

Athanasia Chalari

The
SOCIOLOGY
of the
INDIVIDUAL

Relating Self and Society



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3

Socialization

At birth, the individual human being is virtually helpless. Ahead lies a long and complicated process of learning to live in society. This process is Socialization. (White, 1977: 1)

Why is Socialization Important?

Socialization is one of the most central concepts in sociology. It is through socialization that an infant gets in contact with the social world and this process will continue throughout the life course. Socialization is probably the first and certainly the most important systematic link between the individual and society. The reason is that each individual enables her/him self to get in contact or interact with anything other than her/him self primarily through socialization. Therefore, socialization is based on interaction (as well as symbolic interaction) and would naturally be about the exchange of action between the individual and something/somebody else. But is this the case? Is this exchange of action exclusively between individuals? Or is it within individuals as well? So is socialization only about interaction or could it also be about intra-action?

This chapter uses both sociological and psychological approaches to answer key questions in understanding the concept of socialization. The first question this chapter will try to explain regards: what do we mean by socialization? Specific schools of thought will be discussed and a variety of definitions will be involved. The second question tries to explore: what are the origins of socialization? The process of socialization throughout childhood will then be analysed. The last question this chapter explores has to do with: how does socialization take place? Certain aspects of socialization will then be explained, starting from childhood and moving on to life course.

EXAMPLE

A two-year-old boy points outside the window by saying 'ffff' and then he puts both his hands on his mouth. The boy cannot talk yet. However, he can interact.

The mother is trying to interpret the symbols. She is following the boy's instructions and she looks outside the window where the boy is pointing. She tries to understand what 'ffff' might mean. The boy and the mother share a common understanding of some symbols and meanings but they don't speak the same language. However, this boy knows very well what he means through his own language. And he is trying very hard to explain to his mother that he is pointing at something that he wants to put into his mouth. After a few days, the mother decides to observe her son while looking outside the window and repeating the same sounds and the same gestures. The toddler is neither stupid nor crazy. He knows what he wants but he doesn't know how to communicate it. The mother finally realizes that there is a deflated balloon outside the window that the boy wants to put it into his mouth and inflate. Was this realization the outcome of a typical form of interaction? Or was it the outcome of two separate (and interrelated) series of intra-actions? The boy knows what he wants and he uses his personal vocabulary and gestures to describe it and the mother is trying to imagine what these symbols mean by observing her son and using her imagination. The exchange of this symbolic interaction and therefore the accomplishment of some sort of communication is only achieved after the mother picks up the balloon and shows to her son that actually, this balloon is damaged but they can play with a new one. Why do we only recognize as 'interaction' and therefore 'socialization' the accomplished exchange of (sometimes meaningful) action? In this example, the mother and the boy exchanged meaningful action and they joined the process of socialization even before fully constructing shared meanings or understandings.

What Do We Mean by Socialization?

Sociological perspectives on socialization

The term socialization has been defined in a wide variety of ways. However, following the approach taken in the first chapter, it seems appropriate to begin the exploration of this term by using one of the most influential definitions offered by one of the four founding fathers of sociology (Marx, Weber, Durkheim and Simmel), that of Georg Simmel. Simmel was the first to analyse the interrelated concepts of interaction and socialization in such a detailed level that he promoted them into the core concepts of sociology. He believes that socialization forms the basis of society; this concept is perceived as the outcome of the endless combinations of interactions/relationships between individuals, which are constantly re-created and re-defined. Simmel used the term '*sociation*' to refer to the means through which social phenomena are produced and he explained that through sociation we try to understand the actions of others as well as our own. Craib (1997: 160) explains that for Simmel, sociation refers to the way in which we come into contact with each other in the pursuit of everyday lives and sociability is the play form of this activity. Therefore, sociation (or socialization) is based on interaction,

or differently, on the endless combinations of ways that people exchange action. In fact, Simmel explains that sociology asks what happens to individuals and by what rules they behave, as they form groups which are determined through interaction (Simmel, 1950). In short, socialization for Simmel, can only be understood in terms of interaction. Following Simmel, Speier (1970: 189) synthesizes that socialization is the acquisition of interactional competencies. Today, sociologists regularly argue that socialization describes the ways each individual becomes fully human or a 'person' (Wentworth, 1980).

Relevant literature identifies three main explanations regarding socialization: a) the first approach deriving from *functionalism* (related to Durkheim), perceives socialization as something that 'happens' to individuals and concerns the ways individuals internalize values, attitudes and norms and how they interact within specific socio-cultural settings. Functionalists like Talcott Parsons (1937), believed that if individuals failed to play their expected roles or behaved strangely, then this means that the socialization process that they have experienced is probably incomplete or inadequate. Such views do not recognize individuals' uniqueness. b) The second approach derives from the *interactionist* tradition and specifically the work of Mead (1934) and Cooley (1902/1964) and perceives socialization as the 'development of linguistically mediated reflexive self-concept' (Turner, 2006: 591). Socialization is therefore seen as an interactive process during which individuals negotiate their definitions of the situation with others. Symbolic interactionists believed that socialization is a more dynamic process that enables each individual separately to develop her/his unique ability to think. Socialization is a two-way dynamic process as individuals influence and are getting influenced by the social environment. This school of thought does not distinguish self from society. However, c) the third, *critical* perspective, on socialization (deriving from Marxism and feminist theory) perceives socialization in terms of social control and prioritizes the significance of power imbalances in society and the reproduction of structures of inequality. Bourdieu, for example, explained socialization through the concept of 'habitus' and he suggests that individuals become gradually habituated to the customary ways of behaving, thinking and feeling common to others. Therefore, the element of adjustment to social conditions is prominent in this approach (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

