

There's More Online!

- ✓ **CARTOON** Patterns of Socialization
- ✓ **GRAPHIC ORGANIZER** Agents of Socialization
- ✓ **IMAGE** Hidden Curriculum
- ✓ **TIME LINE** Major Developments in the History of Mass Media
- ✓ **SELF-CHECK QUIZ**



LESSON 3

Agents of Socialization

ESSENTIAL QUESTION • *What factors influence an individual's development?*

Reading HELPDESK



Academic Vocabulary

- **objective**
- **exhibit**

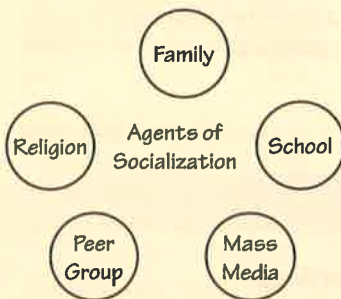
Content Vocabulary

- **hidden curriculum**
- **peer group**
- **mass media**

TAKING NOTES:

Key Ideas and Details

SUMMARIZING As you read about the agents of socialization, use a graphic organizer like the one below to record details about each agent.



IT MATTERS BECAUSE

During childhood and adolescence, the major agents of socialization are family, religion, school, peer group, and the mass media. The family's role is critical in forming basic values, as is the role of religion. Schools introduce children to life beyond the family. In peer groups, young people learn to relate as equals. The mass media provide role models for full integration into society.

The Family and Socialization

GUIDING QUESTION *What is the family's role in socialization?*

The child's first exposure to the world occurs within the family, which is the primary agent of childhood socialization. Essential developments occur through close interactions with a few people—none of whom the child has selected. Within the family the child learns to think and speak; internalize norms, beliefs, and values; form some basic attitudes; develop a capacity for intimate and personal relationships; and acquire a self-image.

The impact of the family reaches far beyond its direct effects on the child. Our family's social class shapes what we think of ourselves and how others treat us, even far into adulthood. Author Jean Evans offers an illustration of this in the case of twenty-year-old Johnny Rocco.

PRIMARY SOURCE

“Johnny hadn't been running the streets long when the knowledge was borne in on him that being a Rocco made him 'something special'; the reputation of the notorious Roccas, known to neighbors, schools, police, and welfare agencies as 'chiselers, thieves, and trouble-makers,' preceded him. The cop on the beat, Johnny says, always had some cynical smart crack to make. Certain homes were barred to him. Certain children were not permitted to play with him. Wherever he went—on the streets, in the neighborhood settlement house, at the welfare agency's penny milk station, at school, where other Roccas had been before him, he recognized himself by a gesture, an oblique remark, a wrong laugh.”

—Jean Evans, “Johnny Rocco,”

The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology, 1948

PATTERNS OF SOCIALIZATION
 Researchers have found that socialization varies by class.

CRITICAL THINKING
 1. *Differentiating* How do middle-class parents and working-class parents tend to differ in patterns of socialization?
 2. *Analyzing Visuals* Which parenting style is reflected in the cartoon? Why do you say this?



Classifying What do children learn within the family?

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Families are generally the first agents of socialization to teach children the gender roles considered appropriate in the general society or in the family's culture. Because adults' gender roles tend to be deeply ingrained, parents may not even be aware that they are teaching their children about gender expectations. For example, in the United States, it seems natural to dress baby girls in pink, but most parents would never consider dressing their baby boys in pink. Parents also reinforce gender roles by the toys they buy their children. Researchers note that parents are more likely to buy their sons toy guns and action figures and buy their daughters dolls. They also note that parents reinforce gender roles through the play patterns they encourage. Parents tend to expect boys to be rough and tumble, to get dirty, and to be more defiant. They expect their daughters to be more obedient and dainty. Even today, girls who play in ways more typical of boys are often called tomboys.

Socialization varies by social class. Researchers have found that most working-class parents tend to worry about their children staying out of trouble and are more likely than middle-class parents to use physical punishment as a means of socialization. Middle-class parents, on the other hand, tend to worry more about fostering curiosity, self-control, and self-expression in their children. Sociologist Melvin Kohn and others contend that the reasons for these differences rest in the way the parents make a living. According to Kohn, working-class parents often hold jobs in which they are told what to do. They assume that their children will grow up to hold similar jobs. Thus, the parents attempt to socialize their children to be obedient. Middle-class parents more often hold jobs in which initiative is valued. Thus, they attempt to instill in their children qualities that will help them in similar jobs.

Kohn found that not all working-class and middle-class parents fit this pattern. Some middle-class parents value conformity, while some working-class parents value initiative. Kohn concluded that jobs were again the deciding factor. Middle-class parents who held office jobs in which they are closely supervised socialize their children to conform. Conversely, working-class parents who make their living doing home repairs or other jobs in which they have freedom to make decisions on their own tend to socialize their children in ways typical of most middle-class parents.

