CULTURE & SOCIETY

Learning Objectives

- Know what culture consists of and recognize how it differs from society.

- Learn about the "cultural turn" and sociological perspectives on culture. Understand the processes that changed societies over time.

- Recognize the legacies of colonialism and the effects of globalization on your own life and the lives of people around the world.

- Understand the debate over the influence of biological and cultural factors on behavior. Learn how the Internet and global culture influence local cultures.

Research Today: Understanding the Modern World

Cultural Appropriation

- **Cultural appropriation**: When members of one cultural group borrow elements of another group's culture.

- Sociologist George Lipsitz has argued that when a majority or dominant culture appropriates elements of a minority culture, particularly one that has historically suffered oppression at the hands of the majority, it is especially important that those doing the appropriation be extremely sensitive to the historical meaning and contemporary significance of the cultural forms being appropriated.

Cultural Appropriation at Yale

- In October 2015, the campus of Yale University broke out in controversy over a series of emails written by administrators about Halloween.

- An instructor was fired after students felt her email was dismissive of the power of harmful stereotypes against marginalized groups.

Subcultures and Countercultures

- **Subcultures**: Values and norms distinct from those of the majority, held by a group within a wider society.

  - Subcultures imply different cultural backgrounds and languages within a larger society, and they include segments of the population that have different cultural patterns.

  - Some people identify with a particular subculture, whereas others move among several.

- **Countercultures**: Cultural groups within a wider society that largely reject the values and norms of the majority.

Assimilation and Multiculturalism

- **Assimilation**: The acceptance of a minority group by a majority population in which the new group takes on the values and norms of the dominant culture.

- While most immigrants to the United States have gradually adopted the label of "American," scholars maintain that assimilation varies depending on access to opportunity.

- **Multiculturalism**: A condition in which ethnic groups exist separately and share equally in economic and political life.

- Multiculturalism calls for respecting cultural diversity and promoting the equality of different cultures.

Cultural Identity and Ethnocentrism

- When exposed to a new culture, people may experience *culture shock,* a state of disorientation from having lost familiar cultural reference points and not yet knowing how to navigate in the new culture.

- **Ethnocentrism**: The tendency to look at other cultures through the eyes of one's own culture, and thereby misrepresent them.

- **Cultural relativism**: The practice of judging a society by its own standards. Useful for understanding differences in culturally diverse societies.

Unanswered Questions

Does Nature or Nurture More Powerfully Influence Human Behavior?

- Are we shaped by our biology, or are we products of learning through life's experiences—nurture?

- **Sociobiology**: An approach that attempts to explain the behavior of both animals and human beings in terms of biological principles.

- Most sociologists today acknowledge a role for nature in determining attitudes and behavior, but they do not assume that all behavior is governed by instinct.

- **Instincts**: Fixed patterns of behavior that have genetic origins and that appear in all normal animals within a given species.

Nature vs. Nurture

- When who we are depends on **nature**, our temperaments, interests, and talents are set before birth

- When the relationships and environment that surround us is responsible for who we are, this is the result of **nurture**

- Twin studies help to identify the impact of nature on personality

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EmctxRcmloc

Does the Internet Promote a Global Culture?

- Many believe that the rapid worldwide growth of the Internet corresponds to a spread in values that echo European and North American cultures:

  - Global communication

  - Seemingly unlimited information

  - Instant gratification

- Countries reinforce traditional cultural values by censoring or blocking opposing content.

Online Spaces

- Online spaces can sometimes become echo chambers when people seek out like-minded others who reinforce their own beliefs.