A different understanding of socialization has been offered by Wentworth (1980); he explained that socialization entails personal autonomy and freedom as well as structural formation and group influence. By sharing some similarities with Goffman's (1959, 1961a) concept of 'dramaturgy' (discussed in Chapter 2), Wentworth proposes three aspects of socialization related to: a) context; b) content and process; and c) potential results. a) 'Context' (or 'front' in Goffman's terms) is the stage in which socialization takes place and includes various social forms as culture, language, structures, norms, etc. b) 'Content and process' (or 'role' in Goffman's terms) is like the play or the scenario and determines the structure of socialization which includes certain forms of talk, behaviour and ultimately specific

forms of interaction. c) 'Potential results' (or 'performance' in Goffman's terms) refers to the outcomes of the socialization, or of what happens next. It is thus understood that socialization may be perceived through different approaches and may contain separate aspects. Goffman, for example, associated socialization with different roles individuals perform during interaction: 'a role implies a social determinism and a doctrine about socialization' (Goffman, 1961a: 76–7) and he therefore suggests that the role is the basic unit of socialization as the individual is shaped through socialization and the individual learns to adopt social roles and rules. Wunder (2007) explains that socialization ensures that an individual will develop a social identity (or self) and have the motivation and knowledge to perform the roles she may need throughout the course of her life.

Socialization and internalization

Wunder (2007) further explains that socialization is the process through which individuals learn and internalize the attitudes, values and behaviours appropriate to people living in any given society (further discussion on internalization follows in Chapter 7). A number of authors have used the concept of 'internalization', in their attempt to further explain the concept of socialization. Durkheim (1912/1995) for example, believed that socialization results in the internalization of collective representations (shared thinking) and this is how ultimately 'society is represented inside us' (1912/1995: 16). For Durkheim, socialization is thus understood as the authority of society inside us. Parsons (1951) further elaborates this view by stating that internalization is the process of learning and therefore this is the way that important elements of culture are incorporated into personality. This is how culture gets into our heads. A similar and equally influential perspective on the internalization of socialization derives from the works of Freud (1961/2004), who believed that the purpose of socialization was to enable (or even force) individuals to internalize social restrictions and prohibitions which are in complete contradistinction with the individual's instinctive desires and sexual drives (further discussion follows in Chapter 6). This is how social inhibitions are internalized and therefore followed. According to White (1977), such deterministic views perceive internalization as a static process as they ignore the possibility of the agent developing her/his own free will.

As already discussed (Chapter 2), in contrast with this view, symbolic interactionism prioritizes interaction over internalization. Although this school of thought is also concerned with the ways individuals fit into society, the emphasis is placed on the individual's learning experience and the process of meaning-making through interaction. Socialization is seen as a life-long process. Mead (1934) for example, perceives socialization during childhood in terms of symbolic communication. Mead explains that children internalize symbols primarily through language. Once these symbols are internalized then the child is able to imagine situations or even possible responses from others. Mead explains that as

the child talks to oneself, then s/he is able to imagine that s/he is someone else and therefore to objectify oneself (take different roles). According to Wentworth (1980), sociologists have generally come to believe that through internalization of socialization, social and cultural processes permeate, even constitute, the minds and bodies of individuals.

Perhaps one of the first founders of developmental psychology, Vygotsky (1978), has been one of the first to use this term (internalization) as he was explaining that children, through acquisition and use of language, eventually internalize and reproduce culture (further discussed in Chapter 7). However, his view did not agree with functionalism in terms of how society dominates our minds. For Vygotsky (1978: 57): 'every function in the child's development appears twice: first on the social level, and later on the individual level; first between people (inter-psychological) and then inside the child (intrapsychological)'. Interaction is indeed what comes first for Vygotsky. Children are able to internalize these interactions and then respond accordingly (if needed). The main difference between Durkheim's, Parsons' and Vygotsky's views has to do with the fact that although all three agree that socialization takes place through internalization of interaction, this does not necessarily mean that society dominates individuals through socialization (as functionalism would have it). Vygotsky explains that it is common for children to produce self-directed speech (or egocentric speech according to the second founder of developmental psychology Jean Piaget) without being interested if others would understand them. For Piaget (1926) this is a kind of 'antisocial' form of behaviour which eventually disappears as self-awareness increases. But Vygotsky explains that this speech eventually becomes internalized and the child stops producing this kind of speech out-loud. It is therefore transformed to 'inner speech' or as Vygotsky (1978) would describe it, a form of thought. As Chalari (2009) explains, although all individuals use certain forms of internalized language this does not mean that all individuals are affected by society in common ways. To the contrary, each individual internalizes aspects of the social world in unique ways and the ways this internalization is further processed primarily relies on each individual separately.

Archer (2003, 2007) would term this process as the ability of the individual to become reflexive towards her/himself and towards society. (More detailed analysis on how internalization of the social world takes place, will be discussed in Chapter 7.) According to Cosaro (2011: 20) socialization 'is not only a matter of adaptation and internalization but also a process of appropriation, reinvention and reproduction'. What might be important to realize at this point is that socialization takes place through internalization of the social world (or aspects of it). However, although certain schools of thought (like functionalism and symbolic interactionism) would conclude that this is how society controls our minds, different views (like Vygotsky's and Archer's) would suggest that socialization is a process that all individuals go through (from a very early age), but it is unique for each one of us. Therefore society (or else social structure) is indeed a determined parameter in the way individuals

produce interaction and therefore get socialized, but as will be further supported in this book, it is not necessarily or exclusively the most decisive factor.

