television, children spent much more time learning about things by talking or reading. This required more use of the imagination. When learning through conversation, a person has to formulate ideas and respond to what is being said in order to maintain the conversation. When learning through reading, a child has to imagine

Mass media
Forms of communication—such as television, popular magazines, and radio—intended for a large audience

what things look like and how things sound in order to grasp the meaning of the written word. When watching television, children are provided with pictures and sounds and are not required to formulate ideas and respond. As a result, Healy (1990) argued that children who have grown up watching a great deal of television do not think unless the pictures and sounds are provided for them. More recent research suggests that the effect of the amount of time spent in front of the television needs to be considered along with other variables, but time spent watching television does interfere with other developmental activities such as reading, physical activity, and interacting with friends (Fields, 2016).

Undoubtedly, many more theories about how the mass media shape our thoughts will be forthcoming. Nevertheless, the fact that the mass media play a part in socialization is widely accepted.

thinking SOCIOLOGICALLY

1. How have your parents influenced your development of a self? What are some of the values and beliefs taught to you that remain an important component of your life today?
2. Discuss the importance of education on the development of a self. How did education either enhance or contradict what was taught to you by your parents?
3. How have your peer groups influenced your development of self? Think of some specific instances and ways in which your peer groups have helped shape your sense of self.

6.5 SOCIALIZATION OF GENDER ROLES

Socialization plays an important part in determining what children believe are acceptable behaviors for members of their gender. Even though the situation has begun to change, our environment bombards all genders with subtle and not so subtle suggestions as to what is considered acceptable. People who diverge significantly from expected gender roles often face intolerance from individuals and from the social system. The same sources of socialization that influence people in other areas of their lives—home, school, the mass media, and interactions with others—also affect the socialization of gender roles.

6.5a Infant and Childhood Experiences

Gender-role socialization in our society begins early. At birth, babies are often wrapped in a blue or pink blanket to indicate their sex assigned at birth; from that moment on, most parents respond to the infant based on the gender associated with that sex. In decades past, future role expectations for infants were rigid. Boys were expected to grow up to play **instrumental roles**, performing tasks leading to goals they have set for themselves. Girls were expected to be more verbal, expressive, emotional, and, when they grow up, more interested in interpersonal relationships—characteristics of the **expressive role** described by sociologists (Zelditch, 1955).

Instrumental role
A role that emphasizes accomplishment of tasks—such as earning a living to provide food and shelter—and is traditionally associated more with men than with women

Expressive role
A role that emphasizes warmth and understanding—rather than action or leadership—and is traditionally associated more with women than with men

Research has shown that infants are viewed differently depending on these future role expectations. Infant boys are often described as big, athletic, strong, or alert; however, infant girls are usually described as tiny, dainty, sweet, pretty, delicate, inattentive, or weak (Bradbard, 1985). Parents tend to notice the dainty fingernails of a baby girl—even though those of a baby boy look identical. Boy and girl infants are also treated differently. Boys are handled roughly and tossed around playfully; girls are held more, cuddled, talked to, and treated as if they were very fragile. Even the tone of voice used is different. Boys are talked to in loud voices, whereas girls are spoken to gently. Parents also give their

children different surroundings, toys, and games, based on gender. However, traditional gender roles do not necessarily have to be the outcome of childhood socialization. A study of NCAA Division I female athletes revealed that parental influence was significant in both the athletes' desire to participate in and their success in sports. This form of socialization included role modeling on the part of parents, the opportunities and the expectations provided by parents, and the various ways of leading females to interpret sports as a meaningful and realistic pursuit (Dixon, Warner, & Bruening, 2008).

Other research shows that infants respond differently to early variations in treatment (Pridham, Becker, & Brown, 2000). Children who are touched and talked to cling to their mothers and talk to them more, regardless of their gender; because girls are held and talked to more than boys, they tend to reciprocate with this kind of behavior (Goldberg & Lewis, 1968; Moss, 1967).

Parents teach their boys and girls different techniques for solving problems. When doing a puzzle, for example, parents give girls specific advice, but they try to help boys learn problem-solving techniques (Frankel & Rollins, 1983). Toys selected for boys are either constructive (pieces are added to build or change the toy, such as railroads) or aggressive (such as guns), while toys for girls are more nurturant or attractive, such as dolls (Lorber, 2003).

