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Chris Livesey , Jonathan Blundell
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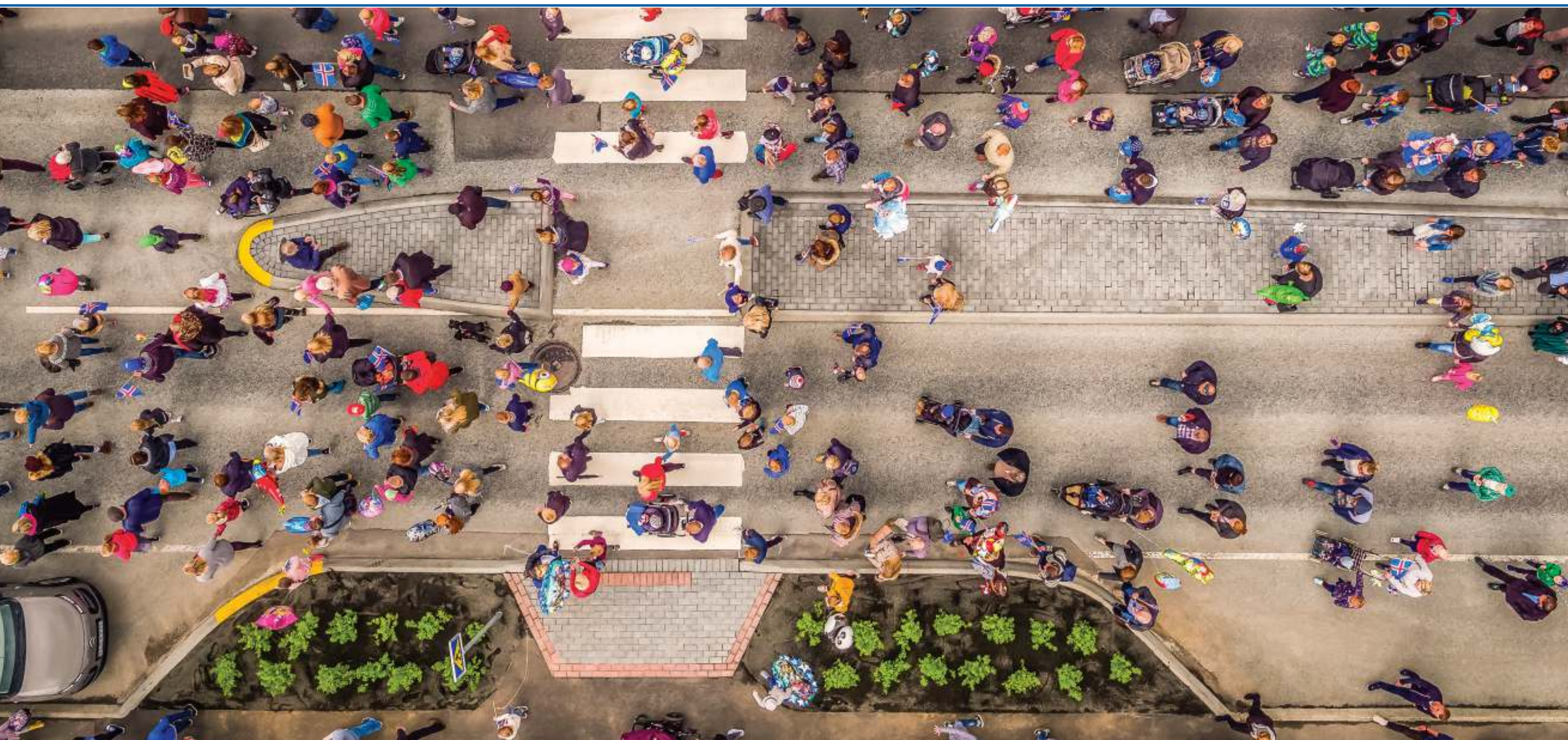

Chapter 1
Socialisation and the creation of social identity

Learning objectives

By the end of this chapter you will understand:

- The process of learning and socialisation
- Social control, social conformity and resistance
- Social identity and change

Before you start

This chapter starts with questions about how it is that we become members of human groups. These include:

- How do we learn to get on with others?
- Are the ways we behave shaped more by nature or by the way we are brought up?
- How do we learn to judge what others think of us and how they will react to what we do and say?
- Are we able to affect the social reality around us?
- Think about each of these questions in relation to your own life, then share your ideas with a partner.