Psychological perspectives on socialization

Psychological perspectives on socialization try to emphasize the psychological contexts of this process. Such perspectives concentrate on the psychological state of the person being socialized and psychology primarily concentrates on the analysis of learning. Generally, psychological studies are primarily concentrated on the ways the child socializes, and therefore develops, through her/his interactions with parents, and certain agents of socialization (further discussion follows) (Slaughter-DeFoe, 1994). However, specific schools of thought perceive socialization in different ways.

Freud emphasized the importance of the unconscious (deriving from childhood experiences) in the shaping of the individual's personality, behaviour and ultimately, socialization. He proposes that socialization is the process through which, individuals learn to suppress their sexual instincts and conform with social and cultural rules and expectations (Freud, 1961/2004). However, different perspectives on psychology would approach socialization differently. For example, cognitive psychologists would concentrate on cognitive (intellectual) development in order to explain how socialization occurs (Piaget's developmental stages). For behaviourism though, socialization is perceived according to the learning of patterns of behaviour through conditioning or through regular participation in recurring interactional activities such as observing and imitating. *Learning Theory* for example, introduced by Watson (1928), is based on the principle of rewarding or punishing behaviour. Skinner (1989) extended this approach by emphasizing the importance of reward as a more effective conditioning of behaviour. Following these views, *Social Learning Theory* (Bandura, 1969, 1977) is concentrated on the ways children imitate behaviours and supports the view that children learn through observation rather than reward. Socialization is therefore seen as a process conditioned by others. Personality psychology views socialization as the process of forming personality during early life through behavioural reinforcements and punishments (Zigler et al., 1982). White (1977) further explains that research in developmental psychology regarding socialization is related to the forms of interaction between the parent(s) and the child. Socialization is therefore studied in laboratory settings while social situations are recreated. Erikson (1950/1963) on the other hand is primarily interested in exploring socialization throughout the life course. He proposed eight stages of socialization beginning at birth and finishing at death. Cultural psychologists link culture with cognition as they explain that individuals internalize the cultural environment through socialization (Vygotsky, 1978; Bruner, 1990). In recent times many psychoanalysts and psychotherapists have tried to analyse the process of socialization by focusing on the relations individuals built with others as well

as with themselves (further discussed in Chapter 6). The ways individuals form their relationship with themselves and with others, guide the way people live their lives (DeSuza, 2011; Luborsky, 1984).

Connections between sociology and psychology

Connections between sociological and psychological approaches to socialization can be seen in various approaches, for example, in the works of the symbolic interactionists (Mead and Cooley) as these views explore socialization in relation to the individual and the concept of self. To do that, Mead tried to explore the connection between the 'I' and the 'Me' (discussed in Chapter 2). Additionally, psychology and sociology could complement each other in terms of how socialization is studied, as many scholars coming from both disciplines would agree that in order to change society, we first need to change the way people bring up their children. Both sociology and psychology have contributed enormously in the study of childhood socialization, which, as will be further explained, constitutes the foundation of adult socialization. Therefore, for psychology and sociology, socialization constituted the first unit of analysis, no matter if the subject of analysis is the individual, the society or both.

Socialization and intra-action

So far, the concept of socialization has been discussed by following a wide variety of theories, approaches and definitions. It could be summarized that socialization is generally understood as a lifelong process, which comprises of all possible combinations of interactions an individual could have with others that enables us to learn how to live our lives within specific social settings. Following the approaches taken in the first two chapters on interaction and symbolic interactionism, intra-action is inevitably involved. Since interaction derives from intra-action (the way a mother scolds her child [interaction] derives from her own evaluation of what is right and what is wrong [intra-action]), then, socialization, which is based on interaction, also derives from intra-action. Indeed, the mother who scolds her child, tries to teach her/him a lesson through this particular interaction. This lesson (for example to respect others), which will be repeated many times, will hopefully accompany this person throughout her/his life. This form of interaction then, becomes a specific form of socialization through which this particular child is raised. Notably, this form of socialization is shaped according to the mother's principles and evaluations of what is right and what is wrong and what her child should or should not do. Therefore, this example of socialization derived from the mother's ongoing process of intra-action regarding what one should learn in life. But even when we refer to lifelong socialization processes like the continuous and repeated interactions individuals form and shape (for example) in their workplace. These everyday contacts with others derive from our everyday contact with our self. Therefore, the aspect

that should be added into the discussion on socialization, has to do with the endless intra-actions the individual experiences within oneself and allows us to learn how to live our lives within ourselves as we move on the life course. This missing part will be further explored and discussed in the following chapters and especially in Chapter 7.

The context of socialization

While discussing and analysing the significance in understanding the content of socialization, the aspects of interaction as well as intra-action should be employed. Equally importantly, the context of socialization should be considered. Admittedly, the literature used in this (and perhaps all) chapter(s) refers to studies, theories, views and approaches deriving from certain cultural, structural and moral settings. Socialization, has been (and will be further) discussed through the ways that Western culture has formed and perceived this social phenomenon. Non-Western societies and cultures, probably perceive the process of socialization through different means and ways, and therefore, certain aspects of the present discussion might seem disconnected to particular contexts of social reality (the socialization process is not as relevant with parenting, family, school and peers if we refer to war zones, refugee camps or certain forms of collective systems of children's upbringing). Even childhood socialization may be experienced as a completely different process than the one discussed in the following sections, if we refer to different cultural contexts. It is therefore crucial to clarify that the ideas discussed in this book's framework refer primarily to Western cultures, and the context of socialization may be perceived in completely different terms by readers coming from distinct social and cultural backgrounds.

