Chapter 5

Socialization

I. Social Experience: The Key to Our Humanity.
   A. Socialization is the lifelong social experience by which individuals develop their human potential and learn culture.
   B. Social experience is also the foundation for the personality, a person’s fairly consistent patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting.
   C. In the nineteenth century there was an intense debate regarding the relative importance of nature (biology) and nurture (socialization) in the shaping of human behavior. Modern sociologists view nurture as much more important than nature in shaping human behavior.
   D. Research on the effects of social isolation has demonstrated the importance of socialization. This research includes:
      1. Harry and Margaret Harlow’s (1962) experimental work with rhesus monkeys.
      2. Studies of isolated children such as Anna, Isabelle, and Genie.
      3. All evidence points to the crucial importance of social experience in personality development.

II. Understanding Socialization.
   A. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939): The elements of personality:
      1. The personality is shaped by two opposed forces: eros, the life instinct, and thanatos, the death instinct.
      2. The personality includes three basic components:
         a. The id, the human being’s basic drives.
         b. The ego, a person’s conscious efforts to balance innate pleasure-seeking drives with the demands of society.
         c. The superego, the operation of culture within the individual.
      3. The id and superego remain in conflict, but in a well-adjusted person, the ego manages these two opposing forces.
         a. Freud’s notion that we internalize norms and his idea that childhood experiences have lasting importance in the socialization process remain critical.
         b. Some of his work has been criticized as reflecting a sexist bias.

      1. Piaget identified four stages of cognitive development:
         a. The sensorimotor stage, the level of human development in which individuals experience the world only through sensory contact.
         b. The preoperational stage, the level of human development in which individuals first use language and other symbols.
c. The **concrete operational stage**, the level of development at which individuals first perceive causal connections in their surroundings.

d. The **formal operational stage**, the level of human development at which individuals think abstractly and critically.

2. Critical review.
   a. Piaget showed that human beings’ ability to shape their social world unfolds gradually as the result of both biological maturation and social experience.
   b. His theory may not apply to people in a society.

   1. Kohlberg suggests that the moral development of children passes through the preconventional, conventional, and postconventional stages.
   2. Critical review.
      a. Kohlberg’s model presents moral development in distinct stages.
      b. However, his theory is based on research using exclusively male subjects.

D. Carol Gilligan (1982, 1990): The gender factor
   1. Gilligan found that boys’ moral development reflects a justice model which stresses formal rules, whereas girls put more emphasis on caring and responsibility and less on the rules.
   2. Critical review.
      a. Gilligan’s work enhances our understanding of gender issues.
      b. However, she does not adequately address the issue of the origin of the gender-based differences that she has identified.

3. THINKING ABOUT DIVERSITY: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER BOX (p. 107)—The Importance of Gender in Research. Carol Gilligan has shown how gender guides social development.

E. George Herbert Mead (1863-1931) Theory of the social self.
   1. The **self** is a dimension of personality composed of an individual’s self-awareness and self-image.
      a. It emerges from social experience.
      b. This social experience is based on the exchange of symbols.
      c. Understanding someone’s intentions requires imagining the situation from that person’s point of view, a process called taking the role of the other.
   2. Mead’s associate, Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929), developed the notion of the **looking-glass self**, the idea that self-image is based on how others respond to us.
   3. The self has a dual nature:
      a. The “I” is the self as subject.
      b. The “me” is the self as object.
   4. The self develops through several stages:
      a. Imitation.
      b. Play, in which children take the roles of significant others.
      c. Games, in which they take the roles of several other people at the same time.
d. Acquisition of the **generalized other**, defined as *widespread cultural norms and values we use as references in evaluating ourselves*.

5. **Critical review.**
   a. Mead showed that symbolic interaction is the foundation of both self and society.
   b. He may be criticized for ignoring the role of biology in the development of the self.