Reflection: How much control have you had over things that have happened in your life so far? How much has been decided for you by others?

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1.1 The process of learning and socialisation

Culture, roles, norms, values, beliefs, customs, ideology, power and status as elements in the social construction of reality

Defining society

While 'a society' is a simple concept – we all probably understand what is meant by Indian, Mauritian, Nigerian or British society – it is more difficult to define. One key feature, however, is that people see themselves as having something in common with others in their society and, by extension, they consider themselves to be different from people in other societies. In this respect, different societies involve two types of *space*:

1. Physical space, in the sense of a distinctive geographical area marked by either a physical border, such as a river, or a non-physical border – perhaps a made up line that marks where one society ends and another begins.
2. Mental space, which separates people based on the beliefs they have about the similarities they share with people in 'their' society and the differences from people in other societies.

It seems straightforward to define a society in terms of physical space – Mauritius occupies a certain geographic area, Nigeria another and India yet another. Yet in itself this space is a *mental* construction; we are simply giving a particular meaning and importance to what is effectively a line on a map.

Anderson (1983) describes societies as 'imagined communities' – things that exist only in the mind. He points out that 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. Societies are mentally constructed by:

- geographic borders that set physical boundaries – we might, for example, consider that everyone born within these borders belongs to a particular society
- a system of government, which may involve, for example, a royal family (monarchy), parliament and civil service
- common language, **customs** and traditions that people share
- a sense of belonging and identification that involves developing the view that 'our' society is different from other societies; Indians, for example, may see themselves as different from Pakistanis or Bangladeshis.

The social construction of reality

Societies are mental constructions, therefore their reality is socially constructed. To understand how this occurs, we need to explore the concept of **culture**. Culture refers to a 'way of life' that has to be taught and learnt through primary and secondary **socialisation**. We can develop this concept to understand how culture contributes to the **social construction** of reality. Cultures are 'dynamic' and constantly changing. All cultures have two basic parts:

1. Material culture involves the physical objects ('artefacts'), such as cars, phones and books that a society produces and that reflect cultural knowledge, skills and interests.
2. Non-material culture consists of the knowledge and beliefs valued by a particular culture. This includes religious and scientific beliefs, as well as the meanings people give to material objects. Merton (1957) suggested that objects such as cars, houses and clothes can function in two ways. Their manifest function refers to the purpose for which they exist; clothes, for example, function to keep you warm. Their latent function, however, may be hidden. For example, material objects may function as status symbols – owning something a culture feels is desirable says something about you to others.

KEY TERMS

Customs: established and accepted cultural practices and behaviours.

Culture: the way of life of a particular group of people, taught and learnt through socialisation.

Socialisation: the process through which people learn the various forms of behaviour that go with membership of a particular culture. Young children, for example, must learn the roles, norms and values they will need to become full members of their society; these are things children do not acquire 'naturally'.

Social construction: the idea that our perception of what is real is created through a variety of historical and cultural processes, rather than something that is fixed and naturally occurring. Different societies, for example, construct male and female identities differently.

