

CHAPTER 4: SOCIALIZATION

The Importance of Socialization

socialization - the process of learning to participate in a group

- begins at birth, continues throughout life
- successful socialization enables people to fit into all kinds of social groups
- most important learning occurs early in life - without prolonged and intensive social contact, children don't learn basics like walking, talking and loving - human infant without socialization can't develop the set of attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors associated with being an individual

Socialization and the Self

self-concept - an image of yourself as having an identity separate from other people

looking-glass self - an image of yourself based on what you believe others think of you

- a 3-stage process: 1. we imagine how we appear to others
- 2. we imagine the reaction of others to our (imagined) appearance
- 3. we evaluate ourselves according to how we imagine others have judged us
- this process is not conscious, can be a positive or negative self-evaluation

significant others - those people whose reactions are most important to your self-concept - for children: mother, father, grandparent, teachers, playmates - for teenagers: mostly peers - for adults: spouses, parents, friends, clergy, employers

role taking - assuming the viewpoint of another person and using that viewpoint to shape the self-concept - a 3-stage process:

1. imitation stage - children begin to imitate behaviors without understanding why (baby raises arms/hands for touchdown sign)
2. play stage - children act in ways they imagine other people would (pretending to be a policeman, astronaut, etc.)
3. game stage - children anticipate the actions of others based on social rules (playing on a sports team)

generalized other - integrated conception of the norms, values and beliefs of one's community or society

"me" - the part of the self formed through socialization

"I" - the part of the self that accounts for unlearned, spontaneous acts

- the two interact with each other during social situations, but the first reaction comes from the "I" - before acting, the reaction is directed into socially acceptable channels by the socialized "me"

Agents of Socialization

hidden curriculum - the informal and unofficial aspects of culture that children are taught in school (discipline, order, cooperation, conformity)

- schools run by the clock, as in the work world

peer group - set of individuals of roughly the same age and interests - for children, it's the only agency of socialization not controlled primarily by adults

mass media - means of communication designed to reach the general population (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies, books, Internet, CDs, MP3s, DVDs)

- children first introduced to numerous aspects of their culture through mass media

- often distorts popular images (courtroom/detective/police work glamorized)

Processes of Socialization

total institutions - places in which people are separated from the rest of society and controlled by officials in charge (mental hospitals, cults, prisons)

desocialization - the process of giving up old norms, values, attitudes and behaviors (replacing personal possessions with standard-issue items promotes sameness among residents)

resocialization - the process of adopting new norms, values, attitudes and behaviors

- both desocialization and resocialization also occur (in a less extreme form) as a child becomes a teenager, when young adults begin careers, and as the elderly move into retirement or widowhood

anticipatory socialization - the voluntary process of preparing to accept new norms, values, attitudes and behaviors (high school seniors preparing for college, college seniors preparing for careers)

reference group - group whose norms and values are used to guide behavior, group with whom you identify (preteens copying behavior and dress)