Gender socialization also effects how children's emotions develop. Parents tend to encourage the expression of sadness more for girls than for boys. Gender socialization is not only affected by the gender of the children but also by the parents as well. Fathers tend to inhibit the expression of sadness in their children more than do mothers (Cassano, Perry-Parrish, & Zeman, 2007).

Today, parents are beginning to have different role expectations for their daughters. More and more parents realize that their daughters will have to compete in the work force. In Sweden, where the government has long been active in discouraging differential treatment of boys and girls, Lamb et al. (1982) found that parents treated their infant sons and daughters alike. However, the two parents differed from one another. They treated their children the way that they had been treated as children. Mothers smiled, cooed, and cuddled their infants more than fathers did; fathers were more playful. These children experienced both types of socialization. As would be expected, the educational and occupational aspirations of boys and girls differ according to whether they are raised by traditional or feminist parents (Blakemore & Hill, 2008).

6.5b Gender-Role Socialization in Schools

Children continue to learn gender-role behavior in nursery school (Ornstein, 1994). Classroom observations of 15 nursery schools showed that the teachers (all women) treated boys and girls differently. Teachers responded 3 times more often to disruptive behavior by boys than by girls. The boys usually got a loud public reprimand, whereas the girls were given a quiet rebuke that others could not hear. Disruptive behavior is often an attempt to gain attention; because the boys received the attention they were seeking, they continued to behave disruptively. When the teacher paid less attention to the boys, this behavior diminished. Teachers were also more willing to help the boys find something to do. The girls who were not doing anything were ignored and received attention only when they were literally clinging to the teacher's skirts.

The teachers spent more time teaching boys. In one instance, the teacher showed boys how to use a stapler, but when a girl did not know how to use it, the teacher took the materials, stapled them herself, and handed them back to the girl. Both problem-solving and analytical abilities are related to active participation, but girls were not given the opportunity to try things as often as boys were. Boys are also praised more for good work and are encouraged to keep trying. Girls are praised for appearance but left in the dark about their academic performance (Sadker & Sadker, 1994).

Teachers also evaluate boys differently from girls. If the preschool child is a boy, the teacher evaluates him no differently whether he is compliant or not. However,

policydebate

Childcare

The use of substitute childcare is becoming increasingly widespread and debated both in the United States and in other developed countries (Saraceno, 2011). The long-term effects of substitute childcare on children when they become adults are not fully known. Most of the research to date suggests that extensive nonparental care in the first year of life does have an impact on a child's development. However, some of the earliest studies were contradictory about what the overall effects are, how long they last, and whether they are beneficial or detrimental to the child (Belsky, 1990; Clarke-Stewart, 1989; Leavitt & Power, 1989; Phillips, McCartney, & Scarr, 1987).

Referring to the widespread use of substitute childcare, in the last decades of the twentieth century, when nonparental day care became widespread, social critic Charles Siegel (1990) wrote, "An entire generation of children is the subject of a risky experiment" (Phillips et al., 1987, p. 37). While the related political debates focus mostly on who should be responsible for ensuring that there is adequate childcare—government, business, or family—the heart of the matter is socialization. How well are children learning to function in society? Is the socialization of children with parental care different than with nonparental care? If so, what are the differences, and are they detrimental or beneficial to the development of the child? Answers to questions such as these will probably have an impact on any national childcare policies that are developed.

Public and political debates about childcare policies have drawn a great deal of attention to the needs of working parents regarding quality care for their children. Little (2007) argues that there is a growing recognition that quality programs for school-aged children can enhance the learning achievements obtained at school. In addition, federal funding for childcare programs is at an all-time high due to the need for stimulating before and after school activities that will expand the knowledge of children both academically and socially.

Research findings for infants and preschoolers are not as positive as they are for school-aged children. Kreader, Ferguson, and Lawrence (2005) argue that efforts need to be made to enhance the quality of childcare for this age group. Infants and preschoolers should have care from individuals properly trained and educated in child development. The ratio of caregivers to children is particularly important at this age. Children at the greatest risk are those from low-income families who may receive less than adequate care from facilities that are often overcrowded and staffed with people who have little knowledge about the socialization process.

