Throughout this text, we will look at additional examples of how the media socialize us in ways that we may or may not realize.

Gender and Racial–Ethnic Socialization

Gender socialization **is the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of being female or male in a specific group or society.** Through the process of gender socialization, we learn about what attitudes and behaviors are considered to be appropriate for girls and boys, men and women, in a particular society. Different sets of gender norms are appropriate for females and males in the United States and most other nations.

One of the primary agents of gender socialization is the family. In some families, this process begins even before the child's birth. Parents who learn the sex of the fetus through ultrasound or amniocentesis often purchase color-coded and gender-typed clothes, toys, and nursery decorations in anticipation of their daughter's or son's arrival. After birth, parents may respond differently toward male and female infants; they often play more roughly with boys and talk more lovingly to girls. Throughout childhood and adolescence, boys and girls are typically assigned different household chores and given different privileges (such as how late they may stay out at night).

When we look at the relationship between gender socialization and social class, the picture becomes more complex. Although some studies have found less-rigid gender stereotyping in higher-income families (Seegmiller, Suter, and Duviant, 1980; Brooks-Gunn, 1986), others have found more (Bardwell, Cochran, and Walker, 1986). One study found that higher-income families are more likely than low-income families to give "male-oriented" toys (which develop visual spatial and problem-solving skills) to children of both sexes (Serbin et al., 1990). Working-class families tend to adhere to more-rigid gender expectations than do middle-class families (Canter and Ageton, 1984; Brooks-Gunn, 1986).

We are limited in our knowledge about gender socialization practices among racial–ethnic groups because most studies have focused on white, middle-class families. In a study of African American families, the sociologist Janice Hale-Benson (1986) found that children typically are not taught to think of gender strictly in "male–female" terms. Both daughters and sons are socialized toward autonomy, independence, self-confidence, and nurturance of children (Bardwell, Cochran, and Walker, 1986). Sociologist Patricia Hill Collins (1990) has suggested that "othermothers" (women other than a child's biological mother) play an important part in the gender socialization and motivation of African American children, especially girls. Othermothers often serve as gender role models and encourage women to become activists on behalf of their children and community (Collins, 1990). By contrast, studies of Korean American and Latino/a families have found more traditional gender socialization (Min, 1988), although some evidence indicates that this pattern may be changing (Jaramillo and Zapata, 1987).

Like the family, schools, peer groups, and the media also contribute to our gender socialization. From kindergarten through college, teachers and peers reward gender-appropriate attitudes and behavior. Sports reinforce traditional gender roles through a rigid division of events into male and female categories. The media are also a powerful source of gender socialization; starting very early in childhood, children's books, television programs, movies, and music provide subtle and not-so-subtle messages about how boys and girls should act (see Chapter 10, "Sex and Gender").

In addition to gender-role socialization, we receive racial socialization throughout our lives. ***Racial socialization*** **is the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of one's racial or ethnic status** as it relates to our identity, interpersonal relationships, and location in the social hierarchy. Racial socialization includes direct statements regarding race, modeling behavior (wherein a child imitates the behavior of a parent or other caregiver), and indirect activities such as exposure to an environment that conveys a specific message about a racial or ethnic group ("We are better than they are," for example).

The most important aspects of racial identity and attitudes toward other racial–ethnic groups are passed down in families from generation to generation. As the sociologist Martin Marger (1994: 97) notes, "Fear of, dislike for, and antipathy toward one

group or another is learned in much the same way that people learn to eat with a knife or fork rather than with their bare hands or to respect others' privacy in personal matters." These beliefs can be transmitted in subtle and largely unconscious ways; they do not have to be taught directly or intentionally. Scholars have found that ethnic values and attitudes begin to crystallize among children as young as age four (Van Ausdale and Feagin, 2001). By this age, the society's ethnic hierarchy has become apparent to the child. Some minority parents feel that racial socialization is essential because it provides children with the skills and abilities they will need to survive in the larger society.

