chapter 5

IN MY HIGH SCHOOL YEARBOOK, probably the single most common inscription from friends and classmates was a variation of, "Stay the same great guy you are now. Don't ever change." Yet countless conversations from college on have charted exactly such a trajectory of change. "Well, when I was younger I felt this way. But *now* I see it differently!" And how many relationships pivot on whether or not someone will "change"—either to stop doing something hurtful or bad or to start doing something better? How many self-help books are written to help us change? Or maybe the fact that there are so many self-help books to help us change actually indicates that we really want to change but actually can't!

On the one hand, we are constantly growing and changing. On the other hand, we believe we have a core self, something constant and unchanging, a place deep down that is who we "really are."

Sociologists are interested in "both" of you—the part that feels eternal and constant and the part that is constantly changing. In fact, sociologists may believe that you don't have multiple personality disorder but that these two parts are actually the same person.

Socialization
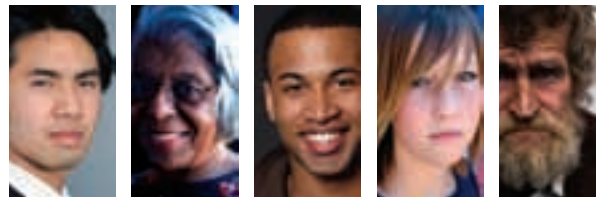
Most of the time, we think of our "self," our identity, as a thing that we possess, like a car. I might decide to hide my "true self," "who I really am," in some situations and reveal it in others. But is there really a single, permanent true self, buried deep inside our minds or our souls? Is there really a "who I really am"?

The sociological perspective sees identity not as a possession but as a process, not a thing that you have but a collection of ideas, desires, beliefs, and behaviors that is constantly changing

The sociological perspective sees identity not as a possession but as a process, not a thing that you have but a collection of ideas, desires, beliefs, and behaviors that is constantly changing as we grow, experience new situations, and interact with other people. We are different today than we were ten years ago, or even last month, and we will be different tomorrow. We are different at home and at school, when talking to our boss and when talking to our grandmother: not just a different front on a

"true self," but a different self, a different person. Our identity is a process, in constant motion.

The sociological perspective may make us feel more creative because we are constantly revising our identity to meet new challenges, but it may also make us feel more insecure and unstable because it argues that there is nothing permanent or inevitable about the self. Change means creative potential, but it also means instability and the potential for chaos.

Socialization and Biology

Our identity is based on the interplay of nature and nurture. *Nature* means our physical makeup: our anatomy and physiology, our genes and chromosomes. *Nurture* means how we grow up: what we learn from our physical environment and our encounters with other people. Nature and nurture both play a role in who we are, but scientists and philosophers have debated for centuries over how much each contributes and how they interrelate.

Before the Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, nature was supreme: Our identity was created by God along with the natural world and could not be changed by mere circumstances. Nurture played virtually no part at all: As many fairy tales assure us, a princess raised in poverty was still a princess. Theologian John Calvin taught that we were predestined to be good or evil, and there was nothing we could do about it. But in the seventeenth century, British philosophers like John Locke rejected the idea that nature is solely responsible for our identity, that biology or God places strict limits on what we can become. They went in the other direction, arguing that we are born as *tabula rasa*—blank slates—and our environment in early childhood determines what we become.

The French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau proposed a compromise. He argued that human beings do inherit identities: All children, and adults in their natural state, are "noble savages," naturally warm, sociable, and peace loving. However, their environment can also change them. Cold industrial civilization teaches children to become competitive, belligerent, and warlike. Thomas Jefferson based his ideas for the American experiment on Locke and Rousseau: "All men are created equal," that is, they derive some basic qualities from nature. However, some are more civilized than others.

In the nineteenth century, the nature side of the debate got a boost when Charles Darwin observed that animal species evolve, or change over time. He was not aware of genetic evolution, so he theorized that they develop new traits to adapt to changing food supplies, climates, or the presence of predators. Because human beings, too, are the result of millions of years of adaptation to the physical changes in their world, identity is a product of biological inheritance, unchangeable (at least during any one individual's lifetime).

But growing up in different environments changes our ideas about who we are and where we belong without having to wait millions of years. For example, a person

who grows up on an Artic tundra, with rough weather and scarce food, will think and act differently from a person who grows up in a tropical paradise, where the weather is mild and food is abundant. The former might consider the world harsh, a struggle for survival, and human nature communal and cooperative. The latter might think life is easy, and it is human nature to compete with everyone else to see who can gather the most coconuts. Or it could go the opposite direction: The tundra dweller might think life is so harsh that you need to compete with everyone else to even have a chance at survival, and the tropical paradise resident might think life is so easy that one can lie back on a hammock, with a pina colada in hand, and wait for the coconuts to drop.

▲ **Socialization varies significantly by race, class, or gender. When White middle-class people see a police officer, they are likely to feel safer; when Black people see a police officer, they often feel more vulnerable—as these California high school boys express (even when confronted by a Hispanic police officer and a Black probation officer).**

The type of environment doesn't determine what sort of "human nature" you will think you have, but the environment definitely plays a part in calculating it. Even identical twins, separated at birth and raised in these two different areas, would think and act differently (Farber, 1982; Loehlin and Nichols, 1976).

The choice is not *either* nature *or* nurture, but both; our biological inheritance, physical surroundings, history, civilization, culture, and personal life experiences all interact to create our identity. Sociologists tend to stress nurture, not because we think nature unimportant but because the ongoing interaction with people and objects in the real world throughout our life course has a profound impact on the creation of individual identity. Biology and the physical world give us the raw materials from which to create an identity, but it is only through human interactions that identity coheres and makes sense to us.

Socialization is the process by which we become aware of ourselves as part of a group, learn how to communicate with others in the group, and learn the behavior expected of us: spoken and unspoken rules of social interaction, how to think, how to feel. Socialization imbues us with a set of norms, values, beliefs, desires, interests, and tastes to be used in specific social situations.

Socialization can take place through formal instruction, but usually we are socialized informally by observing other people's behaviors and reactions. If you are rewarded for a behavior (or see someone else rewarded for it), you will tend to imitate it. If you are punished for a behavior (or see someone else being punished for it), you will tend to avoid it.

Socialization is at its busiest during childhood, but it also happens throughout our lives. Every time we join a new group, make new friends, change residences or jobs, we are being socialized, learning new expectations of the group and modifying our behavior, thoughts, and beliefs accordingly. And others are being socialized by watching us.

Socialization in Action

Most animals are born with all of the information they need to survive already imprinted in their brains. But some, especially the mammals, must spend some time "growing up," learning how to find food and shelter, elude predators, and get along with others. The period of learning and growth usually lasts for just a few months

▲ **Socialization extends long after early childhood. In college, students learn group norms and adopt new identities—in this case, as Florida Gators.**

or, in the case of the higher primates, a few years. But human beings need an extraordinary amount of time, over a third of our lives.

Compare a horse and a human. If you have ever watched a foal being born, in real life or on film, you will recall that it will try to stand up on its wobbly legs shortly after birth. It can walk and run on its own by the next day. After a few weeks, the foal can forage for its own food without depending on its mother's milk. It still has some growing to do, but it is basically as capable as an adult horse.

Human babies do not begin to crawl until about eight months after birth, and they do not take their first hesitant steps for about a year. They can walk and run on their own by the time they are 2 or 3 years old, but they are still virtually helpless, dependent on their parents for food, shelter, and protection from predators (or other dangers) for at least another ten years. If suddenly abandoned in a big city without any adult supervision, they would be unable to survive. Even after puberty, when they have reached physical adulthood, they are often unprepared to buy their own groceries or live by themselves until they have graduated from high school, college, or even graduate school! By that time, about a quarter of their life is over.

Why do human beings require so many years of dependency? What are they learning during all those years? Of course they are developing physically, from childhood to full-grown adulthood, but they are also learning the skills necessary to survive in their community. Some of the instruction is formal, but most of it is informal, through daily interactions with the people and objects around them and learning an ever-changing array of roles and expectations. Socialization works with the basic foundation of our biology to unleash (or stifle) our individual identity.

Feral Children

In Edgar Rice Burroughs's novel *Tarzan of the Apes* (1914), the infant Lord Greystoke is orphaned on the coast of Africa and raised by apes. A childhood without human contact does not affect him at all; the adult Tarzan is fluent in English, French, and many African languages and fully comfortable in human society. But real "feral children," who spend their toddler years in the wilderness, are not so lucky.