Origins of Socialization: Childhood Socialization

In order to better understand what we mean by socialization (in Western cultures), it might be helpful to explore how individuals begin the process of socialization. Socialization begins very early in the infant's life. As Stern (1977) explains, infants aged three months old are already able to engage or disengage their caregivers (through smiling, crying, eye contact, touching). Upbringing can be seen as the most crucial time of socialization. Infants, and later on children, learn the language of their own group and come to understand the norms and values important to their family and society (Wunder, 2007). Developmental psychology is based on the work of the two most influential developmental psychologists (Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky) who have established different approaches regarding childhood socialization. Piaget (1926) for example explains

that even at the age of four months, infants cannot differentiate themselves from their environment; he explains that the most important need of the infant is to be close to her/his mother and he describes distinct developmental stages in terms of the child's ability to socialize and ultimately learn. Vygotsky (1934) on the other hand, suggests that actually, even for infants, socialization is related to social structures and interactions. Vygotsky believes that interaction (and therefore socialization), even from a very early age, depend on structural constraints (class, status, etc.) as well as cognitive development.

Models of childhood socialization

Following the main approaches discussed in the previous sections, in order to define socialization as a concept, Corsaro (2011) explains that accordingly, childhood socialization is explained through two main models: a) *Deterministic Model* in which the child is seen as having a passive role; and b) *Constructivist Model* in which the child is seen as an active agent and learner.

- a) The Deterministic Model derives from two separate approaches: i) *functionalism* (e.g. Inkeles, 1968) which prioritizes order and balance within society and consequently the child should be trained through socialization in order to fit and reproduce the structure of society. This model could also be supported by Durkheim (1995) who explained that through socialization the individual is taught how to follow collective representations (shared ways of thinking). He explained that the job of the parent and teachers is to produce a child who can take up a place in society. For example, children are taught to sleep at specific hours, respect others, do what they are told, etc. ii) *Reproductive approaches* (e.g. Bernstein, 1981) which emphasize the importance of social control through the maintenance and reproduction of, for example, class inequalities. Most upper class parents will try to provide expensive education for their children, even from an early age, by choosing prestigious institutions. Corsaro (2011: 9) characteristically says that according to this model 'society appropriates the child'.
- b) The *Constructivist Model* on the other hand perceives the child as an active agent able to construct her/his own interpretations about the world (Corsaro, 2011). Piaget (1926), for example, explains that even infants are able to use and interpret information from the environment and then construct conceptions. This is probably why infants are able to develop a specific kind of bonding with their primary carer even if this person is not their biological parent. Piaget proposes certain stages of child development each of which entail certain forms of socialization. Furthermore, according to Vygotsky (1978), children's social development (and therefore socialization) is based on their collective actions, which are located in society. Children try to respond to societal demands in a

collective manner through interaction. Think of how hard a child tries to mimic her/his parents from a very early age, or to learn what s/he needs to do to keep her/his parents pleased or to get them annoyed. The child develops socially and psychologically through her/his contact with others. First, through the contact with parents/care takers, then the extensive family, following that, the nursery/day care, the school and so on. Therefore, both Vygotsky and Piaget agree that children co-construct their perception of the social and physical world, through their first steps into childhood socialization. Mackay (1974) further promotes this approach by explaining that children are not passive, incomplete receptacles, rather they are active participants in the socialization process. Socialization is a two-sided process as children interact with adults while acquiring knowledge and the ability to reason. Corsaro (2011: 12) explains that according to the *Constructivist Model*, the 'child appropriates society'.

Corsaro (2011: 20–1), though, proposes a different approach to children socialization which he terms '*Interpretive Reproduction*' and explains that the main characteristics of this approach have to do with the fact that children are able to 'create and participate in their unique peer cultures by creatively talking or appropriating information from the adult world to address their own peer concerns'. Therefore, the child is not only involved in certain cognitive developmental stages that enable her/him to get prepared for the adults' world; nor is he/she only involved in interactions with adults that enable her/him to construct her/his own understandings and skills. Children also interact with other children and they create their own peer cultures (defined as a stable set of activities of routines, values or concerns). Therefore, children's socialization is about children interacting with adults, interacting with the social world and interacting with other children while following a specific cognitive development.

Effective childhood socialization?

Most (if not all) parents want the best for their children and naturally they try to follow the most effective (in their view) socialization process. Unsurprisingly, there are not any manuals offering instructions on how parents should socialize their children, but relevant (primarily Western) literature has been able to identify more or less helpful tendencies. However, the inevitable question one might ask is: what consists effective socialization? Notably, sociology cannot offer a specific answer to this question, as different cultures, in different chronological periods and dissimilar individuals in distinct social circumstances have followed an extensive variety of socialization practices regarding the ways children should be raised. In this context, relevant literature, and perhaps primarily psychological studies, offer specific views and interpretations of what might represent effective socialization practices. Such views, however, are products of certain cultures, beliefs and principles which

may seem completely incomprehensible to readers coming from distinct cultural backgrounds.