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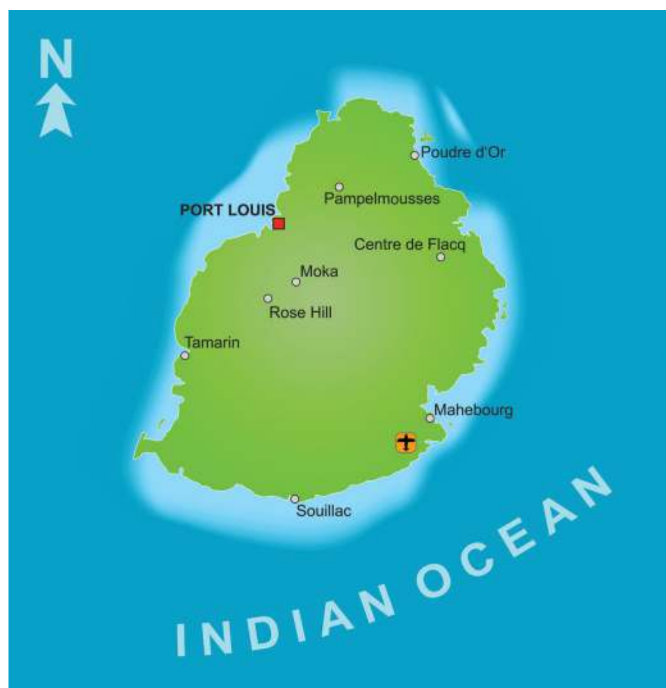

Figure 1.1: A map of Mauritius, an island in the Indian Ocean, which has an ethnically diverse population: about 68% are Indo-Mauritian, 25% are Creole (African descent or mixed race) with smaller numbers of Franco-Mauritian and Sino-Mauritians. How are societies 'imagined communities'?

ACTIVITY 1.1

Figure 1.2: This phone is at the same time an example both of material and non-material culture.

1 Explain how the phone can at the same time be an example both of material and non-material culture.
2 Identify other objects to which this also applies.

Reflection: Compare your examples of objects with a partner. Discuss to what extent your examples are the same and how you have identified other objects. Revisit your list and see whether there is anything you would change.

The idea that cultural objects can have different meanings suggests that cultural interaction, especially in contemporary societies, is both sophisticated and complex. The more sophisticated the interaction in any society, the more open it is to misunderstanding.

In order to make sense of cultural interaction, therefore, we need to create common meanings and establish a structure within which behaviour can happen in predictable ways. For a society to function it must have order and stability, and for these to exist people's behaviour must display patterns and regularities. While cultures may develop differently, they are all constructed from the same basic materials: **roles**, **values** and **norms**.

KEY TERMS

Roles: expected patterns of behaviour expected with each position that we hold, such as being a friend, student or teacher.

Values: beliefs or ideas that are important to the people who hold them. A value always expresses a belief about how something *should* be.

Norms: socially acceptable ways of behaving in different roles.

Roles

Roles are a building block of culture for two reasons:

1 They are always played in relation to other roles. For someone to play the role of teacher, for example, others must play the role of student. Roles contribute to the creation of culture because they demand both social interactions – people have to cooperate to successfully perform certain tasks – and that people are aware of others. In this respect, roles help individuals develop the ability to form groups and communities. This is particularly the case when they involve role-sets; that is, when the role involves a set of different relationships with different types of people, such as a doctor's relationship with patients, nurses, other doctors, patient's relatives and so on. This adds a further dimension to the cultural framework because it locks people into a range of relationships, each with its own routines and responsibilities.

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2 Every role has a name (or label). This name identifies a particular role and carries with it a sense of how people are expected to behave in any situation.

Values

These common expectations provide a sense of order and predictability because role play is guided by behavioural rules in two ways:

1 All roles have a prescribed aspect based on beliefs about how people should behave. Playing a role is guided (governed) by values that provide general behavioural guidelines – a teacher should teach their students, a parent should care for their child and so on.

2 Values provide only broad guidance for role behaviour. For example, it is understood that someone playing the role of teacher should teach, but values do not tell them how to play this role. The specific behavioural guides that tell people how to successfully play a role are known as norms.

Norms

Norms are specific rules showing how people should act in a particular situation (whereas values give only a general idea). Norms, therefore, are rules used to perform roles predictably and acceptably. This is important, according to Merton (1938), because without order and predictability, behaviour becomes risky and confusing. He used the term **anomie** to describe a condition where people who fail to understand the norms operating in a particular situation react in a range of ways – from confusion, through anger to fear.

