

# **SOCIALISATION : A PROCESS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SELF**

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Socialization refers to all learning regardless of age of an individual. In every group one has to learn the rules, expectations, and knowledge of that group, whether the group is a family, state or nation. Socialization is the process whereby people acquire social identity and learn the way of life within their society.

Humans are born into a social configuration of beliefs and values, at a certain time in history, in a specific geographic area. In addition to cultural and historical context, an individual has little control over attributes ascribed or assigned at birth : sex, age, family structure, socio-economic class and ethnicity.

There are areas where society allows individuals a free choice. There are some ideas about clothes which are influenced by fashion change and last beyond a lifetime. Certain dimensions of person's perception of self are culturally supplied. The self stands 'at the center' of a set of concentric circles, each representing a system of social control. Most of the time, people want to obey the rules or to 'dress the part' and socialization of the self contributes greatly to a person's preference to 'dress the part'.

Socialization is the process through which the individual becomes adjusted to the standards and values of the community and society. There are two kinds of Socialization : Primary and Secondary.

Primary socialization involves the process through which we initially form our conceptions of self i.e. during childhood and adolescence. Through primary socialization one knows oneself as one object or entity distinct from environment. On the other hand, secondary socialization process allows us to

maintain or refine our self-concept. They allow us to experiment with new identities, to develop new appearances and to adapt to social changes.

A person cannot be separated from social interactions. Just as identities are formulated in contexts, more global perceptions of self are intricately linked to social life. Mead (1934) indicates that one has a self when he/she can interact in a meaningful way with others. Symbolic interaction requires that the individual shares the meanings that other persons associate with social and physical objects. These meanings are learned as the individual develops a self-concept through play and game stage (Mead, 1934). Gregory Stone (1965) elaborates on Mead's conceptions and relates them to appearance and socialization; he adds another stage that precedes the play and game stage; the pre-play stage. As one completes these stages, one repeats some of them throughout the various phases of our lives, particularly as one faces new contexts requiring new forms of appearance management and identities.

However, primary socialization process linked to appearance begins with pre-play stage.

**Pre-play Stage :** The pre-play is associated with infancy and early childhood, and is characterized by investiture—meaning that one does not select his/her clothing. At this stage, an individual does not yet know how society expects him/her to dress. The most obvious identity at this stage is gender. Adults have control over infant's appearance and develop gender programs. From the moment of birth, adults respond differently towards boys and girls and have differential expectations. Then children at the age of 2 to 3 years are able to classify clothes and hair styles according to their sex (Thompson, 1975, Weinraub et al., 1984).

**Play Stage :** The second stage of primary socialization of the self is the play stage. During this phase, the individual experiments with various identities and takes note of the reactions of others. Children discover who they are while learning what society is. In this process variety of appearances and manners are assumed and assigned by others. Stone (1965) indicates two types of appearance experimentations. Then, reflect two forms of socialization : anticipatory and fantastic.

As children engage in play it involves assuming an identity they could realistically assume in later life, this play is characterized as anticipatory socialization. Pre-school girls tend to prefer feminine styles of clothing over more androgynous styles as they experiment with cultural meanings of being female (Kaiser, 1989). Fantastic socialization allows a child to engage in creative appearance management and assume an identity that is conducive to imaginative play. For example, children might dress and assume the role of a character or animal, while engaging in fantastic socialization. The tendency to fantasize may facilitate the normal evolution of self-concept, which begins to



develop prior to adolescence. By trying out new identities, it is possible to expand the range of possible extension of self (Elliott, 1986).

**Game Stage :** In the third stage in the socialization of self, individuals eventually learn that they can take on the attitude of the community as a whole, or generally understand the collective norms and values. The game stage is associated with late childhood or pre adolescence, when conformity with one's peers as a whole assumes great importance. Clothing becomes a very important symbol of belonging to a certain peer group. Gradually, adolescents become more abstract, flexible and general in their self-assessment.

Although, for most adolescents, clothes are more often a source of positive feeling towards the self than negative, for some these may be a source of embarrassment and social discomfort. The adolescents who dress for themselves tend to be more self-accepting, whereas those who dress to please others are less self-accepting. Less self-accepting adolescents feel that clothing is inadequate. Involvement in organized activities seems to be associated with reduced feeling of clothing deprivation (Drake and Ford, 1979). Such involvement is likely to require the ability to generate a sense of generalized others by taking the attitudes and perspectives of a variety of individuals into account. Thus, there may be a distinction between dressings for others because of lack of self-assurance.

Both males and females are likely to learn that there are multiple means of assessing the self through others. By middle to late adolescence, a person develops a subjective process level; sense of self. Such self-concept allows one to integrate personal traits and appearances that seemingly conflict with one another—in line with contextual consideration (Leahy and Shrik, 1985).

By young adulthood, values appear to be determined more by self-chosen principles, although set of generalized others still remain important, especially in certain context. And once the self is set in motion, a person is increasingly capable of self-determination and is prepared to exert a mediating influence in social relations (Aboulafia, 1986).

In other words, self influences social arrangements just as these arrangements influence the self. Yet there is a continuing tendency to assess the self, drawing on diverse type of information. The young children make extensive use of appearance when forming impressions of others. As early as two years of age, children use clothing and hair style as cues to differentiate between males and females. Children develop mental male and female filing system, and appearance cues are most likely the earliest symbols to be included in such systems. Children at the stage of two are aware that adult men and women wear and use different artifacts, as indicated by their ability to differentiate between men's suits, shirts and hats, and women's dress, blouses, purses and makeup (Weinraub et al., 1984). Young girls' clothes are further

differentiated according to the kinds of behaviours with which they are associated.

Progressive socialization allows perceivers to become more adaptable or resilient in their interpretations of appearance. They recognize that specific trait information about a person is contingent on contextual information. Therefore, perceivers qualify trait descriptions with increased socialization (Leahy, 1976).

Hence, to conclude, socialization process is never totally complete; self and culture reciprocate their influence on one another.

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