The childcare debate is no longer whether childcare should be used but rather how to devise childcare policies that ensure the best possible socialization of children while addressing the realities of families throughout the world as they exist today (cf., e.g., Saraceno, 2011; Brennan, 2007).

Shutterstock

compliance is a significant factor in evaluating girls. Less compliant girls are viewed as less intellectually competent (Gold, Crombie, & Noble, 1987). Cornwell et al. (2013) found that grades awarded by teachers do not always align with standardized test scores. Even though girls outperform boys in reading on standardized tests, when boys exhibit the same attitude as girls in the classroom, their grades are significantly similar to girls. It would appear that noncognitive factors often lead to higher grades for boys and that teachers' stereotypes about gender may influence their grading at times.

Schools teach gender roles in other ways as well. Most teachers and half of all principals are women but superintendents are mostly men. Women teachers are more likely to teach young children; as subject matter becomes more sophisticated and specialized, more men are found teaching. Children receive subtle messages about the capability of men and women as they observe the jobs they hold. School counselors may also encourage children to follow expected gender roles. Career counselors will define girls who want to enter masculine occupations or boys who want to enter traditionally feminine occupations as in need of more extensive guidance. Efforts are sometimes made to steer them into more "appropriate" occupations.

Not only is school performance differentiated by gender as a result of socialization but so are other factors such as self-esteem. Cribb and Haase (2016) studied the impact of same gender versus co-educational schools on self-esteem. They found that in co-educational schools, adolescent girls tend to internalize negative self-esteem more than in all-female schools.

6.5c Gender-Role Socialization in Peer Groups

Children play mainly in same-sex groups, and this contributes to their socialization. Maccoby (1998) notes that children segregate themselves into same-sex playgroups whenever they have a choice of playmates. This tendency begins at the preschool ages and increases until the children reach puberty. Furthermore, this tendency to segregate is stronger when adults do not interfere—in other words, children are more segregated in the cafeteria than they are in the classroom.

Although it is not clear why children segregate themselves in playgroups, at least part of the explanation is that children in mixed groups will be teased for liking or loving a member of the opposite sex (Maccoby, 1998). Children who have ongoing friendships with members of the opposite sex often go into hiding about these friendships by age 7. They will not acknowledge each other in public but only play together in the privacy of their own homes. To the extent that children segregate themselves to avoid teasing, they are responding to the behavior of older members of the society. They are being socialized to play in same-sex groups.

The result of playing in same-sex groups is that girls are socialized to act like girls and boys are socialized to act like boys (Greenwald, Hedges, & Laine, 1996). Maccoby (1998) found that the children did not form groups based on like interests. Whether the girls were passive or aggressive, they played with other girls; the same was true of boys. Once in the playgroup, however, girls learn to act in socially binding ways while boys act competitively. In conversation, for example, girls acknowledge each other, agree with each other, and pause frequently to give others a chance to speak. Boys more often use commands, interrupt, boast, heckle each other, tell jokes, and engage in name-calling. When engaged in taking turns, boys use physical means to get a turn, such as pushing and shoving, while girls use conversational means, persuading others to let them have a turn. As they learn how to get along with others of the same sex, girls especially are less interested in playing with those of the opposite sex because their socially binding norms are less influential and powerful than the competitive norms of boys (Maccoby, 1998).

Psychologist Carol Gilligan (1982) argues that as young girls progress through early socialization, they end up "hitting the wall." In other words, all the negative messages they have received from society about their image, abilities, worth, etc., come flooding back to influence their perceptions of themselves. The gender socialization that begins at birth and continues throughout life has consistently emphasized a male-dominated society where power is less likely to be in the hands of females. When girls fail to conform to the standards set for them by society, the blame will fall on their shoulders. They will be viewed as "tomboy," "oddball," "manly," or some other term situated on their unwillingness to act the way they are supposed to. Gilligan suggests that gender-related stereotypes are harmful to the socialization of girls. For example, the words of former Harvard President Lawrence Summers in 2005 drew enormous criticism when

he suggested at an academic conference on economics that innate differences between men and women might be one reason fewer women succeed in science and math careers. Summers also suggested that discrimination and socialization are not what creates the low number of female professors in science and engineering. He argued that "the real issue is the overall size of the pool," not the size of the pool that was "held down by discrimination."

thinking SOCIOLOGICALLY

How do the theories of socialization presented in this chapter help to explain Gilligan's notion that as young girls progress through early socialization they end up "hitting the wall"?

