

# 4. Socialization

## Objectives

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- Understand the socialization process and how people learn to become members of society
- Examine how the agents of childhood socialization teach a society's culture
- Evaluate how people go through different stages of socialization throughout life

## Vocabulary

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adolescence	looking-glass self	role taking
agents of socialization	mentor	socialization
birth order	personality	sociobiology
cognitive development	psychoanalysis	
instinct	resocialization	

## Background

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This chapter introduces students to the socialization process. They come to view this as a process in which individuals learn to become members of society by following the social rules and norms while learning to perform roles guided by the expectations of others. Being aware of this natural, often difficult lifelong process can give them greater insights into how their personalities are shaped, how they learned important survival skills, and ultimately how to better manage social roles and expectations throughout their lives.

Students benefit from learning how personality is shaped throughout life by things like heredity, the environment, birth order, parents, and surrounding culture. Sociological perspectives in each of these personality-shaping areas are highlighted to broaden students' understanding of the socialization process. Students are also exposed to how one's sense of self is developed during childhood. Becoming better aware of their own inner-selves at this point in the lives could greatly change how they perceive themselves in society.

Students go on to learn how the agents of socialization—individuals or institutions that teach a society's culture—affect the lifelong socialization

process. Learning how major agents like family, schools, day care, peer groups, and mass media influence childhood socialization will help students identify and examine how different social institutions and groups shape their personalities and attitudes.

The socialization process throughout life is then examined. Having a basic, early understanding of how people are socialized into new roles during adolescence, early and middle adulthood, and old age can expand students' perceptions of the world and better empower their identities. Understanding the stages and phases of male and female socialization in early and middle adulthood prepares them for future developments in their lives. They can similarly benefit from learning how senior citizens resocialize themselves with regard to work and retirement, and death and dying.

### Further Resources

Handel, Gerald, ed. *Childhood Socialization*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 1988.

Rose, Peter I., ed. *Socialization and the Life Cycle*. New York: St. Martin, 1979.

## For Discussion

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### Review

1. According to Mead, what are the three distinct phases involved in the way social interactions shape one's personality?
2. According to Freud, what are the three parts of the personality?
3. According to Piaget, what are the four stages of cognitive development?
4. What are the five stages of dying?

### Critical Thinking

1. Which of the elements that help to shape personality development do you think is the most influential? Why?
2. Which of the theories on the development of a person's sense of self do you feel is most accurate? Why?
3. How does learning about the different aspects in the socialization of adolescence affect the way you look at your own life as an adolescent? Explain.
4. Why is it important to "readjust" or resocialize one's perceptions and ideals throughout life? Explain.
5. Who do you think has a more difficult time in the socialization process during early and middle adulthood—men or women? Why? Support your answer with examples.

## Activities

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### 1. What's the Shape of Your Personality?

Divide students into groups and ask members to take turns pointing out how heredity and environment, birth order, parents, and culture are shaping their personality, as based on the chapter content. Participants should discuss their thoughts and feelings about the new insights they are gaining about themselves and their socialization.

### 2. Interviews: The Aging, Senior Citizen Experience

Ask students to interview three senior citizens they know, touching on issues related to the subjects' transition from adulthood to old age, work and retirement, adjusting to new expectations, and coping with health issues and death. Report similarities and unique findings to the class.

### 3. Internet: Exploring Views on the Sense of Self

Direct students to pick one major theorist—Locke, Cooley, Mead, Freud, or Piaget—and to research websites devoted to that theorist's work. Challenge students to find more information, studies, or experiments related to their subjects' views about the development of self and to assess their findings and draw conclusions.

### 4. Special Sources: The Importance of Mentoring

Direct students to use the library to research sociological, psychological, and other studies on the mentoring process. Have students discuss their findings and discuss ways in which they can facilitate influential mentoring relationships in their lives.

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As you read Chapter 4, write an answer to each question below.

1. In what key ways do heredity and environment, birth order, parents, and culture influence the development of one's personality?

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2. Describe the three-step process involved in developing one's self identity, according to Cooley.

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3. What are the four key agents of socialization and what are their most significant tasks in the socialization of children?