- The Internet fosters digitally linked tribes with their own unique cultural beliefs and values, sometimes in conflict with the dominant culture.
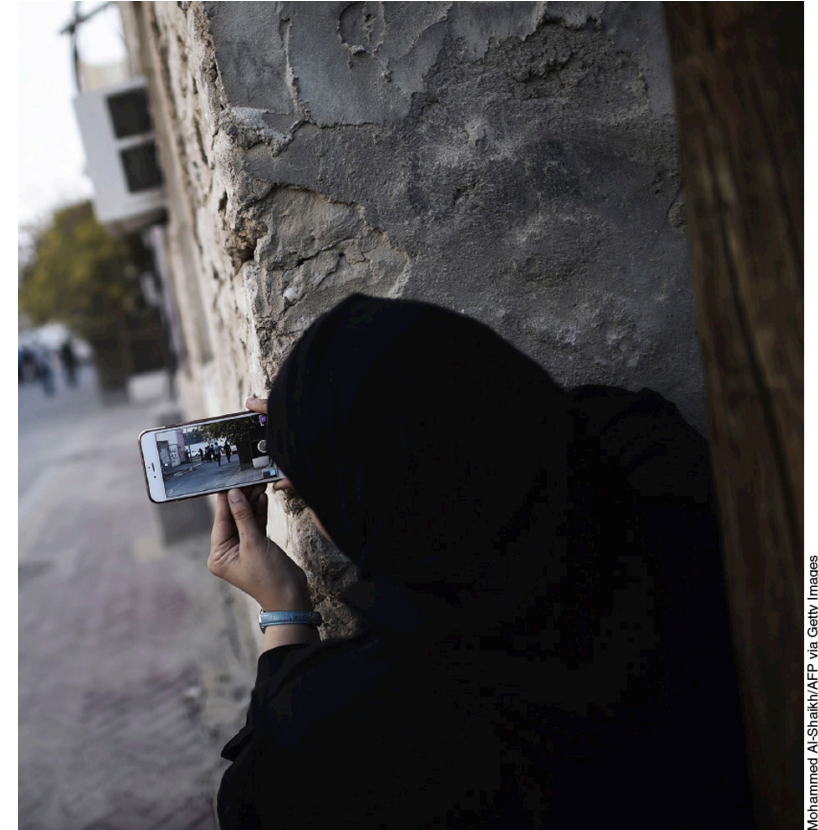
Mohammed Al-Shaikh/AFP via Getty Images

Does Globalization Weaken or Strengthen Local Cultures?

- Globalization refers to the reordering of time and distance in social life as our lives are influenced by events far removed from our everyday activities.

- Benefits of globalization include access to a variety of goods and foodstuffs.

- Problems caused or exacerbated by globalization include global climate change, threat of terrorism, job loss.

- Globalization technology also supports local cultures: you can communicate with others who share your cultural identity around the world.

Nationalism

- The growing global culture has provoked numerous reactions at the local level. One of these reactions is that of nationalism.

- **Nationalism**: A set of beliefs and symbols expressing identification with a national community.

- Nationalism can be highly political, involving attempts to assert the power of a nation based on a shared ethnic or racial identity over people of a different ethnicity or race.

How Easily Do Cultures Change?

- **Cultural lag**: The idea, introduced by William Ogburn, that changes in cultural values and norms take time to catch up with technological developments.

- For example, gene editing technology made it easy & inexpensive to alter specific genes, opening up possibilities of creating new forms with unique (presumably desirable properties)

- Gene editing technology outpaced cultural values, so guidelines were developed to navigate ethical questions and prevent violation of shared values.

How Easily Do Cultures Change?

- One experiment under serious consideration: altering genes in thousands of white-footed mice on Nantucket Island rendering them resistant to Lyme disease.

- Once altered the mice would spread the gene to a million mice on the island, eradicating a disease that afflicts many of the island's residents.

- Gene editing can be used to create a strain of malaria resistant mosquitoes

- Gene editing technique may hold great promise but also raises a host of ethical questions

- US National Academy of Science & National Academy of Medicine to develop guidelines to modify genes

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XPDb8tqgfjY

Socialization and the Life Course

Opening Question

Which of the following is considered the "most important" value that parents in the United States should instill in their children today?

A. creativity

B. being responsible

C. religious faith

D. obedience

Learning Objectives (1 of 2)

- Understand how the four main agents of socialization contribute to social reproduction. Learn the stages of the life course, and see the similarities and differences among cultures.

- Compare and contrast the theories of child development according to Mead, Cooley, Piaget, Freud, and Chodorow.

Learning Objectives (2 of 2)

- Learn how recent research reveals the ways that parents teach children about the meaning of racial identity.

- Consider the influence of social factors, especially mass media and social media, on gender learning. Analyze a new approach to combating bullying.