6.5d Mass Media and Socialization of Gender Roles

From childhood on, US Americans spend thousands of hours watching television, which has a strong tendency to portray gender-role stereotypes. In children's television programming, male characters have traditionally been portrayed as aggressive, constructive, and helpful, whereas female characters were typically portrayed as passive, deferring to males. Many children and adults watch adult programs, especially sitcoms. *I Love Lucy*, which was originally produced in the 1950s and is still seen in reruns, featured Lucille Ball as a consistently inept housewife who had to be rescued by her harassed but tolerant husband. Every episode revolved around Lucy's getting into some sort of trouble. Current sitcoms are a little subtler.

Music videos, however, are often not at all subtle. They show men acting rough, tough, and even violent. "Their" women follow or even crawl after the men—waiting, competing, and even suffering for a bit of attention. The focus of the women is on their appearance; they wear provocative clothing that suggests they are waiting on men to sexually seduce them.

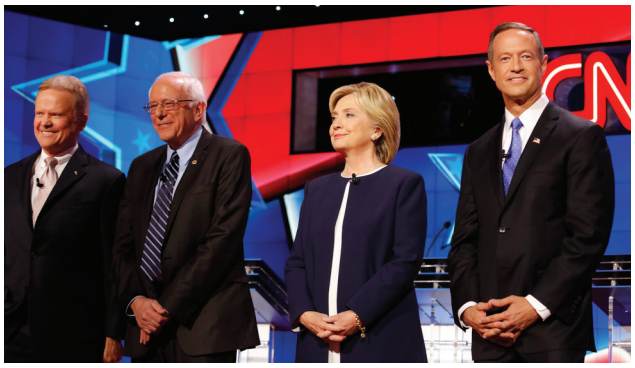
Photo courtesy of Bureau of Industrial Service—A Division of Young & Rubicam, 1956; via Wikimedia

Television programs, such as I Love Lucy, *tend to portray gender-role stereotypes. Lucille Ball's character was portrayed as an inept housewife who had to be rescued by her harassed but tolerant husband.*

Advertising on television and in the press also tends to stereotype both men and women or to portray roles that are impossible to fulfill. Career women are portrayed as superwomen who combine a successful career, motherhood, and a terrific marriage with cooking a gourmet meal for a small dinner party of 10. At the other extreme, women are portrayed as beautiful, bewildered homemakers, even when they work outside the home. These ads show the woman arriving home from work to cook the family meal or do the laundry, but apparently overwhelmed by indecision about what to serve or how to get shirt collars really clean. A male voice heard in the background tells the woman how to solve her problem. Men in ads are sometimes stereotyped as forceful, athletic, involved in business of some kind, or at least actively watching a ball game, and they always seem to know exactly what they want or which beer has more gusto. When men are portrayed doing housework, they are stereotyped as "fish out of water," not knowing exactly how to do this "women's work"; a woman then comes to the rescue with the right product to complete the task. However, this trend is changing, according to Michael Kimmel, executive

director of the Center for the Study of Men and Masculinities at Stony Brook University. According to Kimmel, "Dadvertising" is beginning to target men who are adept at child-rearing and housework (Bukzpan, 2016).

News reporting has generally followed the stereotypes established by society when discussing issues related to women. During the 2008 presidential election—with Hillary Clinton as a presidential candidate, Sarah Palin as a vice presidential candidate, and Nancy Pelosi as the Speaker of the House—women were certainly a focal point. For example, the New York journalist Amanda Fortini wrote, "In the grand Passion play that was this election, both Clinton and Palin came to represent—and, at times, reinforce—two of the most pernicious stereotypes that are applied to women: the bitch and the ditz." Another example came from Contessa Brewer, a female anchor for *MSNBC Live*, who wondered on air if Pelosi's "personal feelings [were] getting in the way of effective leadership"—a problem she suggested would not surface in "men-run leadership posts"—and whether men were "more capable of taking personality clashes" (Millican, 2006). Gender also played a role in the 2016 presidential election. In particular, one exchange was made well-known by the media in which Donald Trump commented that all Clinton had going for her was "the woman card." Yu Wang et al. (2016) found that the "woman card" comment resulted in women being more likely to follow Clinton, but had little impact on Trump's followers.