F. **Erik H. Erikson (1902-1994): Eight stages of development.**
   1. Erik Erikson viewed development as occurring throughout life by facing eight challenges:
      a. **Stage 1** — Infancy: the challenge of trust (versus mistrust).
      b. **Stage 2** — Toddlerhood: the challenge of autonomy (versus doubt and shame).
      c. **Stage 3** — Preschool: the challenge of initiative (versus guilt).
      d. **Stage 4** — Preadolescence: the challenge of industriousness (versus inferiority).
      e. **Stage 5** — Adolescence: the challenge of gaining identity (versus confusion).
      f. **Stage 6** — Young adulthood: the challenge of intimacy (versus isolation).
      g. **Stage 7** — Middle adulthood: the challenge of making a difference (versus self-absorption).
      h. **Stage 8** — Old age: the challenge of integrity (versus despair).

   2. **Critical review.**
      a. Erikson’s theory views personality formation as a lifelong process.
      b. Not everyone confronts these challenges in the exact order; nor is it clear that failure to meet the challenge of one stage means that a person is doomed to fail later on. And his theory may not apply to all peoples in all times.

III. **Agents of Socialization.**
   A. The family is crucial. Socialization within the family varies markedly by social class.
      1. **SEEING OURSELVES—NATIONAL MAP 5-1 (p. 110): Racially Mixed People across the United States.** The experience of this type of racial diversity varies considerably from one region of the country to another.
   B. Schooling introduces students to being evaluated according to universal standards.
      1. Schools join with families in socializing children into gender roles.
      2. The hidden curriculum passes on important cultural values, mostly implicitly.
   C. **Peer groups** are also important, *whose members have interests, social position, and age in common*.
      1. **Anticipatory socialization**, *the process of social learning directed toward gaining a desired position, commonly occurs among peers*. 

D. The **mass media**, *impersonal communications directed at a vast audience*, also shape socialization. Television has become especially important in this regard.

1. Television provokes plenty of criticism from both political conservatives and liberals.
2. A large share of U.S. adults is concerned about the extent of mass media violence.

**IV. Socialization and the Life Course.**

A. Childhood became an increasingly separate phase of life with industrialization; it is currently becoming shorter.


B. Adolescence is often a period of social and emotional turmoil reflecting cultural inconsistency. It is a time of social contradictions when people are no longer children but not yet adults. Like all phases of the life course, it varies with class position.

C. SOCIOLOGY IN FOCUS BOX (p. 111)—Are We Grown Up Yet? Defining Adulthood: Our society does not provide a clear right of passage that marks the point of becoming an adult. This process does different significantly by class, however.

D. THINKING ABOUT DIVERSITY: RACE, CLASS, AND GENDER BOX (p. 116)—The Development of Self among High School Students: Adolescence is a time when people are concerned about identity. Grace Kao documented the importance of racial and ethnic stereotypes in students’ developing sense of self.

E. Adulthood is divided into several stages:

1. Early adulthood involves working toward goals set earlier in life.
2. Middle adulthood is characterized by greater reflectiveness.

F. Old age begins in the mid-sixties. The U.S. is currently experiencing an increase in the elderly population.

G. Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identifies five stages in coming to accept death: denial, anger, negotiation, resignation and acceptance. Today fear and anxiety about death are common, but greater acceptance is likely in the future.

H. The life course: Patterns and variations:

1. Although linked to the biological process of aging, essential characteristics of each stage of the life course are socially constructed.
2. Each stage presents characteristic problems and transitions that involve learning something new and, in many cases, unlearning what has become familiar.
3. General patterns relating to age are always modified by social variables such as race and gender.
4. People’s life experiences vary depending on when they were born. A **cohort** is a *category of people with a common characteristic, usually their age*. 

V. Resocialization: Total Institutions.

A. Total institutions are settings in which people are isolated from the rest of society and manipulated by an administrative staff.

B. Their purpose is resocialization: radically altering an inmate’s personality through deliberate control of the environment.

C. This is a two-stage process:
   1. The staff breaks down the new inmate’s existing identity.
   2. The staff tries to build a new self.