The most famous feral child was the "Wild Boy of Aveyron," probably 12 years old when he was discovered in the woods of southern France in 1800. No one knew where he came from or how long he had been alone. He was unable to speak or communicate, except by growling like an animal. He refused to wear clothes. A long, systematic attempt at "civilizing" him was only partially successful. He was toilet trained, and he learned to wear clothes. He exhibited some reasoning ability. But he never learned to speak more than a few words (Lane, 1979; Shattuck, 1980).

Isolated Children

Though feral children may be largely a myth, some children have been isolated from almost all human contact by abusive caregivers. They can also be studied to determine the impact of little or no early childhood socialization.

Did *you* know?

In December 1971, kangaroo hunters on the Nullabor Plain in Australia saw a half-naked woman living in the wild with kangaroos. Rupert Murdoch's newspaper *The News* immediately dispatched a photographer, and for weeks, virtually every English-language newspaper in the world ran stories about this feral creature. It turned out she was a 17-year-old model performing in a hoax thought up by hotel managers to draw tourists to the area.

One of the best-documented cases of an isolated child was "Isabelle," who was born to an unmarried, deaf-mute teenager. The girl's parents were so afraid of scandal that they kept both mother and daughter locked away in a darkened room, where they had no contact with the outside world. In 1938, when she was 6 years old, Isabelle escaped from her confinement. She was unable to speak except to make croaking sounds, she was extremely fearful of strangers, and she reacted to stimuli with the instinct of a wild animal. Gradually she became used to being around people, but she expressed no curiosity about them; it was as if she did not see herself as one of them. But doctors and social scientists began a long period of systematic training. Within a year she was able to speak in complete sentences, and soon she was able to attend school with other children. By the age of 14, she was in the sixth grade, happy and well adjusted. She managed to overcome her lack of early childhood socialization, but only through exceptional effort.

Studies of other isolated children reveal that some can recover, with effort and specialized care, but others suffer permanent damage. It is unclear exactly why, but no doubt some contributing factors are the duration of the isolation, the child's age when the isolation began, the presence of some human contacts (like Isabelle's mother), other abuse accompanying the isolation, and the child's intelligence (Birdsong, 1999; Candland, 1993; Newton, 2003). But lack of socialization has serious consequences; it is socialization that makes human beings human.

How do we know what we know ?

Maternal "Instinct"

When a mother sees her newborn baby for the first time, we expect her to feel a special bond of love and devotion: The maternal "instinct" has kicked in. If she had planned to give the baby up for adoption, she might suddenly change her mind. Even after the child grows up and moves away, she may feel a pang whenever the child is lonely or upset. Suddenly her career, her other relationships, and her other interests dim into insignificance against a life fully and completely devoted to caring for the child. The Romantic poet William Wordsworth said that "maternal sympathy" is a "joyless tie of naked instinct, wound about the heart." But how instinctive is it?

In *Mother Nature: A History of Mothers, Infants, and Natural Selection* (1999), Sarah Hrdy points out that little actual research has been done on mothers and children. Scientists assume that they have an instinct bond based on millions of years of evolution and leave it at that. But even in the animal kingdom, many mothers neglect or abandon their offspring. Rhesus monkeys who have been raised in isolation, without seeing other monkeys mothering their offspring, refuse to nurse or interact with their own. Among humans, women raised by abusive parents tend to be abusive to their own children, and women raised by indifferent parents tend to be indifferent.

Social expectations also play a role in how mothers respond to their children. In some human cultures, mothers are supposed to be cool and unfriendly to their children. In others, they are not supposed to know them at all. Children are raised by uncles and aunts, or by strangers, and the biological mother ignores them. In *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil* (1992) Nancy Scheper-Hughes examines a culture of such grinding poverty that children often die at an early age, and she wonders why their mothers seem indifferent. She concludes that maternal devotion is a luxury that only the affluent can afford. Every now and then the newspapers in India report of parents who deliberately disfigure their children to make them more hideous looking and thus more pitifully "attractive" beggars.

Mothers are certainly capable of profound love and devotion to their children, but so are fathers, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers, sisters, and adults who have no biological connection at all. And not every mother is capable of such devotion. Biological instinct may play a part in the bond between mother and child, but early training at home and social expectations later in life make all the difference.

Primates

Obviously children can't be deliberately raised in isolation for the sake of scientific research, but we can study primates, who require the longest period of socialization other than humans. Psychologists Harry Harlow and Margaret Harlow studied rhesus monkeys raised apart from others of their species and found severe physical and emotional problems. The monkeys' growth was stunted, even when they received adequate nutrition. They were fearful of others in their group and refused to mate or associate with them socially. Those returned after three months managed to reintegrate with the group, but after six months the damage was irreparable. The females who gave birth (through artificial insemination) neglected their offspring, suggesting that "maternal instincts" must be learned through the experience of being nurtured as a child (Griffin and Harlow, 1966; Harlow, Dodsworth, and Harlow, 1965; Harlow et al., 1966; Harlow and Suomi, 1971).

Models of Socialization

Socialization doesn't happen all at once but proceeds in stages. Both psychologists and sociologists have proposed different stages, based on the accomplishment of specific tasks.

Mead and Taking the Role of Others

George Herbert Mead, whose notions of the difference between the "I" and the "me" we discussed in Chapter 3, developed a stage theory of socialization, stages through which children pass as they become better integrated into society.

Mead argued that there are three stages in the development of the perspective of the other:

Imitation is not only "the sincerest form of flattery," it is also a crucial element of socialization, according to George Herbert Mead. Children imitate the behaviors, and adopt the prejudices, of their parents. ▼

1. *Imitation.* Children under the age of 3 can imitate others, but they cannot usually put themselves into the role of others.

2. *Play.* Children aged 3 to 6 pretend to be specific people or kinds of people that they think are important (their parents, doctors, firefighters, Batman). They say and pretend to do things that these people might say and do. But they are learning more than a repertoire of behaviors. Mead saw children's play as crucial to the development of their ability to take the perspective of others. They must anticipate how the people they are pretending to be would think, feel, and behave in various situations, often playing multiple roles: As "parents," for instance, they may play at disciplining their "children," first playing a parent who believes that a misdeed was deliberate, and then a child who insists that it was an accident.

3. *Games.* In early school years, children learn to play games and team sports. Now they must interpret and anticipate how other players will act, who will do what when the ball is hit, kicked, passed, or thrown. Complex games like chess and checkers require strategy, the ability to anticipate the thoughts of others. And, perhaps most important, the children are learning to place value on actions, to locate behavior within a sense of generalized morality (Mead, 1934).

Only in this last phase do children "internalize" the expectations of more and more people, until eventually they can take on the role of their group as a whole—the **generalized other** of their neighborhood, their school, their religion, their country, or all of humanity.

Piaget and the Cognitive Theory of Development

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget (1896–1980) studied children of different ages to see how they solve problems, how they make sense of the world (Piaget, 1928, 1932, 1953, 1955). He argued that their reasoning ability develops in four stages, each building on the last (Table 5.1).

In the *sensorimotor stage* (birth to age 2), children experience the world only through their senses. They do not recognize themselves as beings distinct from their environment; they will not realize that the hand they see is part of their body. They are not usually able to draw abstract conclusions from their observations; they are initially not afraid of heights, for instance, because they do not correlate the objects they have seen falling with the possibility that they might fall. Eventually they learn to differentiate people from objects and to classify some as important (perhaps the faces of their parents) and to minimize or ignore others (the faces of strangers). And they develop depth perception.

In the *preoperational stage* (about ages 2 through 7), children can draw a square to symbolize a house or a stick with a blob at the end to symbolize a tree. Perhaps they even learn the more complex symbols necessary for reading and writing. But they are not yet able to understand common concepts like size, speed, or weight. In one of his most famous experiments, Piaget poured water from a short, fat glass into a tall, skinny glass. Children at the ages of 5 and 6 were unable to determine that the glasses contained the same amount of water; when they saw higher, they thought "more." In this stage they are egocentric, seeing the world only from their position in it.

In the *concrete operational stage* (about ages 7 through 12), children's reasoning is more developed; they can understand size, speed, and weight; they can use numbers. They can perceive causal connections. But their reasoning is still concrete; they can tell you if a specific statement is true or false, such as, "This is a picture of a dog," when it is really a picture of a cat, but they can't explain why it is true or false. They can learn specific rules, but they are not able to reach conclusions based on general principles.