Socialization Through the Life Course

Why is socialization a lifelong process? Throughout our lives, we continue to learn. Each time we experience a change in status (such as becoming a college student or getting married), we learn a new set of rules, roles, and relationships. Even before we achieve a new status, we often participate in ***anticipatory socialization*—the process by which knowledge and skills are learned for future roles.** Many societies organize social activities according to age and gather data regarding the age composition of the people who live in that society. Some societies have distinct *rites of passage*, based on age or other factors, that publicly dramatize and validate changes in a person's status. In the United States and other industrialized societies, the most common categories of age are childhood, adolescence, and adulthood (often subdivided into young adulthood, middle adulthood, and older adulthood).

Childhood

Some social scientists believe that a child's sense of self is formed at a very early age and that it is difficult to change this self-perception later in life. Symbolic interactionists emphasize that during infancy and early childhood, family support and guidance are crucial to a child's developing self-concept. In some families, children are provided with emotional warmth, feelings of mutual trust, and a sense of security. These families come closer to our ideal cultural

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▲ Do you believe that what this child is learning here will have an influence on her actions in the future? What other childhood experiences might offset early negative racial socialization?

belief that childhood should be a time of carefree play, safety, and freedom from economic, political, and sexual responsibilities. However, other families reflect the discrepancy between cultural ideals and reality—children grow up in a setting characterized by fear, danger, and risks that are created by parental neglect, emotional maltreatment, or premature economic and sexual demands (Knudsen, 1992). Abused children often experience low self-esteem, an inability to trust others, feelings of isolationism and powerlessness, and denial of their feelings.

gender socialization the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of being female or male in a specific group or society.

racial socialization the aspect of socialization that contains specific messages and practices concerning the nature of one's racial or ethnic status.

anticipatory socialization the process by which knowledge and skills are learned for future roles.

Adolescence

In industrialized societies, the adolescent (or teenage) years represent a buffer between childhood and adulthood. In the United States, no specific rites of passage exist to mark children's move into adulthood; therefore, young people have to pursue their own routes to self-identity and adulthood (Gilmore, 1990). Anticipatory socialization is often associated with adolescence, during which many young people spend much of their time planning or being educated for future roles they hope to occupy. Rites of passage may be used to mark the transition between childhood and adolescence or adolescence and adulthood. A celebration known as a Bar Mitzvah is held for some Jewish boys on their thirteenth birthday, and a Bat Mitzvah is held for some Jewish girls on their twelfth birthday; these events mark the occasion upon which young people accept moral responsibility for their own actions and the fact that they are now old enough to own personal property. Similarly, some Latinas are honored with the *quinceañera*—a celebration of their fifteenth birthday that marks their passage into young womanhood. Although it is not officially designated as a rite of passage, many of us think of the time when we get our first driver's license or graduate from high school as another way in which we mark the transition from one period of our life to the next.

Adolescence is often characterized by emotional and social unrest. In the process of developing their own identities, some young people come into conflict with parents, teachers, and other authority figures who attempt to restrict their freedom. Adolescents may also find themselves caught between the demands of adulthood and their own lack of financial independence and experience in the job market. The experiences of individuals during adolescence vary according to race, class, and gender.

▲ An important rite of passage for many Latinas is the *quinceañera*—a celebration of their fifteenth birthday and their passage into womanhood. Can you see how this occasion might also be a form of anticipatory socialization?

Based on their family's economic situation and personal choices, some young people leave high school and move directly into the world of work while others pursue a college education and may continue to receive advice and financial support from their parents. Others are involved in both the world of work and the world of higher education as they seek to support themselves and to acquire more years of formal education or vocational/career training. In the twenty-first century, more college students are exploring international study programs as part of their adult socialization to help them gain new insights on the world around them (see the Sociology in Global Perspective box).