For example, in Western societies, there is a common belief that caring and loving care takers are more likely to reinforce trust and respect in children. Similar views advocate that parents who can show that they are in charge of their own lives and they know what they are doing have better chances to be heard and followed by their children. The combination of discipline and love seems to be one of the most effective practices (Goode, 1977). Consistency in parents' behaviour is also considered vital in this context, along with the examples parents set through their own behaviour. However, occasional inconsistency in application of rewards regarding certain behaviours of the child is perceived as an effective way to reinforce desired behaviour. Psychologists call this approach '*intermittent reinforcement*' (Kendall, 1974). According to relevant studies, participation in rule-making rather than direct enforcement of rules along with explanation of possible outcomes, may result in better ways of collaboration between the child and the parent. Furthermore, punishment, and especially physical punishment has been proven to be particularly unhelpful if not damaging in children's upbringing (Phelps et al., 1998; Dobbs-Oates et al., 2011). Such views derive from specific epistemological backgrounds, which have been produced within certain cultural, structural and moral contexts.

How Does Socialization Take Place?

Socialization occurs throughout the individual's lifetime but it has been researched primarily in two parts: a) *primary or childhood socialization*. This aspect of socialization is associated with family settings and the school period, it generally concerns learning skills of attitudes and behaviours. This first part of socialization can also be understood as the foundation of socialization. b) *Secondary or adult socialization* is related to a wide variety of settings deriving from primary socialization which are further developed, for example, higher education, working place or self exploration and it is mainly related to social influences. This part of socialization can also be perceived as the socialization through the life course. The process of socialization enables the individual to shape oneself in relation to other individuals, in relation to society and in relation to oneself. It is therefore vital to understand how the process of socialization takes place and what parts are involved in this process.

The wider part of (Western) sociological literature that explores these two parts of socialization, focuses on the 'agents of socialization', referring to those who do the socializing (Wunder, 2007; Giddens, 2009; Ritzer, 2015) or, the social contexts of socialization (already discussed as the first out of three main aspects of socialization according to Wentworth, 1980). Agents of socialization may include significant individuals (parents, partners), groups (family, peer group) or institutions (school,

media) that provide structured situations in which interaction and learning takes place. In the same sense, social contexts of socialization refer to certain social settings that may influence the way people live their lives (parents may determine their attitudes towards their children through specific cultural customs or children who have been raised during the war years may be socialized in distinct forms and ways).¹ Therefore, as we discuss socialization we need to be conscious of the agents as well as the context of socialization.

The foundations of socialization

For many sociologists as well as psychologists, the foundations of socialization coincide with primary socialization and refer to the first contact of new borns, infants and young children with initial caregivers, social environment and culture. This stage, according to most psychologists, psychoanalysts and psychotherapists, constitutes the foundation of the individual's personality development (Rohlinger, 2007a). Primary socialization constitutes the initial process through which the individual (of an early age) abandons the physical limits of oneself and explores ways of co-existence with others. At that stage the future person begins to shape oneself in relation to others as well as oneself. This process is based on the acquisition of language(s) and introduces younger generations to the ways society(ies),² social structures and social institutions form. This procedure (also termed '*anticipatory socialization*') is primarily introduced by parents and siblings, and in some cultures by the wider family.

This section will discuss how specific agents and (primarily Western) contexts of socialization contribute to the future adult's understanding of the social world. Early social contact with family prepares future adults for later stages in life. It is within the family that initial social ideas are formed, like gender roles, cultural customs and practices, racial differentiations, class and status orientation, nationality characteristics and more broadly, social expectations and prohibitions. Perhaps, the most important influence deriving from family concerns the individual's fundamental principles, values and beliefs that form the basis of her/his future life. However, the traditional model of the 'nuclear family' is not as common any more, particularly in Western societies. New family models are now becoming more accepted (same-sex families, families spread in different countries, single-parent families, multicultural/racial/religious families). Naturally, forms of socialization vary tremendously between families even within common cultures. Nurseries and day care centres are now used more commonly from the age of even three months. This means that additional forms of interactions and therefore socialization occur in such early stages, undoubtedly contributing significantly to the formation of the future adult. Furthermore, as socialization is seen as a form of interaction, caregivers and parents are more often seen as being influenced by the child as much as they influence the child. School and peer groups' socialization routes contribute significantly to the child's understanding of the world. Additionally, gender formation is

one of the first forms of socialization a child is called to learn. Media and the Internet are the most recent forms of socialization young adults are exposed to from a very early age.

Parenting and family

It is agreed between sociological and psychological literature that parents offer the first social training. Certain upbringing characteristics are considered favourable or unfavourable in terms of the child's opportunities to reach her/his developmental potential (White, 1977). Different cultural expectations are usually associated with children's upbringing practices and initial forms of socialization; such practices could vary enormously. A characteristic example is that of domestic violence; this violent act is treated as a criminal offence in some cultures whereas it is treated as common practice in others. Although children's socialization training and upbringing (in any culture) may include various deviant practices, today it is agreed (by primarily Western scholars and relevant practitioners) that emotional stability and security is vital in a child's life (further discussed in Chapter 6). Several studies (conducted primarily within Western cultural settings) suggest that consistent interaction patterns within family, constant demonstration of affection and play with parents along with repeated encouragement and stimulus of conversation and symbolic communication are as important for the child's complete development, as the basic requirements of adequate food, clothing and shelter (Naouri, 2008, 2005; Maccoby, 1992; Bowie et al., 2013). Indeed, the child's patterns in behaviour, habits and beliefs primarily derive from the models of interaction the child experiences and learns. Therefore, parents' and siblings' models of behaviour are the ones the child is more likely to imitate. The repeated expression of (cultural and personal) values by adults are learned and internalized by the child. Arguably, in cases when parental values are in contradiction with social norms or expectations, conflict is inevitably involved. For example, if a child is raised in a violent family s/he will possibly repeat violent patterns in out-of-family interactions (bullying). In cases like the above, the child might not be sure about which set of values to follow.