Joseph Sohm/Shutterstock

APPLYING GENDER-ROLE SOCIALIZATION

Understanding that gender-role stereotypes are a product of socialization is important for you in your work life and in your personal life. One important problem in the workplace that results from gender-role stereotypes is discrimination against women. This has taken a variety of forms, including unfair hiring practices, lower wages, sexual harassment, and many others.

Some companies hire consultants to develop training programs to help employees at all levels understand the sources of these gender-related tensions in the workplace. Employees can be made aware of how stereotypes are generated through media and other agents of socialization. Also, exercises may be used to help men and women employees understand one another's work experiences a little better. One way is to have the men and women engage in role reversal, role playing exercises. This can help them see situations from the other gender's point of view and become more sensitive to one another's needs and attitudes. The key theme that runs through the training is to get beyond the gender stereotypes that people have learned in their previous socialization.

Stereotypes generated through gender-role socialization may also create problems in your intimate relationships. In her book *Intimate Strangers*, Lillian Rubin (1983) discussed how **gender identity** can prevent people of opposing genders from developing true intimacy. That is, gender-role socialization might impose stereotypical instrumental traits (aggressive, unemotional, dominant, career-oriented, and so forth) on males and stereotypical expressive traits (passive, emotional, subordinate, relationship-oriented, and so forth) on females, which might interfere with their ability to develop close emotional bonds with one another. The realization that gender roles are learned through socialization and are not an inherent part of our biological makeup can help all genders overcome many barriers to intimacy and to relate to one another as whole individuals.

Gender identity
One's internal sense of being male, female, or other genders, as opposed to gender assigned at birth

thinking SOCIOLOGICALLY

In the discussion of how the news media portrays female candidates, both journalists were themselves female. Why might women criticize other women?

6.6 SOCIALIZATION IN ADULTHOOD

The knowledge we acquire as children shapes the meanings we give to ourselves and to the world, and it can continue to influence us for the rest of our lives. However, we never stop learning new things. Every day, we have new experiences, learn new information, and add new meanings to what we already know. Adult socialization occurs when we learn new roles that are expected from us as we get older. Although new knowledge may be different from knowledge acquired as children, the same agents of socialization are at work.

6.6a College and Marriage

Like children, adults are socialized by their families. Adult socialization also occurs in schools. Colleges teach adults of all ages, and the move from home to college can be a period of intense socialization. First-year college students must adapt to their new independence from the family and make their own decisions about health, food, sleep, class attendance, study habits, exercise, and social relationships. They must learn to live in crowded situations and to compete with peers. Some avoid these decisions by going along with the crowd. Others drop the values they learned in the family and adopt a new set of values, whereas some continue to maintain family values in the new setting. Each choice entails some socialization.

Single people undergo socialization when they marry as they learn to live intimately with their spouses and to share living arrangements. Each person is socialized toward marriage based on their own set of experiences and social interactions while growing up. Once married, a young couple must decide how to define their marriage based on their own expectations rather than those of others.

6.6b Parenthood

When a couple has children, they learn the role of parent and are likely to rely on the knowledge of childcare they acquired from their own parents. Because the two parents were themselves brought up by different sets of parents, they will have learned different child-rearing techniques; therefore, they will have to socialize each other to reach an agreement about childcare practices. As their children grow up, parents must be socialized to allow their children to become independent after years of dependency. All this learning is a part of adult socialization.

Children are often very active socializers of their parents. As infants, they let their parents know when they need attention. As toddlers, they begin to assert themselves a little, striving for more autonomy and independence. This process of demanding both attention and independence continues as long as children are at home. It can result in serious conflicts—particularly with teenagers who rebel, fight, take drugs, or run away from home. The socialization of parents can be quite dramatic, but it is often successful. A questionnaire given to mothers and fathers of college students (Peters, 1985) found that the parents had learned different attitudes and behaviors about sports, leisure, minority groups, drug use, and sexuality from their children.