Adulthood

One of the major differences between child socialization and adult socialization is the degree of freedom of choice. If young adults are able to support themselves financially, they gain the ability to make more choices about their own lives. In early adulthood (usually until about age forty), people work toward their own goals of creating meaningful relationships with others, finding employment, and seeking personal fulfillment. Of course, young adults continue to be socialized by their parents, teachers, peers, and the media, but they also learn new attitudes and behaviors. For example, when we marry or have children, we learn new roles as partners or parents. Adults often learn about fads and fashions in clothing, music, and language from their children.

Workplace (occupational) socialization is one of the most important types of early adult socialization. This type of socialization tends to be most intense immediately after a person makes the transition from school to the workplace; however, this process may continue throughout our years of employment. Many people experience continuous workplace socialization as a result of having more than one career in their lifetime.

sociology in global perspective

Open Doors: Study Abroad and Global Socialization

As I had been told, the first month or so of the study abroad experience feels like a vacation in that everything is exciting and new. After this "honeymoon" period, the experience becomes something other than merely a vacation or fleeting visit. You start to relate to the people, the culture, and life in that country not from the eyes of a tourist passing through, but progressively from the eyes of those around you—the citizens who were born and raised there. That is the perspective which is unattainable without actually *living* in another country, and a perspective which I have come to appreciate and understand more fully as I settle back into life here back at home.

—John R. R. Howie (2010), a Boston College economics and Mandarin Chinese major, explaining what studying abroad at Peking University, in Beijing, meant to him

Although we may read and hear about what goes on in other countries, it is quite different to be able to see and experience those cultures firsthand. Perhaps this is why a record number of U.S. students are choosing to study abroad: Studying in another country is an important part of the college socialization process for preparing to live and work in an interconnected world. According to recent reports, more than 260,000 students annually participate in study-abroad programs, and this number continues to increase each year. China, India, and the Middle East have become increasingly popular destinations for study abroad; however, the leading destinations continue to be in Europe, with the United Kingdom, Italy, Spain, and France leading the list (Institute of International Education, 2010). More than half (56.3 percent) of study-abroad students remain in their host country for a short-term stay (summer, January term, or eight weeks or less during the academic year). About 40 percent of all study-abroad students remain for one or two quarters or one semester. Some analysts believe that longer periods of study abroad provide students with greater opportunities to learn the language and way of life of people in other nations (Institute of International Education, 2010).

Sociologists are interested in studying the profile of U.S. study-abroad students because the data provide interesting insights on differences in students' participation by classification, gender, race, and class. Based on the latest figures available (2007/2008), most students participating in study-abroad programs are classified as juniors (35.9 percent) or seniors (21.3 percent). Women make up 65.1 percent of all study-abroad students while men make up 34.9 percent. White students make up the vast majority of study-abroad students (81.8 percent). Other groups include Asian or Pacific Islander (6.6 percent), Hispanic or Latino(a) (5.9 percent), and black or African American (4.0 percent).

Community college students have the fewest opportunities to study abroad because of a shortage of programs and lack of support for programs that do exist. Studies have found that many community college students would like to participate in study-abroad programs but that institutional barriers and prevailing beliefs by school officials about students' personal barriers (such as inability to afford study abroad, conflicting work and family obligations, and lack of understanding about the importance of possible cultural capital that might be gained from such an experience) would keep students from participating if such programs were offered (Raby, 2010).

Socialization for life in the global community is necessary to all students because of the increasing significance of international understanding and the need to learn how to live and work in a diversified nation and world. Even more important may be the opportunity for each student to gain direction and meaning in his or her own life, as John R. R. Howie (2010), the study-abroad student, explains:

> In a sense, the opportunity to live away from my life as I knew it made my future aspirations more apparent to me. As I came back to my life at Boston College, that clarity gave direction and more meaning to what I was doing now. The months abroad definitely weren't always easy—I remember how hard it was adjusting to the food, being away from my girlfriend, friends, and family, and seemingly being out of place in every way—but it was undoubtedly one of the most rewarding and meaningful experiences I have ever had.

reflect & analyze

What are the positive aspects of study-abroad programs in the college socialization process? What are the limitations of such programs? If you are unable to participate in a study-abroad program, what other methods and resources might you use to gain "global socialization," which could be beneficial in helping you meet your goals for the future?