In the same vein, there is a tendency to agree with the premise that the most valuable socialization in the (Western) family setting is the one that causes the least stress for the child when s/he encounters a social situation in the wider society. Such children usually receive consistent parental love, encouragement and discipline whereas erratic handling causes anxiety and insecurity (White, 1977; Rogers, 1951, 1959, 1974, 1986). Furthermore, as Naouri (2005, 2008) has repeatedly demonstrated, the role of the father in the child's upbringing (and therefore primary socialization) is equally important with the role of the mother, especially if both parents work. However, as the mother usually spends most time with the child, she is considered the most significant socializing model for the child. Psychological research (perhaps primarily following Freud's core ideas) consistently promotes the

significance of the establishment of a meaningful connection between the mother and the young child. Even in cases that the mother cannot fulfil this expectation, the presence of a stable adult model is essential. Mother or father's withdrawal of affection often creates difficulties in socialization. Furthermore, the child is more likely to receive a consistent and systematic form of socialization if parents are the only adult models in the family (Naouri, 2005, 2008).

Parenting and family practices constitute the first contact of the child with the (developed) social world. However, the cultural, social and political circumstances where such socialization might take place determine the values, principles and beliefs associated not only with the upbringing practices, but also the dominant social norms regarding what might be more or less desirable or effective socialization practices. Therefore, we need to keep in mind that we primarily refer to Western psychological and sociological literature being in agreement when proposing that the way primary socialization takes place, determines in many respects the way the future individual will live her/his life. Although there are various occasions where children who are raised in deprived environments thrive and others raised in privileged settings fail to fulfil their potential, the principles of: security, stability, acceptance, understanding, caring, affection, encouragement and discipline constitute the essential characteristics of a supportive primary socializing experience. It is therefore becoming understood, that the centre of attention regarding primary socialization is the young child and her/his contact with her/his parents, siblings and family, although in reality this might not be necessarily the case in different cultural settings.

School

By the time young children (again in Western societies) begin school, they spend most of their days interacting and socializing with peers and teachers, trying to learn, and making sense of the world by combining their life experience at home and school. Socialization that takes place in school is considered the second most important agent of Western socialization. The role of education relates to the completion of the fundamental process of learning to take one's place in society. This process is also called '*anticipatory socialization*' and refers to the teaching and learning of what will be expected of one in the future (Ritzer, 2015). Educators are called to instruct the learners systematically into the ways of the whole (although usually very specific) culture. The school offers the first formal and structured socialization to young individuals (White, 1977). Schools teach values and attitudes as well as family, but the process of education includes more systematic forms of learning and teaching which include for example: the importance for working for rewards, the significance of neatness and punctuality, orderliness and respect for authority. Students are expected to remain quiet in class and follow the rules of school discipline. Teachers evaluate students' performance in multiple levels whereas the reactions of teachers may affect the expectations children have about themselves (Persell, 1990; Giddens, 2009).

The process of education in Western cultures has been studied extensively and various approaches have been established. In terms of socialization though, the main approaches followed in this chapter perceive socialization in education in different terms: a) functionalism emphasizes the importance of education in terms of teaching the child how to be fully integrated into society (the child learns core social expectation that s/he is asked to meet, like study in university, get a decent job and create a family); b) symbolic interactionism prioritizes the interactional element of the educational process (between the student and the teacher as well as between the students) while also allowing self-expression of individuality (exploring and cultivating a specific talent); then c) Marxism reveals the function of education as a system of social selection as it is through education that future individuals are selected to follow specific occupations related to status, authority, power and income (the kind and level of education offered in state schools is considered to be different in relation to public schools). Therefore, education (and hence school) offers a structured socialization process that takes place at multiple levels. The ways each child experiences these forms of school socialization vary tremendously and all individuals have different memories of their school years. Therefore although this specific form of socialization is offered in similar ways to certain groups of children (organized primarily according to age), and even though younger children and later on adolescents are exposed to this specific kind of socialization on an everyday basis, it is undeniable that each young individual internalizes this process in unique and even unpredictable ways.

Peers

An additional and equally significant aspect of school socialization relates to the forms of interactions between students. This part of primary socialization is called peer socialization and becomes increasingly important especially in developed societies during the high school years (Fine, 1987; Bennett and Fraser, 2000; Steinberg and Monahan, 2007). Peer group is defined as a group of friends of about the same age and usually the same status. Up until the age of two, children seem to play together but in fact they do their own particular thing. After this stage the child is more able to respond to orders, and to requests or needs of other children. Children need the supervision of adults as well as the comfort they offer. As they develop this need is abridged. Actual peer groups are formed as early as the first or second grade and children over the age of four or five usually spend a great deal of time with friends of the same age. The kinds of socialization formed between children in nurseries and day care centres mainly relate to playing with toys, imitating one another, following teacher's instruction but children also learn to share, care, respect and be patient. Peers may also reinforce behaviours that are reproduced both by parents and school, for example prevent aggressive attitudes, encourage appropriate behaviours for boys and girls, support good manners. These basic but fundamental forms of interaction constitute an increasingly important part of primary socialization

(Corsaro, 2011). The significance of family socialization is given and most of the time it can be relevantly easy to see similarities between young children's and parents' behaviours, habits, attitudes and values. However, in the case of peer groups, such observations are not as clear (Harris, 1998).