KEY TERM

Anomie: a situation in which people are unable to predict the behaviour of others because the system of norms and values is not being followed.

Goffman (1959) argues that norms are more open to interpretation and negotiation than either roles or values. This means that they can quickly adapt to changes in the social environment. There are many ways to perform a teaching role, depending on a range of personal and cultural factors, including the behaviour of those in the teacher's role-set. Some teachers interpret their role as meaning that they need to be strict; others adopt a more friendly approach. However, these interpretations can change; even the strictest teacher may relax their approach at certain times.

Figure 1.3: How do different teachers interpret their roles differently?

Beliefs

Roles, values and norms provide an important framework within which relationships can be ordered and made mainly predictable. A further layer of cultural structuring involves beliefs. These are the important, deep-rooted ideas that shape our values and are, in some respects, shaped by them. While all values express a belief, beliefs do not necessarily express a value. They are more general behavioural guidelines that include ideas, opinions, views and attitudes. These may, or may not, be true; what matters is that they are *believed* to be true. Beliefs in contemporary societies are many and varied, but they perform a significant structuring role when combined with ideologies, which are discussed later in the chapter.

The importance of socialisation in influencing human behaviour, including the nurture versus nature debate

Socialisation is a process that describes how we are taught the behavioural rules we need to become both a member of a particular society/culture and an able social actor.

Biology, rather than culture, may influence some of the ways people behave. Like all animal species, humans seem to be programmed by their genes to some extent, for example, there seem to be 'drives' for procreation and for self-preservation. Genetics suggests that behaviour may be guided by instincts based on biological instructions that can be seen as part of 'human nature'.

Instincts are fixed human features. These are things we are born knowing and our cultural environment plays little or no role in the development of these instincts, for example many females have a 'mothering instinct'.

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A weaker expression of this idea is that people are born with certain capabilities that are then put into practice through environmental experiences. 'Nature' gives us strong hints about behavioural rules, but people are free to ignore those hints. If women have greater child-caring capabilities than men, then it makes genetic sense for them to take on a caring role within a family. However, this is not something their genes force them to do. One way to test whether nature, in the form of instincts, or nurture, in the form of socialisation, is the more important factor is to take advantage of a naturally occurring form of experimentation – the study of unsocialised or feral children.

Feral children

Feral children have missed out on primary socialisation by humans. Examples attract a lot of media attention, but in most cases the evidence is very unclear (for example, it is usually uncertain how long the child was away from people) and some, often noted, cases have been proved fake. Feral children can be raised by animals or survive on their own.

Evidence of human infants raised by animals is rare and not always reliable. One recent example is Saturday Mthiyane, who was discovered in 1987, aged five, living with a pack of monkeys in South Africa and who years later still behaved in ways associated with monkeys rather than humans. However, evidence of children raised with little, or no, human contact is more common. A well-documented example is 'Genie', a 13-year-old Californian girl discovered in 1970. Pines (1997) notes that Genie had been 'isolated in a small room and had not been spoken to by her parents since infancy. She was malnourished, abused, unloved, bereft of any toys or companionship'. When Genie was found, 'she could not stand erect … she was unable to speak: she could only whimper'.

Figure 1.4: Dani (above), often described as a feral child because she was severely neglected for years. How do feral children demonstrate the importance of socialisation?

Feral children are sociologically significant for two main reasons. First, when children are raised without human contact they fail to show the social and physical development we would expect from an ordinary raised child – for example, walking upright, talking, using a knife and fork. Children raised by animals behave as the animals do, suggesting that they learn by imitation. Second, if human behaviour is instinctive it is not clear why children such as Genie should develop so differently from children raised with human contact. We would also expect that, once returned to human society, feral children would quickly pick up normal human behaviours. This, however, is not the case, suggesting that if children miss out on socialisation by humans at an early stage in their life this cannot be corrected later.