▲ FIGURE 3.3 **KEYS TO AGING WELL**
Graphic from the Global Aging Initiative–Aging Research Project at Indiana University. Reprinted by permission of Barbara Hawkins, Indiana University.

In middle adulthood—between the ages of forty and sixty-five—people begin to compare their accomplishments with their earlier expectations. This is the point at which people either decide that they have reached their goals or recognize that they have attained as much as they are likely to achieve.

Late adulthood may be divided into three categories: (1) the "young-old" (ages sixty-five to seventy-four), (2) the "old-old" (ages seventy-five to eighty-five), and (3) the "oldest-old" (over age eighty-five). Although these are somewhat arbitrary divisions, the "young-old" are less likely to suffer from disabling illnesses, whereas some of the "old-old" are more likely to suffer such illnesses. Increasingly, studies in gerontology and the sociology of medicine have come to question these arbitrary categories and show that some persons defy the expectations of their age grouping based on individual genetic makeup, lifestyle choices, and a zest for living. Perhaps "old age" is what we make it!

Late Adulthood and Ageism

In older adulthood, some people are quite happy and content; others are not (see ▶ Figure 3.3). Erik Erikson noted that difficult changes in adult attitudes and behavior occur in the last years of life, when people experience decreased physical ability, lower prestige, and the prospect of death. Older adults in industrialized societies may experience ***social devaluation*—wherein a person or group is considered to have less social value than other persons or groups.** Social devaluation is especially acute when people are leaving roles that have defined their sense of social identity and provided them with meaningful activity.

Negative images regarding older persons reinforce ***ageism*—prejudice and discrimination against people on the basis of age, particularly against older persons.** Ageism is reinforced by stereotypes, whereby people have narrow, fixed images of certain groups. Older persons are often stereotyped as thinking and moving slowly; as being bound to themselves and their past, unable to change and grow; as being unable to move forward and often moving backward.

Negative images also contribute to the view that women are "old" ten or fifteen years sooner than men (Bell, 1989). The multibillion-dollar cosmetics industry helps perpetuate the myth that age reduces the "sexual value" of women but increases it for men. Men's sexual value is defined more in terms of personality, intelligence, and earning power than by physical appearance. For women, however, sexual attractiveness is based on youthful appearance. By idealizing this "youthful" image of women and playing up the fear of growing older, sponsors sell thousands of products and services that claim to prevent or fix the "ravages" of aging.

Although not all people act on appearances alone, Patricia Moore, an industrial designer, found that many do. At age twenty-seven, Moore disguised herself as an eighty-five-year-old woman by donning age-appropriate clothing and placing baby oil in her eyes to create the appearance of cataracts. With the help of a makeup artist, Moore supplemented the "aging process" with latex wrinkles, stained teeth, and a gray wig. For three years, "Old Pat Moore" went to various locations, including a grocery store, to see how people responded to her:

> When I did my grocery shopping while in character, I learned quickly that the Old Pat Moore behaved—and was treated—differently from the Young Pat Moore. When I was 85, people were more likely to jockey ahead of me in the checkout line. And even more interesting, I found that when it happened,

> I didn't say anything to the offender, as I certainly would at age 27. It seemed somehow, even to me, that it was okay for them to do this to the Old Pat Moore, since they were undoubtedly busier than I was anyway. And further, they apparently thought it was okay, too! After all, little old ladies have plenty of time, don't they? And then when I did get to the checkout counter, the clerk might start yelling, assuming I was deaf, or becoming immediately testy, assuming I would take a long time to get my money out, or would ask to have the price repeated, or somehow become confused about the transaction. What it all added up to was that people feared I would be trouble, so they tried to have as little to do with me as possible. And the amazing thing is that I began almost to believe it myself. . . . I think perhaps the worst thing about aging may be the overwhelming sense that everything around you is letting you know that you are not terribly important any more. (Moore with Conn, 1985: 75–76)

If we apply our sociological imagination to Moore's study, we find that "Old Pat Moore's" experiences reflect what many older persons already know—it is other people's *reactions* to their age, not their age itself, that place them at a disadvantage.