As the young child moves through school, peer influence becomes more significant. Peer concerns may involve music, movies, sports, sex, relationships or in some cases illegal activities. Peer groups may provide social rewards like praise, prestige, attention, acceptance and understanding (Persell, 1990). It has been supported that such rewards are more important for young individuals who have not experienced, to a satisfactory degree, such feelings through family socialization (Rogers, 1986). A number of studies reveal that the influence of a supportive family remains strong with regard to the young individual's future life (Krosnick and Judd, 1982; Fairlie et al., 2012; Pugliese and Okun, 2014). Girls form different kinds of peer groups in comparison to boys. The stereotypical 'girly' concerns might be at odds with what boys care about. It is not until the later stages of adolescence that peer groups consist of both boys and girls. Gender, therefore, constitutes an additional aspect of socialization that one needs to consider.

Gender

Gender (further discussed in Chapter 4) socialization refers to the transmission of norms regarding what girls or boys can and should do (McHale et al., 2003; Rohlinger, 2007). Parents are the first who teach their children how to behave in a gendered manner. Parents dress infants in certain colours according to their gender, buy specific toys, teach specific manners, talk in certain ways. Additionally, certain social expectations are learned from an early age; boys for example are expected to be more active and aggressive whereas girls are expected to be more sensitive and caring (Beasley, 2005). These 'automatic' behaviours are generally perceived as natural expressions of masculinity and femininity. By the age of two, children have some sort of understanding of what gender is. By the age of five or six they start understanding the sexual anatomical differences between boys and girls and the purpose of these differences. Once gender is 'assigned', society expects individuals to act accordingly. However, these stereotypical perceptions have been heavily challenged for example by Feminism (Lorber, 2000) that questioned the privileged social treatment males have been receiving from birth. Gender socialization and reinforcement of gender role behaviours is typically encouraged in family and school settings, sports groups and the media. The media and the Internet are another agent of socialization that becomes increasingly significant in the ways individuals interact and socialize.

Mass media and the new technologies

Media socialization concerns a variety of communication forms that do not require personal contact, such as books, magazines, newspapers, radio, films, television and

the Internet. Media plays a large role in shaping our understanding of the world and therefore in the ways socialization takes place. Over the last decades, children have been extensively socialized through television but more recently especially through the Internet. The numbers of hours a child spends in front of a screen (laptop/tablet/smartphone) or TV is endless (Comstock and Scharrer, 2007). Parents begin using media as a form of socialization from a very early age. For many years television has been considered the 'children's closest friend'. Today, various forms of new technologies are offered for the entertainment of young (and older) individuals such as smartphones, video games and tablets (Rideout et al., 2010). Increased precautions have been introduced regarding the limited time a child should watch any kind of media programme. The NHS, for example, instructs parents to prohibit their children to watch any kind of programme for more than thirty minutes per day before the age of three and several forms of parenting control in terms of programme content (for TV, Smartphones, tablets, relevant applications) are now available. Social networking sites become ever more popular whereas Facebook and Twitter are already considered old-fashioned by younger generations (Buckingham, 2008; Watkins, 2009). As the forms of mass and social media alter so rapidly, along with technology, it becomes extremely difficult to be certain of the exact ways and degrees of influencing socialization. What remains certain, however, is that such influence is becoming increasingly powerful.

Socialization through the life course

Individuals will never stop the process of socialization, for as long as they are in contact (even limited) with others. As Erikson (1950) proposed (by developing eight stages), socialization continues through the life course for as long as the individual gets in contact with the social world. As we move on in life, individuals need to work in particular settings, perhaps continuing in higher education or trying different jobs. In all cases, people need to follow institutional rules and regulations, reprioritize their expectations, needs and wants and reconsider their plans, ambitions and anticipations. This is an ongoing process, which has been termed by some as '*resocialization*'. Primary socialization refers to socialize something new whereas resocialization regards the readjustment of a specific socializing process (work in a different job). Certain kinds of socialization may be considered in this context such as in the cases of total institutions (Gambino, 2013; Goffman, 1961b), in these cases, like in the army or prison, rules and regulations should be followed blindly and completely. The effect of 'institutionalization' is prominent in these cases as individuals find it hard to operate outside given barriers. Still, for most individuals, socialization remains a life project, which involves endless encounters with and between people, groups, institutions, cultures, structures, norms, attitudes and habits.

In all cases we refer to the connections individuals have with anyone or anything outside their selves. However, and as it has already been suggested, it might also be

helpful to consider whether the process of socialization also involves the ways the individual gets in contact with oneself (this idea will be further developed in later chapters). These ongoing processes can only be explored if we begin to study the actual ways the individual (as an agent) gets in contact with society (as a structure). Simmel very correctly stated that socialization is indeed the basis of society, however, it may well also constitute the core foundation of the human being. It is therefore vital to further explore some of the endless fascinating ways that the individual is connected to society.

