

Definition of Socialization:

The process whereby an individual learns to adjust to a group (or society) and behave in a manner approved by the group (or society).

According to most social scientists, socialization essentially represents the whole process of learning throughout the life course and is a central influence on the behavior, beliefs, and actions of adults as well as of children.

Source: Encyclopedia Britannica, 2008.

Socialization is learning the customs, attitudes, and values of a social group, community, or culture. Socialization is essential for the development of individuals who can participate and function within their societies, as well as for ensuring that a society's cultural features will be carried on through new generations. Socialization is most strongly enforced by family, school, peer groups and continues throughout an individual's lifetime.

Source: The American Heritage® New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy, Third Edition

Gender socialization:

Gender socialization is the process of learning the social expectations and attitudes associated with one's sex.

Sociologists explain through gender socialization why human males and females behave in different ways: they learn different social roles. Gender socialization occurs through such diverse means as parental attitudes, schools, how peers interact with each other, and mass media.

Socialization is the process by which children and adults learn from others. We begin learning from others during the early days of life; and most people continue their social learning all through life (unless some mental or physical disability slows or stops the learning process).

It is generally accepted that early gender socialization is one of the most important issues in early childhood, affecting both boys and girls. The foundations for stereotypes in gender roles are laid through early gender socialization.

An early gender socialization start at birth and it is a process of learning cultural roles according to one's sex. Right from the beginning, boys and girls are treated differently by the members of their own environment, and learn the differences between boys and girls, women and men. Parental and societal expectations from boys and girls, their selection of gender-specific toys, and/or giving gender based assignments seem to define a differentiating socialization process that can be termed as "gender socialization". There are numerous examples from varied parts of the world confirming that gender socialization is intertwined with the ethnic, cultural, and religious values of a given society. And gender socialization continues throughout the life cycle.

Children start facing norms that define "masculine" and "feminine" from an early age. Boys are told not to cry, not to fear, not to be forgiving and instead to be assertive, and strong. Girls on the other hand are asked not to be demanding, to be forgiving and accommodating and "ladylike". These gender roles and expectations have large scale effects. In many parts of the world, girls face discrimination in the care they receive in terms of their access to nutritious foods and health care, leading them to believe that they deserve to be treated differently than boys. The degree of gender differences observed varies in all cultures in respect to infant, toddler and young child health, nutrition, care developmental activities, education, hygiene and protection.

UNICEF, guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, advocates for gender equality and equity in care, protection and development of all children.

Importance of socialization

1. Socialization converts man, the biological being into man, the social being.

Man is not born social; He becomes social by virtue of the process of socialization. Various instances like-that of Kaspar Hauser, Anna, and others have made it very clear that only through constant training the newborn child becomes social in nature.

2. Socialization contributes to the development of personality.

Personality is a product of society. In the absence of groups or society, no man can develop a personality of his own. But socialization is a process through which the personality of the new born child is shaped and molded. Through the process, the child learns an approved way of social life. At the same time, it also provides enough scope for the individual to develop his individuality.

3. Helps to become disciplined.

Socialization is social learning. Social learning is essentially the learning of rules of social behavior. It is the values, ideals, aims and objectives of life and the means of attaining them. Socialization disciplines an individual and helps him to live according to the social expectations.

4. Helps to enact different roles.

Every individual has to enact different roles in his life. Every role is woven around norms and is associated with different attitudes. The process of socialization assists an individual not only to learn the norms associated with roles but also to develop appropriate attitudes to enact those roles.

5. Provides the knowledge of skills.

Socialization is a way of training the newborn individual in certain skills, which are required to lead a normal social life. These skills help the individual to play economic, professional, educational, religious and political roles in his latter life. In primitive societies for, example, imparting skills to the younger generation in specific occupations was an important aspect of socialization.

6. Helps to develop right aspiration in life.

Every individual may have his own aspirations; ambitions and desires in life. All these aspirations may not always be in consonance with the social interests. Some of them even be opposed to the communal interests. But through the process of socialization an individual learns to develop those aspirations. Which are complementary to the interests of society. Socialization helps him to direct or channelize his whole energy for the realization of those aspirations.

7. Contributes to the stability of the social order.

It is through the process of socialization that every new generation is trained acceding to the Cultural goals, ideals, and expectations of a society. It assures the cultural continuity of the society. At the same time, it provides enough scope for variety and new achievements. Every new generation need not start its social life a fresh. It can conveniently rely on the earlier generation and follow in cultural traditions. In this regard, socialization contributes to the stability of the social order.

8. Helps to reduce social distance.

Socialization reduces social distance and brings people together if proper attention is given to it. By giving proper training and guidance to the children during their early years, it is possible to reduce the social distance between people of different castes, races, regions, religions and professions.

9. Provides scope for building the bright future

Socialization is one of the powerful instruments of changing the destiny of mankind. It is through the process of socialization that a society can produce a generation of its expectations can be altered significantly. The improvement of socialization offers one of the greatest possibilities for the future alteration of human nature and human society- Kingsley Davis.

Types of socialization

① Primary socialization

Primary socialization occurs when a child learns the attitudes, values, and actions appropriate to individuals as members of a particular culture. For example if a child saw his/her mother expressing a discriminatory opinion about a minority group, then that child may think this behavior is acceptable and could continue to have this opinion about minority groups.

② Secondary socialization

Secondary socialization refers to the process of learning what is appropriate behavior as a member of a smaller group within the larger society. It is usually associated with teenagers and adults, and involves smaller changes than those occurring in primary socialization. eg. Entering a new profession, relocating to a new environment or society.

③ **Developmental socialization**

Developmental socialization is the process of learning behavior in a social institution or developing your social skills.

④ **Anticipatory socialization**

Anticipatory socialization refers to the processes of socialization in which a person "rehearses" for future positions, occupations, and social relationships.

⑤ **Resocialization**

Resocialization refers to the process of discarding former behavior patterns and accepting new ones as part of a transition in one's life. This occurs throughout the human life cycle (Schaefer & Lamm, 1992: 113).

Resocialization can be an intense experience, with the individual experiencing a sharp break with their past and needing to learn and be exposed to radically different norms and values.

An example might be the experience of a young man or woman leaving home to join the military, or a religious convert internalizing the beliefs and rituals of a new faith.

An extreme example would be the process by which a transsexual learns to function socially in a dramatically altered gender role.

Agents of socialization:

An agent of socialization is responsible for transferring the rules, expectations, norms, values, and folkways of a given social order. In advanced capitalist society, the principle agents of socialization include the family, peer groups, the media, the school system, religious or spiritual institutions, and state.