Many older people buffer themselves against ageism by continuing to view themselves as being in middle adulthood long after their actual chronological age would suggest otherwise. Other people begin a process of resocialization to redefine their own identity as mature adults.

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▲ Throughout life, our self-concept is influenced by our interactions with others.

Resocialization

***Resocialization* is the process of learning a new and different set of attitudes, values, and behaviors from those in one's background and previous experience.** Resocialization may be voluntary or involuntary. In either case, people undergo changes that are much more rapid and pervasive than the gradual adaptations that socialization usually involves.

Voluntary Resocialization

Resocialization is voluntary when we assume a new status (such as becoming a student, an employee, or a retiree) of our own free will. Sometimes, voluntary resocialization involves medical or psychological treatment or religious conversion, in which case the person's existing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors must undergo strenuous modification to a new regime and a new way of life. For example, resocialization for adult survivors of emotional/physical child abuse includes extensive therapy in order to form new patterns of thinking and action, somewhat like Alcoholics Anonymous and its twelve-step program, which has become the basis for many other programs dealing with addictive behavior (Parrish, 1990).

Involuntary Resocialization

Involuntary resocialization occurs against a person's wishes and generally takes place within a ***total institution*—a place where people are isolated from the rest of society for a set period of time and come under the control of the officials who run the institution** (Goffman, 1961a). Military

social devaluation a situation in which a person or group is considered to have less social value than other individuals or groups.

ageism prejudice and discrimination against people on the basis of age, particularly against older people.

resocialization the process of learning a new and different set of attitudes, values, and behaviors from those in one's background and experience.

total institution Erving Goffman's term for a place where people are isolated from the rest of society for a set period of time and come under the control of the officials who run the institution.

boot camps, jails and prisons, concentration camps, and some mental hospitals are total institutions. Resocialization is a two-step process. First, people are totally stripped of their former selves—or depersonalized—through a degradation ceremony (Goffman, 1961a). For example, inmates entering prison are required to strip, shower, and wear assigned institutional clothing. In the process, they are searched, weighed, fingerprinted, photographed, and given no privacy even in showers and restrooms. Their official identification becomes not a name but a number. In this abrupt break from their former existence, they must leave behind their personal possessions and their family and friends. The depersonalization process continues as they are required to obey rigid rules and to conform to their new environment.

The second step in the resocialization process occurs when the staff at an institution attempt to build a more compliant person. A system of rewards and punishments (such as providing or withholding television or exercise privileges) encourages conformity to institutional norms.

Individuals respond to resocialization in different ways. Some people are rehabilitated; others become angry and hostile toward the system that has taken away their freedom. Although the assumed purpose of involuntary resocialization is to reform persons so that they will conform to societal standards of conduct after their release, the ability of total institutions to modify offenders' behavior in a meaningful manner has been widely questioned. In many prisons, for example, inmates may conform to the norms of the prison or of other inmates but have little respect for the norms and the laws of the larger society.

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▲ New inmates are taught how to order their meals. Two fingers raised means two portions. There is no talking in line. Inmates must eat all their meal. This "ceremony" suggests how much freedom and dignity an inmate loses when beginning the resocialization process.

Socialization in the Future

What will socialization be like in the future? The family is likely to remain the institution that most fundamentally shapes and nurtures people's personal values and self-identity. However, other institutions, including education, religion, and the media, will continue to exert a profound influence on individuals of all ages. A central value-oriented issue facing parents and teachers as they attempt to socialize children is the growing dominance of television, the Internet, and social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Gmail, which make it possible for children and young people to experience many things outside their own homes and schools and to communicate routinely with people around the world.