TABLE 5.1

Piaget's Cognitive Stages of Development		
STAGE	**AGE RANGE**	**CHARACTERISTICS**
Sensorimotor stage	Birth–2 years	Still in the sensory phase; can understand only what they see, hear, or touch
Preoperational stage	2–7 years	Capable of understanding and articulating speech and symbols, but can't understand common concepts like weight
Concrete operational stage	7–12 years	Causal relationships are understood, and they understand common concepts, but they can't reach conclusions through general principles
Formal operational stage	12 years and up	Capable of abstract thought and reasoning

In the *formal operational stage* (after about age 12), children are capable of abstract and critical thinking. They can talk about general concepts like "truth." They can reach conclusions based on general principles, and they can solve abstract problems.

Piaget believed, along with other social scientists, that social interaction is the key to cognitive development. Children learn critical and abstract thinking by paying careful attention to other people behaving in certain ways in specific situations. Therefore, they need many opportunities to interact with others.

Kohlberg and Moral Development

According to Piaget, morality is an essential part of the development of cognitive reasoning. Children under 8 have a black-and-white view of morality: Something is either good or bad, right or wrong. They can't see "extenuating circumstances," acts that could be partially right, partially wrong, or right under some circumstances, wrong under others. As they mature, they begin to experience moral dilemmas of their own, and they develop more complex reasoning.

Lawrence Kohlberg built upon the ideas of Piaget to argue that we develop moral reasoning in three stages:

1. *Preconventional (birth to age 9).* In this stage, morality means avoiding punishment and gaining rewards. A child who gets away with a misdeed will not perceive it as bad—the wrongness lies in the punishment, not in the deed itself.

2. *Conventional (ages 9 to 20).* Conventional morality depends on children or teenagers' ability to move beyond their immediate desires to a larger social context. They still want to avoid punishment and gain rewards, but they view some acts as essentially good or bad. It is their "duty" to perform good acts, whether or not there are any immediate rewards, and when they perform bad acts, they feel "guilt,"whether or not there is any immediate punishment.

3. *Postconventional (older than 20).* In this stage, we are able to see relative morality, viewing acts as good in some situations but not others, or acts that are not all good or all bad, but somewhere in between. Kohlberg's famous test of postconventional moral reasoning set up this scenario: Your wife is sick, and you cannot afford the necessary medication. Should you break into the pharmacy and steal it? Stealing is wrong, but does the situation merit it anyway? (Kohlberg, 1971)

In her book *In a Different Voice* (1982), psychologist Carol Gilligan wondered why women usually scored much lower than men on Kohlberg's morality scale. Were they really less moral? As a student of Kohlberg's, she realized that Kohlberg assumed a male subject. He interviewed only men, made up a story about a man breaking into the pharmacy, and assumed that moral reasoning was dictated by masculine-coded justice asking "What are the rules?" instead of by feminine-coded emotion asking "Who will be hurt?" She argued that there is a different guide to moral reasoning, one more often exhibited by women, called "an ethic of care," which is based on people sacrificing their own needs and goals for the good of people around them. While all of us exhibit characteristics of both justice and care as ethical systems, women tend to gravitate toward care and men toward ethics. Gilligan's argument is that by focusing only on justice, we will miss an equally important ethical system.

Most social scientists do not believe that women and men have completely different forms of moral reasoning. Both women and men develop ethics of care

In his studies of the development of moral reasoning, psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg argued that an abstract "ethic of justice," as in this symbol of American jurisprudence, was the highest form of ethical thought. His student, Carol Gilligan, disagreed, arguing that just as important, though not as recognized, was an "ethic of care," in which people's moral decision making is based on how it will actually affect people. ▼

and ethics of justice. These systems are not gender specific. They are simply different ways of solving moral dilemmas.

Freud and the Development of Personality

Psychiatrist Sigmund Freud (1856–1939), the founder of psychoanalysis, believed that the self consisted of three elements. Of course, they are always interrelated:

1. *The id.* The inborn drive for self-gratification, the **id** is pure impulse, without worrying about social rules, consequences, morality, or other people's reactions; so if unbridled, it could get you into trouble. If we were pure id, we would go into a restaurant and grab anything that looks good, even if it was on someone else's plate, or proposition sexual favors from anyone we found attractive, regardless of the social situation.

2. *The superego.* The **superego** is internalized norms and values, the "rules" of our social group, learned from family, friends, and social institutions. It provokes feelings of shame or guilt when we break the "rules," pride and self-satisfaction when we follow them. Just as pure id would be disastrous, pure superego would turn us into robots, unable to think creatively, make our own decisions, or rebel against unjust rules.

3. *The ego.* The balancing force between the id and the superego, or impulses and social rules, the **ego** channels impulses into socially acceptable forms. Sometimes it can go wrong, creating neuroses or psychoses (Figure 5.1).

Because the id can never have everything it wants, the task of socialization is twofold. First the ego must be strong enough to handle being rebuffed by reality and able to find acceptable substitutes for what the id originally wanted. (Psychoanalysis is supposed to strengthen the ego to handle this task.) And second, the superego must be strong enough to prevent the id from going after what it wants in the first place. Thus, the superego is the home of guilt, shame, and morality. In one of his most famous passages, Freud described this process:

> The ego, driven by the id, confined by the superego, repulsed by reality, struggles to master its . . . task of bringing about harmony among the forces working in and upon it, and we can understand how it is that so often we cannot suppress a cry, "Life is not easy!"

Freud believed that each child passes through three stages of development to become a healthy adult man or woman. These stages are based on the strategies that the ego devises to obtain gratification for its bodily urges.

1. *The oral stage.* At birth, the infant derives gratification from breast-feeding, which Freud regards as a sensually pleasurable activity.

2. *The anal stage.* After being weaned, the baby derives gratification from urination and defecation. These bodily functions are a source of pleasure, until we are toilet trained (repressed).

These two stages are the same for both boys and girls. In the beginning of the third stage, though, they separate. Both boys and girls continue to see their mothers as the source of gratification and also as the object of identification. But their tasks diverge sharply.

FIGURE 5.1
The Human Psyche According to Freud
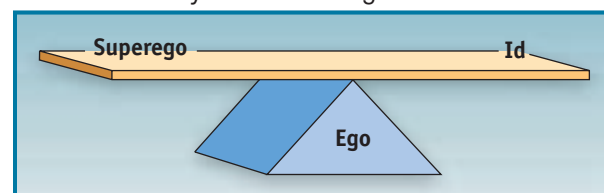
3. *The Oedipal stage.* The boy desires his mother sexually and identifies with her. Fearing his father's wrath at this sexual competition, the boy renounces his identification with her, identifies with his father, and thus becomes "masculine." He is now capable of maturity as a man and, simultaneously, will be heterosexual.

The girl's tasks are different. She must sustain her identification with her mother and come to see that her source of gratification is not in having sex but in making a baby. By remaining identified with her mother, she becomes "feminine," and by renouncing her "masculine" sexual drives, she will be capable of heterosexuality as well.

The key insight from Freud's stage theory is that we understand sexual orientation to be linked to gender. We assume that effeminate men and masculine women are gay or lesbian. Whether or not that is true (it's actually not), we owe that stereotypic assumption to Freud.

Problems with Stage Theories

Stage theories are extremely popular. Many best-sellers describe the "seasons of a man's life," "passages," or "the fountain of age." And we often use stage theory to describe a problem, preferring to believe that someone will "grow out of" a problematic behavior than to believe that such a behavior is part of who they "really are." It is interesting, and often amusing, to try to fit our own experiences into the various theorists' stages of human development, but the whole idea of stages has some problems in the real world:

- The stages are rigidly defined, but many of the challenges are lifelong. Erikson (1959) puts the conflict between being part of a group and having a unique identity in adolescence, but every time we join a new club, get a new job, move to a new town, or make new friends, we face the same conflict, even in old age.
- It is not clear that failure to meet the challenges of one stage means permanent failure. Maybe we can fix it during the next stage.
- The theorists usually maintain that the stages are universal, but do people in all cultures and all time periods really develop in the same way? In cultures where there are no schools, is there a preadolescence? In many parts of the world, the life expectancy is about 40; are middle adulthood and old age the same there as in the United States, where we can expect to live to about 80? Even within the same culture, people do not develop in the same way. Piaget argued that the formal operational stage of abstract reasoning begins during adolescence, but Kohlberg and Gilligan (1971) found that 30 percent of the U.S. population never develop it at all.