Summary

This chapter explored the concept of socialization by using both sociological and psychological approaches. Socialization has been defined initially through the work of Simmel, whereas additional and more recent views have been involved. Psychological and sociological perspectives regarding socialization have been discussed separately and a synthesized overview followed. The connection between socialization and intra-action has been discussed and the importance of the context of socialization has been recognized. The origins of socialization have also been included in the discussion by concentrating on childhood socialization. Specific forms of socialization have been explained including parenting, family, school, peers, gender, mass media and new technologies whereas the ongoing process of socialization through the life course has been briefly discussed.

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Concepts in Context

A German professor in a UK university falls in love with a Canadian colleague. They decide to live together and have a family. They have a child in Canada and spend the first year of their boy's life with the Canadian part of their family. The couple decide to move back to the UK as that is where both parents work, although they occasionally visit the German side of the family. The boy spends the second year of his life in the UK, enjoying long hours in a British nursery. Both parents work and they spend the rest of their time with their son. The boy learns both German and English whereas by the time he begins school his British accent is obvious. This is just one of the characteristics that distinguish him from his parents.

This could be a case of a multicultural family that tries to find the most appropriate way to enable the younger part of the family to socialize with others, with different cultures and with oneself. In this case, each member of this family

comes from different cultures and all three cultures contribute significantly in the boy's upbringing (German, Canadian, British). As the boy learns the different languages, he acquires better (although never full) access to his German and Canadian roots. However, as he grows up in Britain, he will probably be perceived as being British with German and Canadian roots. Socialization for this boy has been quite complex, as various different aspects should be considered. Still, his parents raise the boy by allowing him to be exposed to different cultural settings, different languages and different family heritages.

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— SELF-REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS —

1. How could we study this case of socialization?
2. How could we identify the aspects of intra-action related to socialization?
3. What is distinct about this case of childhood socialization?
4. How important is the contribution of family in this example of socialization?

Possible ways of exploring the questions offered in this chapter and Further Readings:

1. One way to study this case of socialization would be through functionalism. However, relevant approaches might fail in explaining how this child could/should go through the socialization process, as it is not clear in which culture he needs to fit. Should he be exclusively integrated into the British culture? What kind of contact should the parents maintain with their own cultures? Which cultures should be learned at home? Symbolic interactionism might be more helpful in explaining that the acquisition of different languages may allow this boy to get a better understanding of the different cultures and his own heritage. But, how much should parents try to teach their son of these different cultures and languages? What level of understanding of these differences is considered acceptable? Marxist/critical views would probably emphasize the unequal treatment this child might receive, as he is different compared to other children. But is this difference necessarily disadvantageous? Is there any chance that this child might use his unequal position to his own benefit?

Further Reading:

Ritzer, G. (2015) *Essentials of Sociology*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

2. In cases like the example discussed, the complexity of the socialization process might become more obvious. However, at the same time, what remains important

relates to the fact that this boy, just like any child, will eventually find a way to lead his life and bridge the different components of his upbringing. The plurality of ways this boy can use to communicate with others (and thus go through the process of socialization) may also relate to the ways he will use to relate to himself. This boy might feel more strange between his Canadian or German family and perhaps less strange between his British friends. The ways he will find to balance the different parts of his socialization process are more related to the ways he might produce intra-action rather than interaction.

Further Reading:

Chalari, A. (2009) *Approaches to the Individual: The Relationship between Internal and External Conversation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

3. The uniqueness of this boy's upbringing has to do with the ongoing exposure to different cultures throughout the different stages of his cognitive, social and emotional development. As both parents are getting equally involved in his childhood years, the boy is involved in a number of different kinds of interactions and exchanges of symbolic meanings (different languages, traditions, norms) that could potentially enable him to have easier access to more ways of thinking and better understanding of different kinds of behaviour. But at the same time, this might mean that this boy's upbringing might be more difficult as this boy needs to figure out how different ideas and values can co-exist within his mind and his everyday life in a meaningful way.

Further Reading:

Corsaro, E.A. (2011) *The Sociology of Childhood*. Newbury Park, CA: Pine Forge Press.

4. Perhaps, the parental contribution in this case of socialization might be more complex in relation to other cases. As both parents anticipate that their son will be involved with three different cultural heritages, they have to work harder in order to find a balanced way to raise their son. It might be even more difficult for these parents to pass on to their son the values and principles that they were raised with and feel that their child should also learn. At the same time, through their son, these parents expand their own process of life course socialization as they learn more about the British culture, values, principles and norms. Therefore, this case might be a rather extreme, but not rare case of a multicultural family, that tries to combine different forms of socialization through meaningful ways.

Further Reading:

Bowie, B.H., Carrère, S., Cooke, C., Valdivia, G., McAllister, B. and Doohan, E.A. (2013) 'The role of culture in parents' socialization of children's emotional development.' *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 35(4): 514–33.

Maccody, E.E. (1992) 'The role of parents in the socialization of children: an historical overview'. *Developmental Psychology*, 28(6): 1006–17.

This example discusses the foundations of this individual's socialization experience (including childhood socialization) which will be followed by the experience of socialization through the life course and all different components of this complicated process will allow this person to move on in life. As each individual's case is unique, so is the socialization process s/he experiences. What might be helpful though would be to explore how individuals (like this young boy) manage to get in contact with their own self and eventually construct their identity, especially in cases like the one discussed, where a wide variety of different elements are involved. The next chapter will explore the identity formation process.

Notes

- 1 For further discussion see: Sagi-Schwartz (2012).
- 2 Plural refers to increasing cases of infants/younger children who are raised in multicultural families or even between different cultures and acquire from an early age more than one language.