The socialization process in colleges and universities will become more diverse as students have an even wider array of options in higher education, including attending traditional classes in brick-and-mortar buildings, taking independent-study courses, enrolling in online courses and degree programs, participating in study-abroad programs, and facing additional options that are unknown at this time. However, it remains to be seen whether newer approaches to socialization in higher education will be more stressful or less stressful than current methods. (See the You Can Make a Difference box to learn how some students are working to reduce stress in their current college environment.)

It is very likely that socialization in the future will be vastly different in the world of global instant communication than it has been in the past. We are already bombarded with massive quantities of information that vary widely in usefulness and quality. If analysts are correct in their assumption that we are moving toward a paperless society in the future, the flow of information will increasingly shift to the Web and intensify the amount of data with which we are bombarded. At the same time, we will find it difficult to discern what information is useful and what is entertainment or trivia. One thing remains clear: The socialization process will continue to be a dynamic and important part of our life as we assume various roles throughout our life span.

you can make a difference

Don't Be Stressed Out in College: Helping Yourself and Others

- MTV/Associated Press Survey on What Stresses Out College Students Finds That While Two-Thirds of College Students Say They're Generally Happy, 80% Feel Day-to-Day Stress! (Ypulse.com, 2010).
- A study in the *Journal of Adolescent Health* reports that stresses from the daily routine of college life keep 68 percent of students awake at night, with 20 percent of them reporting being sleepless for some period of time at least once a week (Messenger, 2009).

The college experience is an important socialization process for young people and adults. The economic and social benefits from achieving additional years of education beyond high school are great; however, some students are concerned that the price (not only in terms of dollars and cents) of such an education is also great because of academic and psychological stress. Is there anything that you can do to reduce stress? Do you have tips for coping that you might pass on to other students?

Here are a few thoughts on how to reduce stress in college:

- *Don't stress about being stressed.* Sometimes we worry even more when we realize that we are feeling pressure to succeed, to get along well with others, and to fit into new surroundings, particularly during our early college years. For students taking classes online, a whole new experience occurs as you learn how to interact with professors and others in the virtual community. Sometimes it is best to quickly admit that we are stressed out and then to set up a plan for handling the problem. Don't wait to seek help from others if the worries seem overwhelming.
- *Get more sleep.* This may sound odd when you are already concerned about there not being enough hours in your day; however, this is sound advice. One of the major stressors of college students (and others!) is a chronic lack of sleep. Although professionals suggest that college students should get a minimum of eight hours of sleep each night, 70 percent of students surveyed in one study reported that they slept far less than eight hours per night. If we are organized, we can often do more work in a shorter period of time, and this gives us more time for rest and relaxation.
- *Stay well.* Getting sick is one of the major ways in which college students get behind in their studies, work, and personal life. Cold and flu are among the key types of illnesses that affect students' studies and class attendance. As simple as it may seem, Mother's adage about washing your hands regularly is excellent advice for reducing the likelihood of becoming sick. Hand sanitizers have become increasingly popular on college campuses since the outbreak of the H1N1 flu virus. Make use of receptacles dispensing sanitizer on campus and elsewhere. Dress warmly in cold weather, cultivate good eating habits (despite the 24-hour-a-day availability of pizza and junk food), and squeeze in time for some exercise even when you think you definitely don't have time to exercise.
- *Plan some quiet time and some fun time.* Many of us get immersed in our work projects and forget that we need some time to ourselves to think, meditate, and engage in activities we find relaxing. We need some personal space, and if you are attending a brick-and-mortar college, you may have to look around to find a place where you can have a few moments for quality quiet time without other people around. If you are taking classes away from a traditional college campus, you may have to carve out a space in which to do your studies and to spend time without interruptions from other family members or coworkers.
- *Gain a new perspective on stress by helping other people cope with their own stress.* Sometimes the surest way to learn new information or to develop a new pattern is to share ideas with another individual. If you know someone who appears to be stressing out, pass on positive suggestions about how you have coped with a similar situation. This may be especially helpful if you have been in college for several years and can give insights from your own experience to a first-year student or someone else who is new to your college. Although colleges offer orientation and advising programs, many students like to turn to peers to find out how to cope with problematic situations. Often, the individuals we meet in college—and with whom we share our stresses and coping mechanisms—are the same people we later identify as our best friends (based on Lynn, 2010). Sharing helps us to talk aloud about our problems and coping strategies; it also provides us with an opportunity to learn from other people about their life experiences and strategies for remaining calm even in seemingly stressful circumstances.