Two other problems with stage theories result from the fact that we assume that one passes through a stage fully and never returns to that stage. But we are also constantly cross-cutting stages, moving back and forth. Socialization turns out to be a lifelong and fluid process.

There are two other socialization processes that are important to consider.

Anticipatory Socialization. Even while you occupy one status, you may begin to anticipate moving to the next stage and begin a future-oriented project of acting *as if* you were already there. **Anticipatory socialization** is when you begin to

We also socialize ourselves in anticipation of the positions we hope to occupy. This woman, fresh out of college, is on her way to a job interview on Wall Street—and she already looks the part. ▼

enact the behaviors and traits of the status that you expect to occupy. For example, young adolescents might decide to begin drinking coffee, in anticipation of the onset of adulthood, when they will drink coffee the same as grownups do. Often people begin to imitate those who occupy the statuses *to which we believe we will eventually belong*. This can result in some confusion and even some anger from your friends, especially if you start acting like a "snob" because you are anticipating becoming rich when you graduate from college and join the Fortune 500.

Resocialization.   Moving from one stage to another doesn't happen easily, but we often have to relearn elementary components of the role when we enter a new status. **Resocialization** involves learning new sets of values, behaviors, and attitudes that are different from those you previously held. Resocialization is also something that happens all through your life, and failure to adequately resocialize into a new status can have dire consequences. For example, let's say you are a happy-go-lucky sort of person, loud and rambunctious, and you are arrested for disturbing the peace and sent to jail. Failure to resocialize to a docile, obedient, and silent prisoner can result in serious injury.

One of the more shocking moments in resocialization happens to college students during their first year in school. Expectations in college are often quite different from high school, and one must "resocialize" to these new institutional norms. When resocialization is successful, one moves easily into a new status. When it is unsuccessful, or only partially realized, you will continue to stick out uneasily.

Agents of Socialization

Agents of socialization are people, groups, or social institutions that socialize new members, either formally (as in lessons about traffic safety in school) or informally (as in cartoon characters on television behaving according to social expectations). **Primary socialization,** which occurs during childhood, gives us basic behavioral patterns but allows for adaptation and change later on. **Secondary socialization** occurs throughout life, every time we start a new class or a new job, move to a new neighborhood, make new friends, or change social roles, allowing us to abandon old, outdated, or unnecessary behavior patterns, giving us new behavioral patterns necessary for the new situation.

Socialization is not necessarily a positive ideal, helping the child adjust to life in the best of all possible worlds. Some of the norms we are socialized into are oppressive, shortsighted, and wrong. We can be socialized into believing stereotypes, into hating out-groups, into violence and abuse. "You've got to be taught to hate and fear" is a well-known line from a song in the Broadway musical *South Pacific* (1958). Children of different cultures might be curious about differences they see, even somewhat uneasy, but they aren't biologically programmed to commit genocide as adults. That is learned.

For a long time psychologists and sociologists argued that the major agent of primary socialization was the family, with school and religion becoming increasingly important as childhood proceeded. These three institutions—family, school, religion—and the three primary actors within those institutions—parents, teachers, clergy— were celebrated as the central institutions and agents of socialization.

Socialization is not always positive. One can be socialized to hate and fear; indeed, you can be socialized to be a ruthless killer as were many child soldiers in the ethnic conflict in Sierra Leone. ▼

Of course, they are central; no institutions are more important. But from the point of view of the child, these three institutional agents—parents, teachers, clergy—are experienced as "grownups, grownups, and grownups." Asking children today about their socialization reveals that two other institutions—mass media and peer groups—are also vital in the socialization process. These two institutions become increasingly important later in childhood and especially in adolescence. Later, as adults, government, the workplace, and other social institutions become important. Agents of socialization tend to work together, promoting the same norms and values, and they socialize each other as well as the developing individual. It is often impossible to tell where the influence of one ends and the influence of another begins, and even a list seems arbitrary. (Each of these institutions is so important that we return to each one in a separate chapter.)

Family

There are many different child-rearing systems in cultures around the world. In the United States, we are most familiar with nuclear families (father, mother, children) and extended families (parents, children, uncles, aunts, grandparents), but in some cultures everyone in the tribe lives together in a longhouse; or men, women, and children occupy separate dormitories. Sometimes the biological parents have little responsibility for raising their children or are even forbidden from seeing them. But there is always a core of people, parents, brothers, sisters, and others, who interact with the children constantly as they are growing, giving them their first sense of self and setting down their first motivations, social norms, values, and beliefs. From our family we receive our first and most enduring ideas about who we are and where we are going in life.

Our family also gives us our first statuses, our definitions of ourselves as belonging to a certain class, nationality, race, ethnicity, religion, and gender. In traditional

How do we know
what we know ?

"Be Like Me/Don't Be Like Me"

For decades, sociologists believed that parents socialized their children to grow up like them; that is, parents saw themselves as positive role models for their children. And that was true for middle-class parents. Middle-class fathers see themselves as role models for their children, saying, in effect, "You can grow up to be like me if you study and work hard."

But this isn't true for the working class. In a landmark study, *The Hidden Injuries of Class* (1993), sociologists Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb interviewed hundreds of working-class women and men, many of whom were immigrants or children of immigrants. They found that these people felt inadequate, sometimes like frauds or imposters, ambivalent about their success. They had worked hard but hadn't succeeded, and because they were fervent believers in the American Dream—where even a poor boy can grow up to be the president—they blamed themselves for their failure. Sennett and Cobb attributed this to "status incongruity"—living in two worlds at the same time.

And how did they manage to ward off despair when they were at fault for their own failures? They deferred success from their own lives to the lives of their children. They worked at difficult, dirty, and dangerous jobs not because they were failures but because they were sacrificing to give their children a better life. They were noble and honorable.

But they saw themselves not as role models to be emulated but as cautionary tales to be avoided. "You could grow up to be like me if you don't study and work hard," they were saying. It turns out that whether you see yourself as a positive or a negative role model depends on what class you belong to (Sennett and Cobb, 1993).

societies, these remain as permanent parts of our self-concept. We would live in the same village as our parents, work at their occupation, and never aspire to an economic success greater than they enjoyed. In modern societies, we are more likely to be mobile, choosing occupations and residences different from those of our parents, having different political and religious affiliations, changing our religions. But even so, the social statuses from our childhood often affect the rest of our lives. People raised in the Methodist Church who later join the Roman Catholic Church usually think of themselves not as "Catholic" but as "ex-Methodist, now Catholic."

Studies show that different sorts of families socialize their children in different ways. Melvin Kohn (1959, 1963, 1966, 1983, 1986, 1989, 1993) found that working-class families are primarily interested in teaching the importance of outward conformity—of neatness, cleanliness, following the rules, and staying out of trouble—while middle-class families focus on developing children's curiosity, creativity, and good judgment. Lower-class families are similar to working-class families in favoring conformity and obedience, and the affluent follow the middle class in favoring creativity and good judgment. Kohn (1977) found that these differences are determined by the pattern of the parents' jobs. Blue-collar workers are closely supervised in their jobs, so they tend to socialize their children into the obedience model, but skilled tradesmen, who have more freedom, tend to socialize their children into the creativity model.

Socialization in the family is rarely the result of intentional training but rather happens through the kind of environment the adults create. Whether children see themselves as smart or stupid, loved or simply tolerated, whether they see the world as safe or dangerous, depends largely on what happens at home during the first few years of their lives.

▲ **One of the chief socializing institutions is religion. Here, a Jewish family celebrates Passover, which requires the telling of the story of Exodus to each generation.**

Education

In modern societies, we spend almost a third of our lives in school. Seventy-five percent of the U.S. population graduate from high school after 12 or 13 years of education, and 25 percent complete four or five years of college. Graduate school or professional school can add another five to ten years. During this time, we are learning facts, concepts, and skills, but education also has a latent function, a "hidden curriculum" that instills social norms and values, such as the importance of competition. Education has an enormous impact on our sense of self, and it is nearly as important as family in instilling us with our first social statuses. For example, high school curricula are typically divided into "academic" and "practical" subjects. Most students are channeled into one or the other on the basis of their race or class, thus ensuring that White middle-class children prepare for college and middle-class careers, while many non-White and working-class children prepare for working-class jobs.