Today's Class

- Basic Concepts
  - How the four main agents of socialization contribute to social reproduction
  - The stages of the life course; the similarities and differences among cultures
- Theories of Socialization
  - Learn the theories of child development according to Mead, Piaget, Freud, and Chodorow
- Research on Socialization Today
  - Learn how recent research on changing gender roles and child care
- Unanswered Questions about Socialization

Introduction to Socialization

- Sociologists focus their study on the role of society and social interaction in self-development

- How does the environment and others shape who you are?

- When and how do you develop the concept of right and wrong?

- **Socialization** is the lifelong process through which people learn values, norms, behavior & social skills appropriate to their social position, such as their age, gender, or social class

Introduction to Socialization

- Socialization is not the same as socializing (to mix socially)

- Socialization is critical to both individuals and society and provides the means through which we can gradually see ourselves through the eyes of others

- It is through socialization that we learn language

- Societies depend on socialization to ensure survival

Socialization

- **Socialization**: The social processes through which children develop an awareness of social norms and values and achieve a distinct sense of self. Although socialization processes are particularly significant in infancy and childhood, they continue to some degree throughout life.

Mario Villafuerte/Bloomberg via Getty Images

Life Course

- Socialization is a process whereby the infant gradually becomes a self-aware knowledgeable person, skilled in ways of his or her culture and historical time periods**.**

- Social roles we hold in life could seem 'natural' but involve intense socialization or learning how to successfully navigate one's roles & responsibilities through life course.

- **Life course**: The various transitions and stages people experience during their lives.

- **Social reproduction**: The process of perpetuating values, norms, and social practices through socialization, which leads to structural continuity over time.

Basic Concepts

Agents of Socialization

- **Agents of socialization**: Groups or social contexts within which processes of socialization take place.

- In primary socialization, the family is the main agent of socialization.

- In secondary socialization, other agents of socialization—such as schools, peer groups, organizations, the media, the workplace, religious organizations, and even the government—become socializing forces.

Types of Socialization

- **Resocialization**: The process whereby people learn new rules and norms upon entering a new social world.

- **Mild Resocialization :** E.g., move to a new country, must learn new language, customs etiquette, such as bowing instead of shaking hands with a colleague.

- **Extreme form of resocialization**: E.g., if one enters an institution such as the military or prison, where the individual has to learn an entirely new set of rules, schedules and modes of interacting with others.

Types of Socialization

- **Desocialization**: The process whereby people unlearn rules and norms upon exiting a particular social world.

- **Example:** Athlete who has retired from a competitive sport

- **Anticipatory socialization**: The process whereby we learn about a social role in advance of enacting the role.

- **Example:** Summer camp for high school prepare young children to someday live independently from one's parents.