Further evidence for the significance of socialisation is the fact that different cultures develop different ways of doing things. If human behaviours were governed by instinct, we would expect there to be few, if any, differences between societies. In fact, of course, there are huge variations between cultures, Sometimes, these cultural differences are relatively trivial. Billikopf (1999) discovered through his own experience that 'in Russia, when a man peels a banana for a lady it means he has a romantic interest in her'. At other times, cultural differences are more fundamental. Wojtczak (2009) argues that in Victorian Britain most women 'lived in a state little better than slavery'. As she notes: 'women's sole purpose was to marry and reproduce.' This is not a situation we would recognise in British society today. If human behaviour was instinctive, it would be much the same, in any place or time.

ACTIVITY 1.2

Suggest ways in which feral children can be used to test the influence of nature or nurture on human behaviour.

Reflection: Consider the 'Think like a sociologist' box on page 7 and then come back to this activity. Looking at it again, would you define the problems in the same way, or is there anything you would do differently?

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THINK LIKE A SOCIOLOGIST

Thinking about what you have learnt about feral children and the importance of primary socialisation, how would this knowledge and understanding be useful to people working with children, such as nannies and nursery teachers?

The 'I' and the 'Me'

Basic human skills have to be taught and learnt. The symbolic interactionist George Herbert Mead (1934) argued that the same was true of more advanced social skills. He claimed that the social context in which behaviour occurs conditions how people behave. While self-awareness – the ability to see ourselves as others see us and react accordingly – is often seen as an instinctive human skill, Mead argued that it is in fact learnt. It involves developing a concept of Self and this is what sets humans apart from animals. For Mead, 'the Self' (an awareness of who we are) has two related aspects:

- an 'I' aspect based around our opinion of ourselves as a whole. We each respond to the behaviour of others as an 'I'. Mead called this the 'unsocialised self'.
- a 'Me' aspect that consists of an awareness of how others expect us to behave in a given situation. Mead called this the 'social self' because it develops through socialisation.

We can illustrate these ideas in the following way. If you accidentally put your hand in a fire, the 'I' is expressed by how you react to the pain. The 'Me', however, specifically conditions how you choose to express that pain; your reaction will be conditioned by factors such as:

- who you are – whether you are adult or child, male or female and so on
- where you are – alone at home or in a public place
- who you are with – such as family, friends or strangers.

If you are a young child, for example, your reaction to being burnt may be to cry. If you are a young man, you may feel that crying is not a socially acceptable reaction – so you may swear loudly instead. Swearing loudly may be acceptable if you are at home by yourself, but may not be acceptable if you are fixing a stranger's fire as part of your job. Similarly, if you had been messing around with friends when you burnt your hand, their reaction may be to laugh and make fun of your pain. Laughter would though not be an appropriate reaction if it was your child who had burnt their hand.

The presentation of self

If the social context of an act changes both its meaning and how people react, it follows that an awareness of self is constructed and developed socially. Goffman (1959) argues that who we believe ourselves to be – our sense of identity – is also constructed socially through how we present ourselves to others.

Goffman proposed a model of self and identity in which he described social life as a series of dramatic episodes. People are *actors*. Sometimes, they write and speak their own lines – this is their personal identity. Sometimes, they follow lines that are written for them – the external influences that inform how people behave in particular situations and roles. For example, because we understand how our society defines masculinity and femininity, we know how we are expected to behave if we are male or female. We can also work out how others will react to our behaviour; we can see ourselves as others do and adjust our behaviour so as to try to make the impression on them that we want to achieve.

The idea of creating an impression is also significant in relation to how we present ourselves in different situations. Goffman suggests that when we adopt a particular identity, we 'perform' to others in order to 'manage' the impression they have of us. Identity performance, therefore, is about achieving a desired result: when you want to create a favourable impression on someone, you 'act' in ways you believe they will like. For example, if you want to be seen as a good Sociology student, you could carry around a textbook and a full folder of notes.

Fifty years before Goffman, Cooley (1909) suggested that in the majority of social encounters other people are used as a looking-glass self. They are like mirrors reflecting our self as others see us; when we 'look into the mirror' of how others behave towards us, we see reflected an image of the person *they* think we are.