Education socializes us not only into social class, but into race, gender, and sexual identity statuses. Jonathan Kozol (1967) documented the "destruction of the hearts and minds" of African American children in the Boston public schools in the 1960s, where teachers and administrators were overtly prejudiced. But even teachers and administrators who are not prejudiced privilege in-groups and marginalize or ignore out-groups, often in the interest of "not rocking the boat."

Religion

The United States is the most religious nation in the Western world: Forty percent of the population attend religious services every week, and nine out of ten have a weekly conversation with God. Nearly 60 percent pray every day or several times a day—higher for Blacks and Latinos (Pew Forum, 2007). But we are socialized into religious belief in many places besides churches, mosques, and temples. Often we pray or hear religious stories at home. Nearly two-thirds of Americans with Internet access have used it for religious purposes (Hoover, Clark, and Rainie, 2004). In school, we recite the Pledge of Allegiance, which since the mid-twentieth century has included the phrase "one nation under God," and increasingly school boards are requiring that biblical creation be taught along with (or instead of) evolution in science class as an explanation for the origin of the world. Every political candidate is expected to profess publicly his or her religious faith; an atheist would have a very difficult time getting elected to any office. (In fact, a Gallup Poll found that more people say they'd vote for a homosexual for president than would vote for an atheist [Adler, 2006].)

Religion is an important agent of socialization because it provides a divine motivation for instilling social norms in children and adults. Why do we dress, talk, and behave in a certain way? Why do we refuse to eat pork when our neighbors seem to like it? Why are we not allowed to watch television or go to school dances? Why are men in charge of making money, and women in charge of child care? Why are most of the elite jobs occupied by White people? Religion may teach us that these social phenomena are not arbitrary, based on outdated tradition or on in-groups competing with out-groups. They are based on God's law. However, when we are socialized into believing that our social norms come directly from God, it is easy to believe that the social norms of other groups come directly from the devil. Sometimes we even receive formal instruction that members of out-groups are evil monsters.

What
do *you*
think ?

MyLab

Belief in an Afterlife

Religious groups are one of the most salient agents of socialization. Most people are born into a particular religious group and are socialized from birth in the beliefs of that group. Beliefs are ideas about what is true, so they are very difficult, if not impossible, to argue empirically. What we can do sociologically is look at how other social factors influence beliefs. In this question, we will look at how social class and gender are related to belief in life after death. So, what do you think?

Do you believe in life after death?

○ Yes, definitely
○ Yes, probably
○ No, probably not
○ No, definitely not

See the back of the chapter to compare your answers to national survey data.

In traditional societies, religious affiliation is an ascribed status. You are born into a religion, and you remain in it throughout your life, regardless of how enthusiastically you practice or how fervently you believe (or if you believe at all). Several of the religions practiced in modern societies continue to be ascribed. For instance, if you are born Roman Catholic and later decide that you don't believe in the Roman Catholic Church anymore, you are simply a "lapsed Catholic." However, in modern society, religions operate in a "religious marketplace," with hundreds and even thousands of different groups competing for believers and the freedom to select the religious group that will best fit into our other social roles.

Peers

At school, in the neighborhood, at our clubs, and eventually at work, we develop many groups of friends, wider groups of acquaintances, and a few enemies. In modern societies, our **peer groups** (the friends) are usually age specific—a third grader hardly deigns to associate with a second grade "baby" and would be ostracized by a group of fourth graders. As adults, we expand the boundaries of age a bit, but still, 50-year-olds rarely buddy around with 30-year-olds. Peer groups also tend to be homogeneous, limited to a single neighborhood, race, religion, social class, gender, or other social status. The smart kids may sit at one table in the cafeteria, the jocks at another, and the heavy metal fans at a third.

Peer groups have an enormous socializing influence, especially during middle and late childhood. Peer groups provide an enclave where we can learn the skills of social interaction and the importance of group loyalty, but the enclaves are not always safe and caring. Peers teach social interaction through coercion, humiliation, and bullying as well as through encouragement, and group loyalty often means being condescending, mean, or even violent to members of out-groups (Figure 5.2).
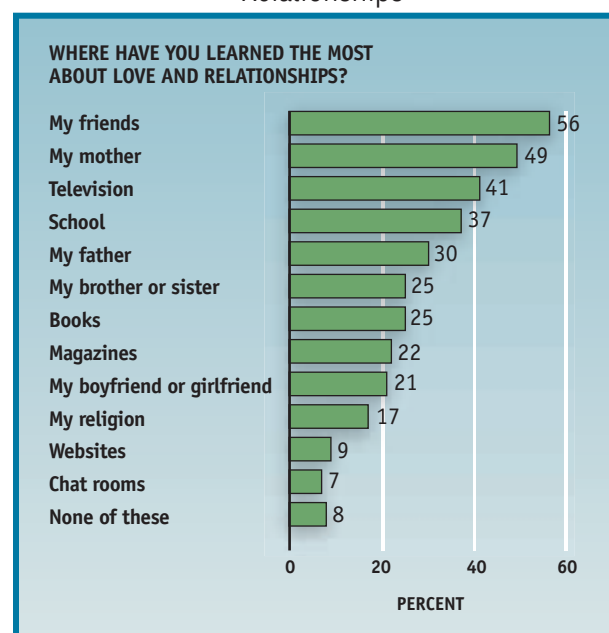
Sometimes peer groups resist the socialization efforts of family and schools by requiring different, contradictory norms and values: rewarding smoking, drinking, and vandalism, for example, or punishing good grades and class participation. But more often they merely reinforce the socialization that children (and adults) receive elsewhere. Barrie Thorne (1993) looked at gender polarization (separating boys and girls) among elementary school students and found that peer groups and teachers worked together. The teachers rewarded boys for being "masculine"—aggressive, tough, and loud—and girls for being "feminine"—shy, quiet, and demure. Peer groups merely reinforced gender polarization. Boys' groups rewarded athletic ability, coolness, and toughness; and girls' groups rewarded physical appearance, including the ability to use makeup and select fashionable clothing.

We continue to have peer groups throughout adulthood. Often we engage in anticipatory socialization, learning the norms and values of a group that we haven't joined yet. For example, we may mimic the clothing style and slang of a popular peer group in the hope that we will be accepted.

Mass Media

We spend all day, every day, immersed in mass media—popular books and magazines, radio, television, movies, video

FIGURE 5.2 Peer Socialization and Love Relationships

WHERE HAVE YOU LEARNED THE MOST ABOUT LOVE AND RELATIONSHIPS?

	Percent
My friends	56
My mother	49
Television	41
School	37
My father	30
My brother or sister	25
Books	25
Magazines	22
My boyfriend or girlfriend	21
My religion	17
Websites	9
Chat rooms	7
None of these	8

Source: Harris Interactive YouthQuerySM Monthly Omnibus, December 2002 data, published in the Trends & Tudes Newsletter, Feb. 2003, "Love and Romance and America's Youth," Harris Interactive Inc. All rights reserved. Reprinted with permission.

Sociology and our World

Race, Gender, and Peer Approval

What we do in our leisure time depends in large part on what we think our peers think of that activity. If we think they approve, we're more likely to do it; if we think they disapprove, we're less likely to do it.

But our judgment depends a lot on race and gender. Researcher Steven Philipp surveyed 421 eleventh and twelfth graders in a school district in Florida. He asked them to evaluate which leisure activities they thought were approved by their peer groups. Philipp found significant racial differences for half the items. Blacks showed stronger peer approval for playing basketball, going to the mall, singing in a choir, and dancing; White adolescents showed stronger approval for playing soccer, horseback riding, waterskiing, camping, fishing, and golfing. Blacks and Whites had equally strong approval for watching television, and the groups had equally strong negative ratings for bowling, reading, using a computer, collecting stamps, playing a musical instrument, and going to a museum.

Gender differences were much higher between White girls and boys than between Black girls and boys. It may be that for White adolescents, gender is a more important agent of peer socialization, while for Black adolescents, race may be more important (Philipp, 1998).

games, the Internet, and even sociology textbooks. While media use varies somewhat with race and ethnicity, gender, education, and income, overall young people in the United States spend about six and a half hours every day with one form or another of mass media (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2004a). It is an important agent of socialization from childhood right through adulthood.

Television is probably the dominant form of mass media across the developed world. Viewing is dependent on status: Generally, the higher the socioeconomic class, the less television viewing. Women watch more than men, African Americans more than White Americans. But children of all classes, races, and genders watch the most: The Kaiser Family Foundation says that of the five and a half hours that children aged 2 through 18 spend consuming mass media every day, nearly three hours are spent watching television (the rest of the time is devoted to listening to music, reading, playing video games, and using the computer).