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4. How do peers, responsibilities, identity, and conflicting pressures affect a person's socialization during adolescence?

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5. According to Levinson and Frieze, in what ways do the socialized life patterns of men and women during early and middle adulthood differ?

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Find the best answer for each item. Then circle the correct answer.

1. What is the process by which individuals learn to become members of society?
  - a. sociobiology
  - b. socialization
  - c. resocialization
  - d. mentoring
2. What do you call the relatively stable patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting that distinguish one person from another?
  - a. adolescence
  - b. psychoanalysis
  - c. personality
  - d. instinct
3. What is the study of the biological bases of social behavior?
  - a. sociobiology
  - b. socioeconomics
  - c. sociology
  - d. biogenetics
4. What is the description of the development of self through social interactions with other people?
  - a. socialization
  - b. resocialization
  - c. agents of socialization
  - d. looking-glass self
5. What is the activity in social development in which a child pretends to be other people?
  - a. birth order
  - b. looking-glass self
  - c. goal sharing
  - d. role taking
6. What is Freud's theory that the unconscious childhood experiences and instinct-based drives largely shape personality and behavior?
  - a. psychology
  - b. psychoanalysis
  - c. adolescence
  - d. superego
7. What is the process of changes over time in the way an individual thinks, learns, reasons, and acquires language?
  - a. instinct
  - b. socialization
  - c. cognitive development
  - d. psychoanalysis
8. What is the period between childhood and adulthood (teenage years) in industrial and post-industrial societies?
  - a. adolescence
  - b. puberty
  - c. maturation
  - d. cognitive development
9. What is the process of altering what was learned earlier in life and learning new kinds of appropriate behavior?
  - a. socialization
  - b. resocialization
  - c. psychoanalysis
  - d. cognitive development
10. What is the term for a close advisor, usually an older person who takes an active interest in the career development of a younger person?
  - a. elder
  - b. mentor
  - c. facilitator
  - d. agent of socialization

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Read each description, and write the letter of the correct term on the line.

1. The socialization process is said to shape an individual's personality \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. during childhood
  - b. during adolescence
  - c. as an adult
  - d. over the span of one's life
2. Each of the following areas is said to help shape one's personality development EXCEPT \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. heredity and environment
  - b. birth order
  - c. nutrition
  - d. parental guidance
3. Birth order is said to shape the personalities of "later children" in that they tend to \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. endure more pressure to achieve
  - b. worry more than others
  - c. be more affectionate, friendly, and creative
  - d. be cautious and cooperative
4. The conscious perception of one's identity as distinct from others is called \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. sense of self
  - b. looking-glass self
  - c. tabula rasa
  - d. rite of passage
5. \_\_\_\_\_ conveys that the relationship between the individual and society is one of constant conflict in the development of one's sense of self.
  - a. Cooley's looking-glass self concept
  - b. Mead's role-taking theory
  - c. Freud's psychoanalysis theory
  - d. Piaget's cognitive development process
6. Piaget's cognitive development theory says children are first able to understand abstract concepts like love and death in \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Stage 1, *motor intelligence*
  - b. Stage 2, *preoperational*
  - c. Stage 3, *concrete operational*
  - d. Stage 4, *formal operational*
7. The main agent of socialization for children is \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. family
  - b. schools and day care
  - c. peer groups
  - d. mass media
8. The primary reason that adolescence exists only in industrial and post-industrial societies is that \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. children in pastoral and agricultural societies mature much faster, more naturally
  - b. western cultures do not have formal rituals that pass children directly into adulthood
  - c. western cultures feel it is important to extend the childhood period for better socialization
  - d. complex societies need better trained labor
9. The phase of development for males that is said to be "the bridge" between early and middle adulthood is called the \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. Novice Phase
  - b. Entering the Adult World Phase
  - c. Settling Down Period
  - d. Midlife Transition
10. All of the following are issues people of old age have to resocialize with EXCEPT \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. adjusting to retirement
  - b. changing one's "master status"
  - c. adapting to new expectations for "seniors"
  - d. prioritizing health, accepting death

### Essay Question

Since a person is socialized into roles throughout life, what kinds of things can individuals do to improve this process for themselves?