The presentation of self always involves:

- The importance of interpretation: identities are broad social categories whose meaning differs both historically and across different cultures.
- The significance of negotiation. Identities are always open to discussion; what it means to be male, female, young, old and so on, is constantly changing as people 'push the negotiated boundaries' of these identities.

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KEY SOCIOLOGIST

Erving Goffman (1922–82)

The Canadian-American social psychologist, Erving Goffman, built on the earlier work of Mead, Cooley and others, developing theories of social interaction. He developed the dramaturgical approach to studying interaction, exploring the ways in which individuals perform actions in a similar way to performers in a play. He was interested in everyday life and, as well as his theoretical work, he carried out ethnographic research, most notably participant observation as an assistant in a mental institution, published as *Asylums: Essays on* the Condition of *the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. His other best-known books are *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life, Stigma* and *Gender Advertisements*. His daughter Alice is also a sociologist, known for her ethnographic work *On the Run: Fugitive Life in an American City*, about low-income African-American communities.

E

THINK LIKE A SOCIOLOGIST

Try to extend Goffman's ideas about social life being like acting in a play. Think about stage and backstage areas, being off stage, other members of the cast, who the audience is and so on.

ACTIVITY 1.3

With a partner, suggest ways that you try to manage the impression people have of you. How can this impression be negotiated?

Reflection: Think about who you have talked to this week – have you modified your behaviour with them? If you had done something differently would it have changed your interaction with them?

Alternatives

Not all scientific disciplines place the same emphasis on socialisation as sociology does when explaining how individuals become competent social actors. For example, biological ideas about evolution have sometimes been used to explain social development. These ideas range from relatively simple forms of 'social Darwinism', based on the idea that social life simply involves 'the survival of the fittest', to the more sophisticated arguments of sociobiology. In these, biological principles of natural selection and evolution are applied to the 'human animal' to produce what Wilson (1979) argued is a 'biological basis' for all human behaviour. He claimed that although human behaviour is not genetically determined, it is strongly influenced by 'biological programming' or 'biogrammars'.

Wilson believed that these 'biogrammars' suggest that humans are likely to behave in particular ways. For example, he believed that men and women are biologically programmed with different traits that lead them to perform different cultural roles:

- Women are passive, nurturing and caring, which makes them best suited to child-rearing.
- Male traits of aggression best suit them to a 'providing role' that translates into paid work in contemporary societies.

These arguments influenced sociology in, for example, the work of functionalist sociologists such as Parsons (1959a). He argued that in most societies, family roles are organised to reflect the belief that women play an expressive role – that of caring for others. Men, however, play an instrumental role – with a focus on providing for the family. Both of these roles are based, in part, on evolutionary biological principles.

While males and females can choose not to take these roles, Parsons believed, over-riding the biogrammar, behaviour that opposes this biological instinct is seen as a less efficient way of organising human cultural relationships. So, for example, men can take on the expressive role and women the instrumental role, but this is likely to cause social problems because it is not making the best use of the different capabilities of males and females.

Evolutionary psychology explains contemporary psychological and social traits in terms of the general principles of natural selection: those behaviours that are evolutionarily successful are selected and reproduced. In this way, various forms of social behaviour, such as family development and gender roles, can be explained as evolutionary adaptations occurring over many centuries. They represent successful adaptations to problems common to all human societies, such as how to raise children while also providing the things family members need for survival.

Psychology is, however, a diverse field and there are many different explanations for human development.

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These range from those focused on genetics (such as evolutionary psychology), through disciplines such as neuropsychology, to social psychological approaches broadly similar to the interactionist theories found in the works of Mead and Goffman.

Social psychology places greater stress on how environmental factors, such as family and work relationships, affect the development of genetic or psychological predispositions. Meins *et al.* (2002) noted that although there exists a genetic instinct for babies to become attached to their primary care-giver, this can be affected by environmental factors. The most important of these is the ability of the care-giver to recognise and understand the needs of the child.