Many scholars and parents are worried about the impact of heavy television watching, arguing that it makes children passive, less likely to use their imagination (Christakis, 2004; Healy, 1990), and more likely to have short attention spans. But other scholars disagree. Television has been around for over 50 years, so the worried parents watched themselves, when they were children, with no catastrophic loss of creativity or rise in mass murder; in earlier generations, similar fears were voiced about radio, movies, comic books, and dime novels.

Video games are increasingly becoming an important form of mass media. The vast majority of players are children and teenagers, making video games nearly the equal of television in popularity. (The genres aren't strictly separate; the same characters and situations may appear in television, movies, comic books, and video games simultaneously.) Adult observers have the same sorts of concerns as they have with television: lack of creativity and decreased attention span, plus rampant sexism. (Women are usually portrayed as passive victims who must be rescued, and those who are competent adventurers, such as Lara Croft, Tomb Raider, are leggy supermodels rather than competent adventurers.) But some studies show that video games develop logic, reasoning, and motor reflexes, skills useful in a technological future (Johnson, 2005).

Did you know?

The average American home has more television sets than people—there are 2.73 sets in a typical American home and only 2.55 people—plus 1.8 VCRs, 3.1 radios, 2.6 tape players, 2.1 CD players, 1.4 video game players, and at least 1 computer. Fifty-eight percent of families with children have the TV on during dinner, and 42 percent of families with children are "constant television households"—that is, they have a TV on virtually all day, whether or not anyone is actually watching it.

FIGURE 5.3 Internet Distribution around the World

IP Addresses Per Dot
- +1000
- <999
- <500
- <100
- <50
- <10
- <10
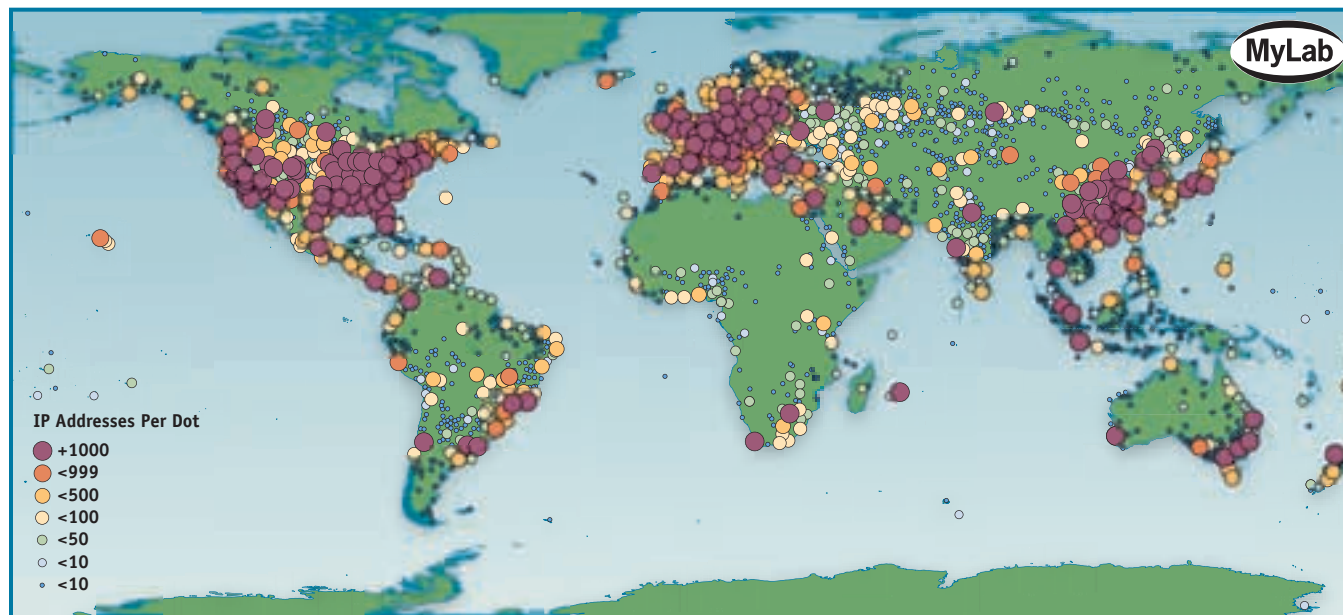
Source: From Ipligence.com, 2007 (ipligence.com/worldmap/).

For teenagers, music and magazines play as great a role as television in socialization. Popular songs, aimed mostly at a teenage audience, socialize expectations regarding gender and sexual expression, and magazines aimed mostly at girls are full of articles expressing gender polarization and compulsory heterosexuality: They are mostly about how to select fashions, use makeup, and date boys.

The media perfectly illustrate the dynamic tensions of globalization and multiculturalism. On the one hand, media are so complex and diverse that different groups can engage almost exclusively with "their" media: There are television networks, radio stations, video games, computer websites, magazines, and newspapers for just about every single "demographic" imaginable. So, it appears that multiculturalism in the media is really the fragmentation of media into a plentiful array of demographic niches.

But, on the other hand, people all over the world are increasingly meeting in computer chat rooms, on Facebook and other global media network sites, on global access computer gaming sites, in video conferences, and on global telephone connections (Figure 5.3). The media bring us together across every conceivable boundary and also *at the same time* fragment us into discrete subgroups.

The Workplace

We spend about one-third of our lives in the workplace, and we often define ourselves most essentially by our jobs: If you ask someone "What are you?" he or she will probably reply "I am an architect" or "I am a factory worker" rather than "I am somebody's brother." In traditional societies, your job was less a marker of identity because there were only a few specialized jobs: a religious sage, a tribal chief, and perhaps a few skilled artisans. Everyone else in the community did everything necessary for survival, from gathering crops to spinning cloth to caring for the children.

In modern societies we receive specialized training, and we have jobs that usually require us to leave home and family and spend all day in a workplace (although

staying home to take care of the household is often considered a job, too). In many ways, workplaces are similar to schools: Supervisors assign tasks like teachers, and there are peer groups (those we interact with all the time), acquaintances, and sometimes enemies. We are expected to behave in a "professional" and "business-like" fashion, but depending on the social class of the job, what that means varies tremendously.

Socialization and the Life Course

Some of the transitions we experience throughout our lives are biologically fixed and marked by physiological changes: Puberty marks the beginning of adolescence, for instance, and menopause or gray hair the beginning of old age. But the stages of the life course are primarily social constructions, differing widely from culture to culture and strongly influenced by statuses like race, class, gender, and nationality and by material circumstances. For instance, in some cultures 15-year-olds are considered fully grown adults and in others still children. In some cultures people in their 40s are considered elderly and in others still in the prime of their life. Even the physiological changes differ: The age of menarche (the first menstruation) in girls steadily decreased throughout the twentieth century, and in modern societies, old age no longer begins at the age of 40. (We detail each of these stages in significantly more detail in the chapter on aging.)

Childhood (Birth to Puberty)

In modern societies, we think that we can instantly distinguish children from other sorts of people, and not only because they are smaller. We assume that they have interests, abilities, beliefs, and goals that differ tremendously from those of teenagers and adults. They do not work; they have no interest in dating or romance; they play with toys and go to school. They are fragile and innocent. They must be shielded from the bad aspects of life, like sex and death. They need constant adult supervision and care.

Although this notion of childhood seems like common sense, it is not universal. It does not occur in every culture, and even in the West, it has evolved relatively recently, during the past few centuries. In earlier eras, children were considered miniature adults. As soon as they were able to walk, they went to work alongside the adults, merely getting more difficult and complex tasks as they grew older. There are countries in the world today where children still work full time, sometimes in physically demanding and dangerous jobs.

Adolescence (Roughly the Teen Years)

Biological changes that occur in puberty are universal, but the timing changes from culture to culture and over time. A century ago, most girls did not experience menarche (their first menstruation) until they were 17 or 18, but today it often comes at age 11 or 12. The cultural boundaries of adolescence are even more variable.

