Chapter 5 – Socializing the Individual

Section 3 – Agents of Socialization
What is an agent of socialization?

• Remember what socialization is? Interactive process by which individuals learn the basic skills, values, beliefs and behavior patterns of a society

• An ‘agent’ is something that causes something to occur

• So..... agents of socialization are specific individuals, groups and institutions that provide the situations in which socialization can occur
There are 4 main agents of socialization in the United States:

- Family
- Peer group
- School
- Mass media
Family

- The most important and first agent of socialization
- The principle socializer of young children
- Teaches how to behave in socially acceptable ways, to develop emotional ties and internalize values and norms
- Individuals share the patterns of the larger culture, but retain unique values and behavioral traits as learned from their family
- Socialization can be both deliberate (structured) and unconscious (unintended)”...do as I say not as I do”.
Remember the PSA: “I learned it by watching you, dad!”

“Parents who use drugs have kids who use drugs”
Peer group

- Defined: a primary group composed of individuals of roughly equal age and social characteristics (your friends)
- Other peers that you encounter can also influence you
- More influential as children grow older
- To be accepted by our peers we often behave certain ways – we try to be the kind of person we think they want us to be
- Desire to fit in - there’s a focus on group interests and acquiring skills needed to fit into a subculture
- Socialization is not “structured”
- Groups goals can be at odds with larger society/parents/schools
PEER PRESSURE
If all your friends jumped off of a bridge, would you do it too?
Schools

• Structured - the emphasis is on acquiring skills that will enable us to fit into a larger society
• Plays a major part in our socialization because we’re in school for so long
• most socialization is deliberate: activities teach skills whether vocational, academic or social
• extracurricular activities teach us teamwork, practice
• anticipatory socialization for the world of work because of deadlines, schedules and learning how to fit in to the larger society
• transmission of values
• unintentional socialization – some teachers and peers become role models for students
• peer groups are abundant in school
crud!!!
Mass media

• Forms of communication that reach large audiences with no personal contact between those sending and receiving the information – TV, newspaper, radio, films, magazines, Internet, etc…
• TV is the most influential of all mass media (there is at least one in every home – said to watch an average of 7 hours a day).
• Positives and negatives of TV...
• Where (geographically) would mass media NOT play a role?
BODY IMAGE

These jeans make my butt look big.
I hate my love handles.
I feel fat.

Body image is influenced by culture, media, family and peers.

But ultimately, you're the judge of your body image & it's the only body you've got, so love it, respect it & fuel it.
Other agents of socialization...
Can you think of any other things in our culture/world that shape us into who we are?

- religious institutions
- social classes
- government
- work places
- community and culture
- gender roles
- toys!!!!
Resocialization

- Defined: a break with past experiences to learn new values and norms
- Can either be positive (monastery) or negative (prison)
- If you WANT to quit something, say smoking, you have to be resocialized a bit, same with if you change your lifestyle habits to get more exercise and eat better
- Sometimes you’re forced to be resocialized by court order!!
Total Institution

• Defined: a setting in which people are isolated from the rest of society for a set period of time and are subject to the control of officials of varied ranks – prisons, boot camps, monasteries, psychiatric hospitals...

• Resocialization is often done in a TOTAL INSTITUTION (and if you remember the movie “Soldier”, socialization can also be done in a total institution)

• Resocialization in a total institution is a lot more intense and can be much more forcible than someone who chooses to resocialize themselves

• individuality is stripped away and replaced with an institutional identity: similar hair and uniforms, new standards of behavior and a regimented schedule
The Fairy Tale:
A childhood agent of socialization

- [http://www.dltk-teach.com/rhymes/littlered/1.htm](http://www.dltk-teach.com/rhymes/littlered/1.htm)