ACTIVITY 1.4

Make a list of anything you think might be instinctive human behaviour (such as eating, sleeping, crime, childcare and so on). Remove an item from the list if people have a choice about whether or not to do it (such as crime) or how and when we do it (such as eating). What do the remaining items on your list tell you about the influence of instincts and culture on human behaviour?

Reflection: Compare your list with a partner's to see whether you have the same remaining items. Looking at your list, do you think your own personal experience or unconscious bias has affected your judgement?

Agencies of socialisation and social control, including family, education, peer-group, media and religion

The socialisation process takes two main forms:

1. Primary socialisation occurs mainly within the family and is the first stage of socialisation. This type of socialisation is essential to the development of behaviours we recognise as fundamentally human, such as learning language. The first primary relationship we form is usually with our parents. This is followed by primary attachments to other family members, people of our own age (friends) and, subsequently, to other adults such as work colleagues. Primary socialisation is necessary because human infants need other people in order to develop both as human beings and as members of a particular culture. We do not just need to learn general human behaviours, we must also learn about social relationships, how to play roles and so on.
2. Secondary socialisation involves secondary groups and is characterised, according to Berger and Luckmann (1967), by 'a sense of detachment from the ones teaching socialisation'. Secondary socialisations are situations in which we do not necessarily have close, personal contacts with those doing the socialising. Parsons (1959a) argued that one of the main purposes of secondary socialisation is to 'liberate the individual from a dependence on the primary attachments and relationships formed within the family group'. In contemporary societies, where the majority of people we meet are strangers, it would be impossible and undesirable to treat them in the same way that we treat people we love or know well. This is why we develop instrumental relationships – those based on what people can do for us, or what we can do for them, in particular situations. Berger and Luckmann suggest that while primary socialisation involves 'emotionally charged identification' with people such as our parents, secondary socialisation is characterised by 'formality and anonymity'. You do not, for example, treat a stranger who asks you for directions as your closest friend.

ACTIVITY 1.5

Identify differences between primary and secondary socialisation. Why does primary socialisation have to take place before secondary socialisation?

Figure 1.5: How does requiring people to dress identically contribute to their socialisation?

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Social control

The process of socialisation brings *order, stability* and *predictability* to people's behaviour. If a child is socialised into a perceived 'right' way of doing something, such as eating with a knife and fork, there must also be a perceived 'wrong' or deviant way (in this example perhaps eating with their fingers), which should be discouraged. Socialisation, therefore, is also a form of **social control** – it involves limiting the range of behaviours open to individuals. Social control is linked to the idea that human behaviour involves a life-long process of rule-learning, built on **sanctions** – the things we do to make people conform. The **agencies of socialisation** described below are also agencies of social control.

Agencies of socialisation

We can look at selected agencies of socialisation in terms of the roles, values and norms they try to teach and the sanctions they set/impose.

Primary socialisation

Family: Although there are only a small number of family roles, these tend to be played out over long periods and involve complex forms of role development, especially in societies that allow divorce and remarriage. Adults may have to learn roles ranging from husband/wife to parent/step-parent. Child development also involves a range of roles: baby, infant, child, teenager and, eventually perhaps, an adult with children of their own.

The ability to develop roles within the context of a group mainly governed by relationships based on love, responsibility and duty, means that we can make mistakes and learn lessons as we go without causing too much harm. Mead refers to parents as significant others. They shape both our basic values, such as how to address adults, and our *moral values*, for example our understanding of the difference between right and wrong. Basic norms, such as how to address family members (for example, '*Mum*', '*Dad*'), when, where and how to eat

Figure 1.6: Within a family, how do children play their roles differently from adults?

and sleep, and definitions of acceptable behaviour are normally taught within the family. Sanctions are mainly *informal*, with positive sanctions involving things such as:

- facial expressions (for example, smiling)
- verbal approval/reinforcement ('good boy/girl')
- physical rewards (such as gifts).

Negative sanctions are similarly wide-ranging – from showing disapproval through language (such as shouting) to physical punishment.

KEY TERMS

Social control: ways in which members of society are made to conform to norms and values.