6.6c Career

Another type of adult socialization is occupational training, which teaches not only the skills but also the attitudes and values associated with an occupation. Acquiring a new job involves taking on new statuses and roles. A new employee in an office must learn how to conform to the expectations of the other workers and to the business's written and unwritten rules. During this socialization, the employee will discover the answers to many questions: Are employees expected to wear suits, or is less formal clothing acceptable? Do employees address one another by their first names? Is rigid adherence to established procedures expected? Are some department heads more accommodating than others?

6.6d Resocialization

Major adaptations to new situations in adulthood may sometimes require **resocialization**. The changes people undergo during this process are much more pervasive than the gradual adaptations characteristic of regular socialization. Resocialization usually follows a major break in a person's customary life; this break requires that the person adopt an entirely new set of meanings to understand his or her new life. Divorce, retirement, or the death of a loved one usually involves the process of resocialization. Retirement from work is sometimes an easy process of socialization to a new situation, but it often requires a great deal of resocialization. Retired people often lose at least part of their income, so they may have to adapt to a new standard of living; with the loss of work, new sources of self-esteem may have to be developed. Society may help by providing education on financial management, health, and housing. Employers may also provide counseling services and support groups for retired people, especially when they want employees to retire.

Besides loss of income and self-esteem, retirement creates another resocialization problem: Most roles involve social expectations and provide rewards for meeting those expectations. However, there are few social expectations associated with retirement other than the loss of a previous role; as a result, the satisfactory performance of the retirement role goes unrecognized. To compound the problem, the retired person's spouse often dies during this period, so he or she must relinquish the family role as well as the work role. Nonetheless, if the retired person has enough money to buy nice clothes, enjoy hobbies, and afford travel for social events or volunteer work, then he or she can create a new role that is rewarding.

Mortification of self (Goffman, 1961), the most dramatic type of resocialization, occurs in institutions like the armed forces, prisons, and mental hospitals. People entering these institutions are totally stripped of their old selves. Physically, they are required to strip, shower, and don institutional clothing. All personal possessions are taken away; they must leave behind family, friends, and work. They must live in a new environment under a new set of rules and adopt a new role as a soldier, prisoner, or patient. Their previous learning must be completely redefined.

Whether dealing with socialization or with resocialization, the human mind is very complex. People learn varied sets of meaning during their lives, and they interpret each situation on the basis of their own biography and their own definition of the situation. How a person presents the self and maintains interactions depends on his or her unique interpretation of self, others, and the situation. It is this ability to interpret that makes socialization and social interaction such a varied, interesting, and challenging area of study.

Resocialization
Socialization to a new role or position in life that requires a dramatic shift in the attitudes, values, behaviors, and expectations learned in the past

Mortification of self
Stripping the self of all the characteristics of a past identity, including clothing, personal possessions, friends, roles, routines, and so on

CHAPTER 6

Wrapping it up

Summary

1. *Socialization* is the process of learning how to interact in society. Infants must interact in order to survive; as they interact, they learn about society.
2. It is thought that children who have been isolated or abused, or who received little attention when very young, do not learn to walk, talk, or otherwise respond to people because early social interactions are crucial to development.
3. Sociobiologists believe that inborn genetic traits direct human behavior just as they direct the behavior of animals. They contend that sexual, altruistic, and warlike behaviors occur in humans because we are predisposed to them in our genetic makeup. Most biologists and social scientists, however, sidestep the nature-nurture debate by contending that human behavior is determined by our biological capacity to learn socially.
4. Human beings learn a symbol system—language. Through linguistic interaction, we develop a *self*, or an idea of who we are.
5. Mead used the term *role-taking* to describe the process of figuring out how others think and perceive us. According to Mead, children take the role of only one other person at a time at first. Children practice role-taking in play and learn to generalize in team games. The *I* acts, but the *me* sees the self as an object. The interplay between the two allows the self to act freely while aware of social reactions.
6. Charles Horton Cooley used the term *looking-glass self* to describe how people learn about themselves; he argued that our identities are heavily influenced by our perceptions of how others view us. We see ourselves not as we are, and not as others see us, but as we *think* others see us.
7. Goffman compared interaction to a drama on stage. We present ourselves, as we want other people to define us. Once we have presented ourselves, everyone involved in the interaction is expected to maintain that presentation. We justify our discrepant behavior by making excuses or disclaimers. If we cannot maintain our presentations, we will respond to our failure with emotion—often embarrassment or anger.
8. Kohlberg provided us with the foundation on which to understand moral development in children.
9. Freud believed that personality consisted of three components: the *id*, *superego*, and *ego*.
10. Some of the important agents of socialization are the family, schools, peer groups, and the mass media.
11. From the start, children are socialized differently based on the sex they are assigned at birth. Men are expected to be instrumental, active, and task-oriented, whereas women are expected to be expressive, nurturing, and people-oriented.
12. *Resocialization* may be necessary when a person's life changes dramatically and abruptly, such as when he or she retires. In more extreme cases, such as incarceration, *mortification of self* can occur.