Socialization
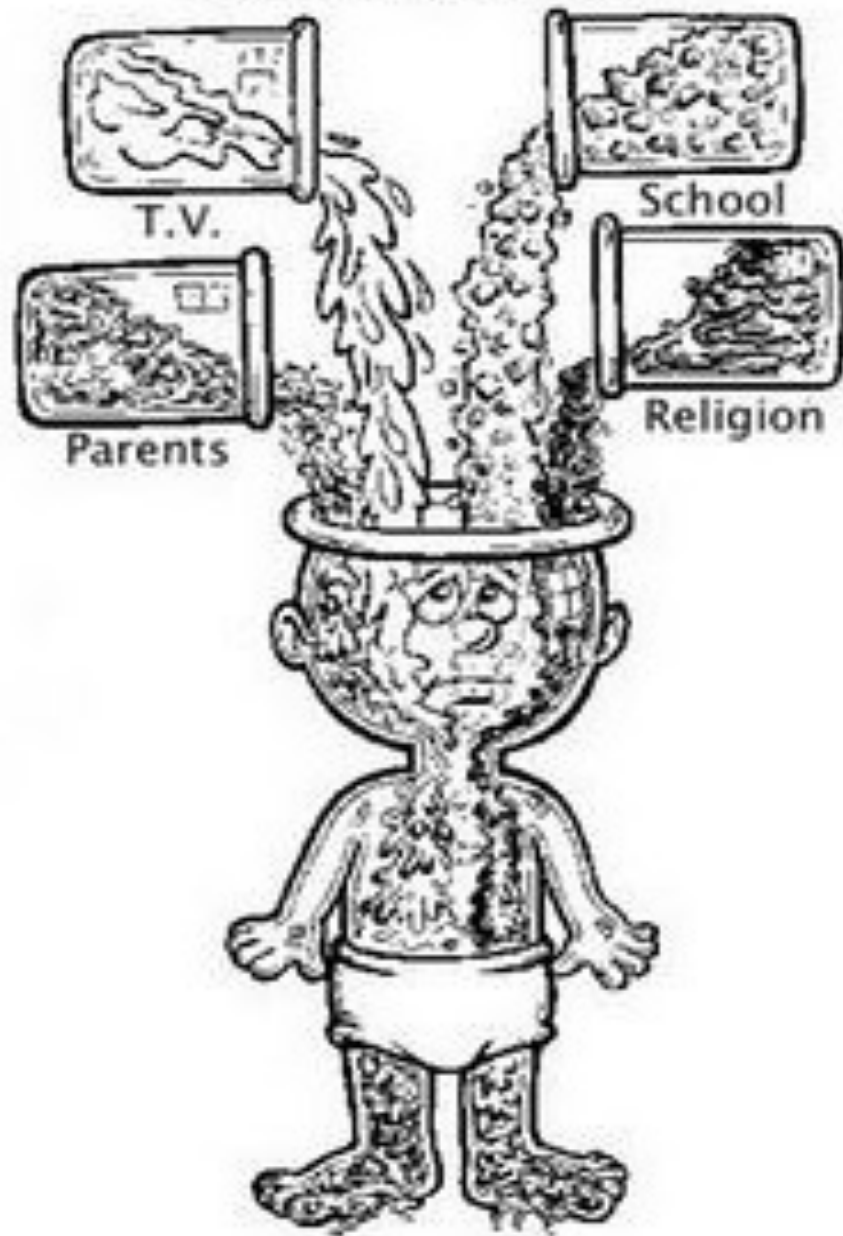
Nature vs. Nurture, continued

- Sociology's larger concern is the effect society has on human behavior, the nurture side of the debate

- Structural functionalist view socialization as essential to society because it perpetuates culture by transmitting it to new generations

- Conflict theory argues that socialization reproduces inequality from one generation to the next

- Interactionists looking at socialization are concerned with face-to-face exchanges and symbolic communication

Families

- In modern societies, most early socialization occurs within a small-scale family context, though an infant's range of family contact is not standard across cultures.

- In most premodern societies, the family into which a person was born determined the individual's lifelong social position.

- In modern societies, social position is not inherited at birth, yet the region and social class of the family have a distinct effect on patterns of socialization.

Schools

- **Hidden curriculum**: Traits of behavior or attitudes that are learned at school but not included in the formal curriculum—for example, gender differences.

- Teachers' reactions affect the expectations children have of themselves, which in turn become linked to their job experience when they leave school.

Peer Relationships

- **Peer group**: A friendship group composed of individuals of similar age and social status.

- Peers may experience rites of passage together, such as graduations or religious rites.

Michael Dwyer/Alamy Stock Photo

Age-Grade

- **Age-grade**: The system found in small traditional cultures by which people belonging to a similar age group are categorized together and hold similar rights and obligations.

- Peer groups are often formed at school, and the system of age-based classes reinforces their influence.

Children Constructing Meaning

- The social activities that schoolchildren do together can be as important as other agents for their socialization.

- Sociologist Barrie Thorne examines how children actively create and re-create the meaning of gender in their interactions with one another. Peer groups greatly influence gender socialization, particularly as children talk about their changing bodies. Social context determined whether a bodily change was experienced with embarrassment or pride.

Mass Media

- **Mass media**: Forms of communication, such as newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, designed to reach mass audiences.

- Today, it is a rare American who goes a day (or even an hour) without reading an article, watching a video, or listening to a podcast online.

- More than 90 percent of teens go online at least once a day, whereas nearly a quarter (24 percent) use the Internet "almost constantly."

Identity in Media

- Media is particularly influential in shaping the beliefs, behaviors, social interactions, and relationships of children, teens, and young adults. Children and adolescents often model the gender roles and practices that they see on their favorite television shows.

- Media can teach children about topics with which their parents may be less familiar or comfortable, and can provide information and even a sense of solace for children who may be lacking in support in their communities.

Violence in Media

- The level and number of media sources portraying extreme violence has only increased over time.