Sanctions: ways of rewarding or punishing acceptable or unacceptable behaviour; usually used in the sense of punishments (negative sanctions).

Agencies of socialisation/social control: The social institutions and groups, such as family and the media, which influence behaviour by providing guidance, examples and sanctions.

Family: a social institution comprising a group of people linked by kinship ties.

KEY SOCIOLOGIST

George Herbert Mead (1863–1931)

Mead can be seen as the 'forgotten' father of sociology; he developed the symbolic interactionist approach which became the alternative tradition within sociology to the structural approaches of functionalism and **Marxism**. He did not publish any books. His ideas were spread after his death when some of his students at the University of Chicago in the USA put together several volumes made up of notes from his lectures, records of courses he taught and unpublished papers. He was interested in social action and the micro scale, with his work often was seen as social psychology rather than sociology. He developed the idea of the self as made up of the 'me', based on how the individual understands they are seen by the 'generalised other' and the 'I', based on the individual's impulses.

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Functionalists often see primary socialisation as a one-way process that passes from adults to children. However, socialisation involves more than an unquestioning acceptance of the behaviours we learn within the family group. Although children are socialised by being encouraged to *copy* behaviour, they are also actively involved in negotiating their socialisation. For example, children do not always obey their parents; they may even choose not to obey as part of a test of the limits of social control. Children may also receive different socialisation messages: a relative may reward behaviour that a parent would punish. Children have to learn that the same behaviour may receive different reactions from different people in different situations. Faced with a new situation, they need to be able to judge what the reactions are likely to be.

Peers: Peer-groups are made up of people of a similar age, for example, teenagers. They can be considered primary agencies of socialisation because we usually choose friends of a similar age, and personal interaction with them influences our behaviour – from how we dress and talk to the things we love or hate. Peer-groups can also be secondary agencies because they may be used as a reference group – what Hughes et al. (2002) call 'the models we use for appraising and shaping our attitudes, feelings and actions'. In the recent past, this has included youth **subcultures** such as hippies and punks. Although most people do not interact with groups as specific as this, we all have reference groups of people we identify with and whose appearance and behaviour we model our own on. Our behaviour may be influenced by things such as the fashions and the general behaviour of people our own age or status. This is an example of peer pressure as a form of social control.

KEY TERMS

Marxism: political, sociological and economic school of thought based on the work of Karl Marx.

Peers: people of similar status, and usually age, with whom a person has frequent contact.

Subcultures: a culture within a larger culture. Subcultures take many forms, such as religious groups, fans of a particular singer or actor, school gangs and so on. Subcultures usually develop their own norms and values, although these do not necessarily conflict with those of the wider culture within which they exist.

Figure 1.7: How do your friends influence your behaviour?

We play a range of peer-related roles, depending on our age group and situation. 'Friend', for example, expresses very personal role play, whereas at school or work we may have a variety of people we don't know very well (acquaintances). In the workplace, too, we are likely to play the role of colleague to at least some of our peers. Similarly, the values we are taught within a friendship or peer-group vary with age and circumstances. However, we will probably carry the value of friendship with us throughout our lives.

Peer-group norms often relate to ideas about age-appropriate behaviour. Young children, for example, are usually not permitted by law to smoke cigarettes or to buy alcohol. Also, it is generally not considered age-appropriate for the elderly to take part in extreme sports or wear clothes designed for younger people. Peer-group sanctions, or social sanctions, are generally informal and include things such as disapproving looks and negative comments. This is mainly because peer-group norms vary considerably, and the same behaviour may result in different responses depending on the situation. Swearing at a grandparent will probably be met with disapproval; swearing among friends may be perfectly acceptable. Approving gestures and language, laughing at your jokes and seeking out your company may represent positive sanctions. Refusing to speak to someone, rejecting friendship or engaging in physical violence are negative sanctions associated with peer-group.

Secondary socialisation

Agencies of secondary socialisation include schools, religious organisations and the media. In some cases, such as education, we are in daily contact with other

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