What other suggestions do you have for dealing with stress in college? At home? At work?

Interested in learning more online? Use keywords such as "college student stress" and "tips for preventing stress" to search for sources of information and assistance.

chapter review

• What is socialization, and why is it important for human beings?

Socialization is the lifelong process through which individuals acquire their self-identity and learn the physical, mental, and social skills needed for survival in society. The kind of person we become depends greatly on what we learn during our formative years from our surrounding social groups and social environment.

• How much of our unique human characteristics comes from heredity and how much from our social environment?

As individual human beings, we have unique identities, personalities, and relationships with others. Each of us is a product of two forces: (1) heredity, referred to as "nature," and (2) the social environment, referred to as "nurture." Whereas biology dictates our physical makeup, the social environment largely determines how we develop and behave.

• Why is social contact essential for human beings?

Social contact is essential in developing a self, or self-concept, which represents an individual's perceptions and feelings of being a distinct or separate person. Much of what we think about ourselves is gained from our interactions with others and from what we perceive that others think of us.

• What are the main social psychological theories on human development?

According to Sigmund Freud, the self emerges from three interrelated forces: the id, the ego, and the superego. When a person is well adjusted, the three forces act in balance. Jean Piaget identified four cognitive stages of development; each child must go through each stage in sequence before moving on to the next one, although some children move through them faster than others.

• How do sociologists believe that we develop a self-concept?

According to Charles Horton Cooley's concept of the looking-glass self, we develop a self-concept as we see ourselves through the perceptions of others. Our initial sense of self is typically based on how families perceive and treat us. George Herbert Mead suggested that we develop a self-concept through role-taking and learning the rules of social interaction. According to Mead, the self is divided into the "I" and the "me." The "I" represents the spontaneous and unique traits of each person. The "me" represents the internalized attitudes and demands of other members of society.

• What are the primary agents of socialization?

The agents of socialization include the family, schools, peer groups, and the media. Our families, which transmit cultural and social values to us, are the most important agents of socialization in all societies, serving these functions: (1) procreating and socializing children, (2) providing emotional support, and (3) assigning social position. Schools primarily teach knowledge and skills but also have a profound influence on the self-image, beliefs, and values of children. Peer groups contribute to our sense of belonging and self-worth, and are a key source of information about acceptable behavior. The media function as socializing agents by (1) informing us about world events, (2) introducing us to a wide variety of people, and (3) providing an opportunity to live vicariously through other people's experiences.

• When does socialization end?

Socialization is ongoing throughout the life course. We learn knowledge and skills for future roles through anticipatory socialization. Parents are socialized by their own children, and adults learn through workplace socialization. Resocialization is the process of learning new attitudes, values, and behaviors, either voluntarily or involuntarily.

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questions for critical thinking

1. Consider the concept of the looking-glass self. How do you think others perceive you? Do you think most people perceive you correctly?
2. What are your "I" traits? What are your "me" traits? Which ones are stronger?
3. What are some different ways that you might study the effect of toys on the socialization of children? How could you isolate the toy variable from other variables that influence children's socialization?
4. Is the attempted rehabilitation of criminal offenders—through boot camp programs, for example—a form of socialization or resocialization?

turning to video

Watch the ABC video *Student Stress: Dark Side of College* (running time 2:25), available through **CengageBrain.com.** In this video, students discuss the pressures of college that can lead to excessive stress and depression. As you watch the video, think about your own experience as a college student. After you've watched the video, consider these questions: Which of the stressors discussed in the video do you experience or have you experienced? What resources are available on your campus or through your school to help you manage stress? What, if any, additional resources would be helpful?