- Witnessing violence, whether in person or via a recorded image, increases the chances that a child will behave aggressively.

Media Everywhere

- Electronic communication is widely accessible, even to those who cannot read or write.

- In the most impoverished parts of the world, it is common to find people owning radios, television sets, and smartphones.

- People throughout the globe are exposed not only to cultural messages from their own societies, but also increasingly to cultural media images from across the world.

Social Learning Theory: Bandura's Bobo Beatdown Experiments

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XHIhkM1cAv4

Work

- The work environment often poses unfamiliar demands, perhaps calling for major adjustments in the person's outlook or behavior.

- Many workers must:

  - Master the specific task of their job

  - Internalize cultural norms about appropriate professional behavior

  - Learn how to "feel" and display socially acceptable emotions at work

Social Roles

- **Social roles**: Socially defined expectations of an individual in a given status or social position.

- Some sociologists mistakenly regard social roles as unchanging parts of a society's culture.

- In fact, socialization is a process in which humans can exercise agency. Individuals come to understand and assume social roles through an ongoing process of social interaction.

Identity

- **Identity**: The distinctive characteristics of a person's (or a group's) character that relate to who he is and what is meaningful to him. Some of the main sources of identity include gender, sexual orientation, nationality or ethnicity, and social class.

Chris Cooper-Smith/Alamy Stock Photo

Social Identity

- **Social identity**: The characteristics that are attributed to an individual by others.

- All individuals have more than one social identity.

- Social identities mark ways that individuals are the same as others. Shared identities can be predicated on common goals, values, or experiences.

- **Master status**: A single identity or status that overpowers all the other identities one holds.

Self-Identity

- **Self-identity**: The ongoing process of self-development and definition of our personal identity through which we formulate a unique sense of ourselves and our relationship to the world around us.

- Characterized by individual agency and choice.

Socialization through the Life Course

- Childhood

- Teenager

- Young Adulthood

- Midlife

- Later Life

Childhood

- The concept of childhood has developed over the past two or three centuries.

- The ideas that children have rights and that child labor is morally repugnant are recent developments.

The Teenager

- The idea of the teenager didn't exist until the early twentieth century.

- In traditional cultures, children already work alongside adults.

- In Western societies, teenagers often try to act like adults, but they are treated by law as children.

Young Adulthood

- Scholars have observed a "delayed transition to adulthood" among young people in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

- Frank Furstenberg identified five benchmarks considered critical to the adulthood transition: leaving the home of one's parents, finishing school, getting married, having a child, and being financially independent.

- However, young people define "adulthood" more in terms of abstract traits like self-reliance and happiness, rather than the attainment of particular milestones.

Midlife

- Midlife, the stage between young adulthood and old age, is generally believed to fall between the ages of 45 and 65.

- However, this age range is not fixed, as one's entry to midlife tends to be signified by the social roles one adopts (or relinquishes).

- There is a new emphasis on looking ahead.

Later Life

- Older adults comprise an increasingly large share of the population worldwide.

- In traditional societies, the authority of both men and women increased with age. In industrialized societies, by contrast, older people tend to lack authority.

4.2 Theories of Socialization

How the Self Emerges

- The most prominent theories about child development emphasize different aspects of socialization.

- **Cognition**: Human thought processes involving perception, reasoning, and remembering.

G. H. Mead and the Development of Self (1 of 3)

- According to Mead, infants and young children develop as social beings by imitating the actions of those around them.

- He believed children achieved self-awareness with the ability to distinguish the "me" from the "I" through a process of play he called "taking the role of the other."

- **Social self**: The basis of self-consciousness in human individuals, according to the theory of G. H. Mead. The social self is the identity conferred upon an individual by the reactions of others.

- **Self-consciousness**: Awareness of one's distinct social identity as a person separate from others. Human beings are not born with self-consciousness but acquire an awareness of self as a result of early socialization. The learning of language is of vital importance to the processes by which the child learns to become a self-conscious being.

G. H. Mead and the Development of Self (3 of 3)

- Mead believed a further stage of child development occurred at 8 or 9 years old, when children learn to play organized games, which have rules that reflect the values of social life.

- **Generalized other**: A concept in the theory of G. H. Mead, according to which the individual comes to understand the general values of a given group or society during the socialization process.