Psychologists early in the twentieth century began to define adolescence as a stage of life in modern societies, when children, especially from affluent groups, need training to compete in specialized job markets, so they stay out of the workforce for several years past puberty. During this time, they have a great deal of freedom to make their own choices about their friends and activities, and they often explore their political, social, sexual, and religious identities: You are more likely to leave

your religion, or convert to a new religion, in adolescence than at any other time in your life. But they still must live under the supervision of adults, parents or guardians, who have the final say in decisions. They do not have the responsibilities of adults, nor do they enjoy many adult privileges. In the United States, most adolescents do not work full time; their criminal acts receive different punishments from those of adults; and they are forbidden from marrying, having sexual relations, signing contracts, purchasing real estate, entering military service, and drinking alcohol.

In earlier eras, a girl became a woman when she married, usually in her early 20s, and a boy became a man when he entered the working world—on the farm, in the factory, or apprenticed to a trade. This usually occurred before his fifteenth birthday. As late as 1920, only 16 percent of 17-year-old males—one in six—graduated from high school. Yet increasingly, high school became the defining experience for children of the middle and professional classes. Between 1880 and 1900, the number of public high schools in the United States increased by more than 750 percent.

The boundary between childhood or adolescence and adulthood is marked by many milestones, called rites of passage. In early societies, rites of passage were grueling endurance tests that took weeks or months. Modern societies tend to make them festive occasions, ceremonies like the Bar and Bat Mitzvah for Jewish 13-year-olds, or parties like the *quinceañera* for 15-year-old Hispanic girls. There are also many symbolic rites of passage, like getting a driver's license and graduating from high school.

Did *you* know?

Initiation rituals provide a cultural mechanism for members of a particular culture, usually males, to pass from one developmental stage (youth) to adulthood. In some East African cultures, for example, 12-year-old boys live alone and isolated for four years. When they return, they are circumcised without anesthesia by a stone knife. They must not flinch. Pueblo Indian (Hopi, Zuni) kachinas whip the boys with yucca whips until they bleed (kachinas are animal-human hybrids, also elders in disguise). Others use nasal incision to stimulate bleeding.

Like these other cultures, American adolescent males have devised numerous risky and often grotesque ways to initiate each other into manhood. But, unlike other cultures, American adolescents perform these by themselves. Everywhere else, initiation is undertaken only with adult supervision to make sure it remains safe and doesn't get out of control.

Sociology and our World

The Violent Years?

Adolescence is often portrayed as a time of turmoil and uncertainty, as people who used to be children but are not yet adults struggle to find their place in the world. The generation gap between adolescents and adults has been bewailed for centuries. In the 1960s, commentators often countered complaints that contemporary youth were uniquely crazy by quoting this passage:

> Our youth today now love luxury; they have bad manners, contempt for authority, disrespect for older people. Children nowadays are tyrants, they no longer rise when elders enter the room, they contradict their parents, they chatter before company, gobble their food and tyrannize their teachers. They have execrable manners, flout authority, have no respect for their elders. What kind of awful creatures will they be when they grow up?

The "punch line" was that the passage was written by Socrates, about 500 BCE.

Ever since G. Stanley Hall's massive, two-volume tome, *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relation to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education* (1904) mapped out a distinct period for these postchild/preadult youths, parents and psychologists have worried that adolescence is a conflict-ridden stage of psychological development, filled with emotional upheaval and seismically shifting emotions. After World War II, the din of concern reached a crescendo in the national consciousness when near-universal high school attendance, suburbanization, and the new affluence of the Eisenhower years all converged to create a definable new segment of society, "teenagers" (the term was first used in 1944).

However, numerous studies show that most adolescents are no more uncertain than adults, and their lives are not particularly tormented (Males, 1996, 1998; Offer, 2004). With the support of parents, other adults, and peers, they move easily and happily from childhood to adulthood.

▲ **Old age was historically a stage of life characterized by boredom, loneliness, and poverty. As people are living longer, they are also re-creating communities, and, in those countries with adequate social security, living happier and healthier—as well as longer—lives.**

Adulthood

Most social scientists measure the transition to adulthood by the completion of five demographic markers: (1) Complete your education; (2) get a job; (3) get married; (4) leave your parents' home and move into your own; and (5) have a baby. Fifty years ago, all these transitions would have been accomplished by the early 20s. But today, they are more likely to be completed by one's early 30s. So developmental psychologists have identified a new stage of development, *young adulthood,* that is perched between adolescence and full adulthood.

Young adulthood (from the late teens to about 30) has no roots in physiological growth. It is a social category, based on the modern need to postpone full adulthood for years past adolescence. The first young adults were college and professional students, who would not work full time or marry until they reached their mid-20s, but in contemporary society many people feel a sort of adolescence until they reach their 30s, or even longer (Goldschneider and Waite, 1991): They are not "settled down" into permanent careers, residences, and families. They are still exploring their sexual, political, and religious affiliations.

In contemporary society many people change careers several times during their lives, each requiring new periods of training, moves to new cities, and new sets of social acquaintances, so the stability and long association we expect from "adulthood" may be replaced by constant beginnings.

From young adulthood, one passes into "middle age," roughly from age 30 to age 60. Today, there is more anxiety and tension surrounding middle age than in the past. When so much mass media glorify youth, it is easy for people in middle age to think of themselves as deficient or diminished.

In earlier times, middle-aged persons maintained closer connections with kin and followed the routines of work that were the same as those around them. Now, we tend to go out on our own, choosing careers different from those of our kin and living far away. Our interpersonal connections depend on individual initiative, not on parents, community, and tradition, and it is easy to get lost along the way.

Above age 60 has generally been referred to as "old age." In earlier cultures, few people lived to see their old age, and those who did were revered because they had the job of passing on the wisdom of earlier generations to the later. To call someone "Grandfather" or "Grandmother" was to put them at the pinnacle of social status. In industrialized societies, their children were usually working at jobs they knew nothing about, using technology that didn't even exist when they were young, so they tended to lack social status. Nowadays, we may say, "Get out of the way, Grandpa!" as an insult to an older person who is moving too slowly for us. On *The Simpsons,* Homer's father Abraham is constantly ridiculed for his physical disabilities and for being forgetful, longwinded, narrow minded, and fantasy prone.

Because older people often move to retirement communities and nursing homes far from their children, grandchildren, and friends, they must make social connections all over again, and many find old age to be the loneliest time of their lives. It is also the poorest, because they are not working, and their only source of income may be a small pension or Social Security check.

The longevity revolution in industrialized countries means that most people can expect to live 20 or more years in old age. Sixty-five no longer seems doddering and

decrepit, and the mandatory retirement age has been raised to 70 in some states or eliminated altogether. Will such a long life span transform old age, restoring to it some of its lost prestige? The longevity revolution has ushered in new terms for the aged, as we will see later in this book, from the "young old" to the "old old." If 30 is the new 20, then today 90 is the new 70.

Gender Socialization

We are not only socialized into the norms and expectations of age categories. We are socialized into all of our roles and statuses. When we get a new job, we are socialized into the spoken and unspoken rules of the job: Do you eat your lunch at your desk, in the employee lounge, or out at a restaurant? Are you supposed to discuss your personal life with your co-workers or limit your interaction to polite greetings? Should you profess an interest in opera or the Superbowl? The socialization is usually into what "should" be done, not what "must" be done. You will not be thrown out onto the street for mentioning the Superbowl when the social norm is to like opera, but you will find your prestige lessened. You will be less likely to belong to the most coveted peer groups and less likely to rise to positions of leadership in the group.

Socialization into gender is one of the most profound and thorough, occupying a great deal of the time and energy of a great many agents of socialization throughout the life course. From the moment babies return from the hospital in pink or blue blankets, or wear their first outfits marked with "Daddy's Little Princess" or "Daddy's Little Slugger," they undergo **gender socialization** to accept two entirely different sets of social norms. Boys are expected to be tough, aggressive, loud, and athletic, and girls to be sensitive, passive, quiet, and nonathletic.

Throughout childhood, both groups are punished for transgressions by every agent of socialization: parents, teachers, peers. Perhaps the boys get more punishment. Girls who are tough, aggressive, loud, and athletic are labeled "tomboys," while boys who are sensitive, passive, quiet, and not good at sports are labeled with the much worse term "sissies." The difference is one of gender privilege. Because "masculine" things are powerful, girls who do "masculine" things may be praised as just trying to increase their prestige, but boys who do "feminine" things are "acting like a girl"; that is, they get less prestige.