Discussion Questions

1. How could the ideas of Mead and Cooley be used to discuss your own gender-role socialization?
2. Using Cooley's "looking-glass self" concept, discuss how your perception of how others see you influences the way you think about yourself. What effect does this have on you?
3. Discuss things you do in college that you believe are important because your peers tell you they are important. Are these messages from your peers making you a better student?
4. Discuss things you do in college that you believe are important because the mass media tell you they are important. Are these messages from the mass media making you a better student?
5. Imagine you are putting on a skit about getting ready to go to class (or put on such a skit, if possible). What impression are you going to make on professors? On classmates?
6. How does your backstage preparation for class differ from your performance onstage?
7. Think back to your most recent casual conversation, perhaps at lunch. What disclaimers were used in the course of this conversation?
8. Use Goffman's ideas about social interaction to develop an explanation of socialization.

Pop Quiz for Chapter 6

1. In Spitz's study, children reared with their mothers in a detention center compared to those in foundling homes were found to _____.
   a. have normal development
   b. show slow physical and social development
   c. be unable to talk at all or capable of saying only a few words
   d. have died within 2 years of the study
2. The process of learning how to interact in society is called _____.
   a. behaviorism
   b. developmentalism
   c. socialization
   d. interactionism
3. Studies of feral children lend support to what idea?
   a. Children can develop normally even without human interaction.
   b. The first 2 years of life determine the type of later development.
   c. Except for learning to speak a language, the physical growth of feral children is only minimally impaired.
   d. None of the above
4. Which of the following is true of the wild boy of Aveyron?
   a. He learned to talk within 4 years.
   b. He learned to use utensils quite readily.
   c. He died within a few years of being rescued.
   d. None of the above
5. The study of the biological and genetic determinants of behavior is called _____.
   a. sociobiology
   b. symbolic interaction
   c. socialization
   d. dramaturgy
6. Mead called the process of figuring out how others will act _____.
   a. the presentation of self
   b. behavior modification
   c. developmental growth
   d. role-taking
7. Mead's two-part social self consists of the _____ and the _____.
   a. "I," "me"
   b. "you," "me"
   c. "we," "you"
   d. "me," "you"
8. According to Mead, play is a way of practicing _____.
   a. role-taking
   b. socialization
   c. gender-role stereotyping
   d. dramaturgy
9. Components of the looking-glass self include which of the following?
   a. How we think our behavior appears to others
   b. How we think others judge our behavior
   c. How we feel about the judgments of others
   d. All of the above

(continues)

Pop Quiz for Chapter 6 (continued)

10. Traditionally, the primary agent of socialization is _____.
    a. the family
    b. educational institutions
    c. peer groups
    d. reference groups
11. Studies show that human interaction is generally necessary for infants; however, in rare instances, infants can become normal, healthy children without it. T / F
12. Although the media are important socializers of children and adolescents, they have little impact on the social learning of adults. T / F
13. Children themselves are active socializers of parents. T / F
14. Peer groups are typically people of about the same age. T / F
15. People learn varied sets of meaning during their lives. T / F

Answers: 1. a 2. c 3. d 4. d 5. a 6. d 7. a 8. a 9. d 10. a 11. F 12. F 13. T 14. T 15. T