Growing up does not lessen the intensity of gender socialization. We are bombarded with media images every day about appropriate masculinity and femininity. On television, Jerry Seinfeld orders salad on a date; his friends ridicule him, and

◀ **Boys may be called "sissies" when they defy gender expectations (as in this image from the movie *Billy Elliot*) and girls called "tomboys." But sanctions for gender nonconformity are more severe for boys than for girls.**

How do we know
what we know
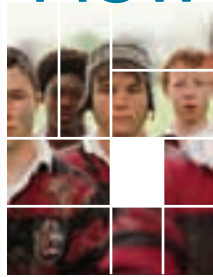
Gender and the Boy Code

In their best-selling books about boys, psychologists such as William Pollack (1999), James Garbarino (1999), Michael Thompson and Dan Kindlon (2000), and others argue that from an early age, boys are taught to refrain from crying, to suppress their emotions, never to display vulnerability. As a result, they argue, boys feel effeminate not only if they express their emotions, but if they even feel emotions.

Young boys begin to embrace what Pollack calls "the boy code" by age 4 or 5, when they enter kindergarten, and they get a second jolt when they hit adolescence. Think of the messages boys get: "Stand on your own two feet! Don't cry! Don't be a sissy! Don't be a mama's boy!" As one boy in Pollack's book summarizes it: "Shut up and take it, or you'll be sorry."

Consider the parallel for girls. Carol Gilligan (1982) describes how assertive, confident, and proud young girls "lose their voices" when they hit adolescence. At the same moment, Pollack notes, boys become more confident, even beyond their abilities. You might even say that boys find their voices, but they are inauthentic voices of bravado, risk taking, and foolish violence. The boy code teaches them that they are supposed to be in power, and they begin to act like it. What is the cause of all this posturing and posing? It's not testosterone, but privilege. In adolescence both boys and girls get their first real dose of gender inequality. Therefore, girls suppress ambition, boys inflate it.

The boy code leaves boys disconnected from many of their emotions and keeps them from sharing their feelings with their peers. As they grow older, they feel disconnected from adults, as well, unable to experience the guidance toward maturity that adults can bring. When they turn to anger and violence it is because they believe that these are the only acceptable forms of emotional expression.

Where do they learn the boy code (or, as teenagers and adults, the guy code)? From teachers and parents certainly, but mostly from their peers. The guy code offers a specific blueprint for being accepted as a guy. But just as "the first rule of *Fight Club*" (1996)—perhaps the touchstone text for thousands of guys—says, "You can tell no one about Fight Club," the guy code is never written down or verbalized. Rather, it is passed from guy to guy in locker rooms and gyms, bars and frat houses, workplaces and churches, all across the nation. The guy code teaches exaggerated versions of the ideology of masculinity, with certain modifications: "Be tough! Be strong! Laugh at weakness! Do not feel!"

he is refused a second date because "real men" order steak. Our romances are expected to be gender polarized, with heterosexual men from Mars, heterosexual women from Venus, and gay men and lesbians the reverse, even in such trivialities as handling the television remote (men flip quickly from channel to channel, women stick with one channel). Our churches and temples are sites of performing gender, our jobs dependent on demonstrating gender-appropriate skills and attitudes. Even at home, among our friends, we cannot relax: Our peer groups are constantly enforcing the rules, policing everyone and punishing any transgression with snubs, stares, jokes, or ostracism.

Socialization in the 21st Century

The socialization process is dynamic and continuous. Across the life span, more and different agents of socialization can come into play. One never achieves or reaches a "true" identity but is always interacting and reacting to create what can only be a temporary or partial "self." While this complex process potentially offers us constant opportunities for self-creation and growth, it is also rife with tensions between

autonomy and belonging, individuality and group identification. As the sociologist Erving Goffman (1961) captured it:

> Without something to belong to, we have no stable self, and yet total commitment and attachment to any social unit implies a kind of selflessness. Our sense of being a person can come from being drawn into a wider social unit; our sense of selfhood can arise through the little ways in which we resist the pull. Our status is backed by the solid buildings of the world, while our sense of personal identity often resides in the cracks.

Next time someone gives you his or her yearbook to inscribe, consider writing, "Change! And keep changing! For the rest of your life!"
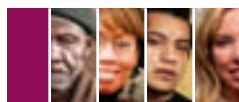
Chapter Review

1. ***How do sociologists see the relationship between socialization and biology?*** Both nature (biology) and nurture (socialization) play a role in how we are made and how we develop. Before the Enlightenment, nature ruled, and identity was thought to be preordained by God along with the natural world. During the Enlightenment, the idea emerged that our environment shapes who we are. Rousseau argued a compromise and said human beings do inherit identities, but the environment changes them. That is the view sociologists take, although they tend to focus on the nurture aspect, because interaction with others is ongoing and affects who we are. Learning from interactions with others, or socialization, is the process by which we become aware of ourselves as part of a group, learn how to communicate, and learn expectations for behavior.

2. ***How does socialization work?*** Humans require more years of dependency and socialization than other species. We are learning the skills necessary not just to survive in the physical world but also to survive in the social world.

3. ***What are the stages of socialization?*** George Herbert Mead developed a theory about how we learn to see others' points of view gradually as children as the internalized expectations of what he called the "generalized other." Mead said this happened in three stages, including imitation, play, and games, in which children learn to anticipate the thoughts of others. Jean Piaget theorized that reasoning ability develops in four stages. In the first stage, children experience the world through their senses; in the second, they learn to use symbols; in the third, they develop reasoning; and in the fourth, they become capable of abstract thinking. Lawrence Kohlberg built on that theory and added that we develop moral reasoning in three stages. In the first, we are motivated by reward and punishment. In the second, we see the larger social context. In the third stage, we see relative morality. Stage theories have problems: The stages are rigidly defined, it is not clear if one must complete each stage in order, and the stages are not necessarily universal.

4. ***What are agents of socialization?*** Agents of socialization are those people, groups, or institutions that socialize new members. Socialization is not always positive and varies in relative importance at different times of life. One of the most important agents of socialization is the family. Education is another major agent of socialization. At school, we learn facts, concepts, and skills but also are exposed to a hidden curriculum instilling social norms and values. Religion provides a divine motivation and rationalization for norms and values, and through peer groups we learn skills such as social interaction and group loyalty. The media are also pervasive agents of socialization, touching on all areas of our lives.

5. ***How does socialization occur over the life course?*** Although the stages of the life course are a social construction, they provide a useful way of looking at how humans make their way through life. Childhood is the period from birth to puberty. Our notion of childhood is not universal, nor has it remained the same historically. The idea of adolescence emerged along with the development of specialized job markets; young people needed specialized education. Adulthood is often marked by completion of one's education, getting a job, getting married, moving into one's own home, or having a baby. The transition from adolescence to adulthood is occurring later in life now, when people are in their 30s instead of in their 20s.

6. *How are we socialized into gender?* We are socialized into all of our roles and statuses, including gender. Gender-role socialization permeates all aspects of our lives and is ongoing throughout the life course. Even before birth, parents choose colors and clothing based on gender. Boys and girls are socialized into two different sets of norms, and this socialization is pronounced during childhood. Gender transgressions are punished by every agent of socialization. As children grow into adolescents and adults, they continue to be socialized by these agents on what is appropriate for males and females in different situations and at different stages of the life course.

Key Terms

Agent of socialization (p. 137)
Anticipatory socialization (p. 136)
Ego (p. 135)
Gender socialization (p. 147)

Generalized other (p. 133)
Id (p. 135)
Peer group (p. 141)
Primary socialization (p. 137)

Resocialization (p. 137)
Secondary socialization (p. 137)
Socialization (p. 129)
Superego (p. 135)

What does *America* think?

Belief in an Afterlife

These are actual survey data from the General Social Survey, 1998.

Do you believe in life after death? Data from the General Social Survey for the 1990s show the following: More than half of the respondents definitely believed in life after death, and another one-fifth probably did. Only slightly more than 20 percent did not believe in life after death. More women than men believed in an afterlife (59.3 percent versus 53.3). Social class differences were not that marked.

CRITICAL THINKING | DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From the GSS data seen above, it appears that Americans in general tend to believe in life after death. How does this reflect the character of American society and core American values?
2. Each religion has different ideas about the afterlife. How do history and culture affect how a religious group conceives its ideas about an afterlife?
3. This is one topic where there seems to be very little deviation with regard to either social class or gender. Why do you think that is?

▶ Go to this website to look further at the data. You can run your own statistics and crosstabs here: **http://sda.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/hsda?harcsda+gss04**

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