Religion and Socialization

GUIDING QUESTION *What is religion's role in socialization?*

Sociologists recognize that religion is an important agent of socialization. In the United States, this is true even for people who do not attend religious services. Religious values have played an important role in American society from colonial times onward, and religious references are widespread in daily life. In addition, many religious values and ideas of morality have become part of American culture, and their religious roots are no longer visible. Sociologist Thomas Luckmann refers to these values and beliefs as *invisible religion*.

Religion as an agent of socialization is even stronger for people who attend religious services. By attending religious services, children learn the values, morals, and beliefs of their particular religions. But the effects are more far-reaching than that. Children also learn aspects about group life, such as proper dress and speech. In addition, sociologists have found that religion influences people's views on sexuality, proper gender roles, work, and child-rearing practices, as well as other beliefs. The socializing influence of religion can continue into adulthood, especially if an individual experiences a religious conversion.

Sociologists point out that religious participation also reduces the likelihood of divorce. This, in turn, strengthens the family, the primary agent of socialization. Places of worship also help socialize new immigrants to the ways of the community, help the poor and the sick, and bring extended families together for religious holidays and rites of passage. Similarly, religious beliefs and practices help the elderly as they prepare for their own and their peers' eventual deaths.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Analyzing How does religion serve as an agent of socialization for both people who attend religious services and those who do not?

objective based on facts; not distorted by personal feelings

hidden curriculum the informal and unofficial aspects of culture that children are taught in school

Teaching children proper behavior in the lunchroom is part of a school's hidden curriculum.

CRITICAL THINKING

Applying Why is the lunchroom experience part of a school's hidden curriculum?



Socialization in Schools

GUIDING QUESTION *How do schools socialize students?*

In school, children are under the care and supervision of adults who are not relatives. For the first time, many of the child's relationships with other people are impersonal. Rewards and punishments are based on performance rather than affection. Although a mother may cherish any picture that her child creates, a teacher evaluates his or her students by more **objective** standards. Slowly, children are taught to be less dependent emotionally on their parents. The school also creates feelings of loyalty and allegiance to something beyond the family.

The socialization process in school involves more than reading, writing, and arithmetic. Underlying the formal goals of the school is the **hidden curriculum**—the informal and unofficial aspects of culture that children are taught in preparation for life. The hidden curriculum teaches children discipline, order, cooperation, and conformity—characteristics required for success in the adult world of work.

School also teaches children how we experience time in the real world. According to education critic John Holt, life in schools is run by the clock, as it is in the working world. A bell signals when children must move to the next scheduled event, whether or

not they understand what they have been working on and whether or not they are ready to switch to a different subject. Getting through a preset number of activities within a given time period often becomes more important than learning. Schools have rules and regulations to cover almost all activities—how to dress, how to wear one's hair, which side of the hall to walk on, when to speak in class. Teachers reward children with praise and acceptance when they recite the "right" answers, behave "properly," or **exhibit** "desirable" attitudes.

Children are isolated from the working adult society by being set apart in school for most of their preadult lives. Because they are separated from the adult world for such a long time, young people must depend on one another for much of their social life.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Evaluating How does the hidden curriculum of schools help socialize children for their adult lives?

Peer Group Socialization

GUIDING QUESTION How do peer groups contribute to socialization?

The family, religion, and the school are agents of socialization organized and operated by adults. The child's **peer group**—composed of individuals of roughly the same age and interests—is the only agent of socialization that is not controlled primarily by adults. Children usually belong to several peer groups. A child may belong to a play group in the neighborhood, a clique at school, an after-school club, or a sports team.

In the peer group, young people have an opportunity to engage in give-and-take relationships. Children experience conflict, competition, and cooperation in such groups. The peer group also gives children experience in self-direction. They can begin to make their own decisions; experiment with new ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving; and engage in activities that involve self-expression. Peer groups also promote independence from adults because often the norms of the peer group conflict with those of the adult world. Children learn to be different from their parents in ways that help develop and exhibit self-sufficiency.

The peer group also provides an opportunity for children to develop close ties with friends outside the family, including members of the opposite sex. At the same time, they are learning to get along with large numbers of people, many of whom are quite different from themselves. This helps develop the social flexibility needed in a mobile, rapidly changing society.

Most Americans now live in either urban or suburban areas. In both two-income families and single-parent families, parents may commute many miles to work and spend much of their time away from home. Consequently, once children reach the upper levels of grade school, they may spend more time with their peers than with their parents.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Making Connections Why do peer groups become more important agents of socialization as children get older?



Team sports help teach students valuable life lessons.

CRITICAL THINKING

Drawing Inferences In what ways might participation in team sports be good preparation for adult life?

exhibit to show or display

peer group set of individuals of roughly the same age and interests

The Mass Media and Socialization

GUIDING QUESTION What role does the mass media play in socialization?

mass media means of communication designed to reach the general population

TIME LINE

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS IN THE HISTORY OF THE MASS MEDIA

Innovations in mass media, such as recorded music, radio, and television, have long been powerful agents of socialization.

CRITICAL THINKING

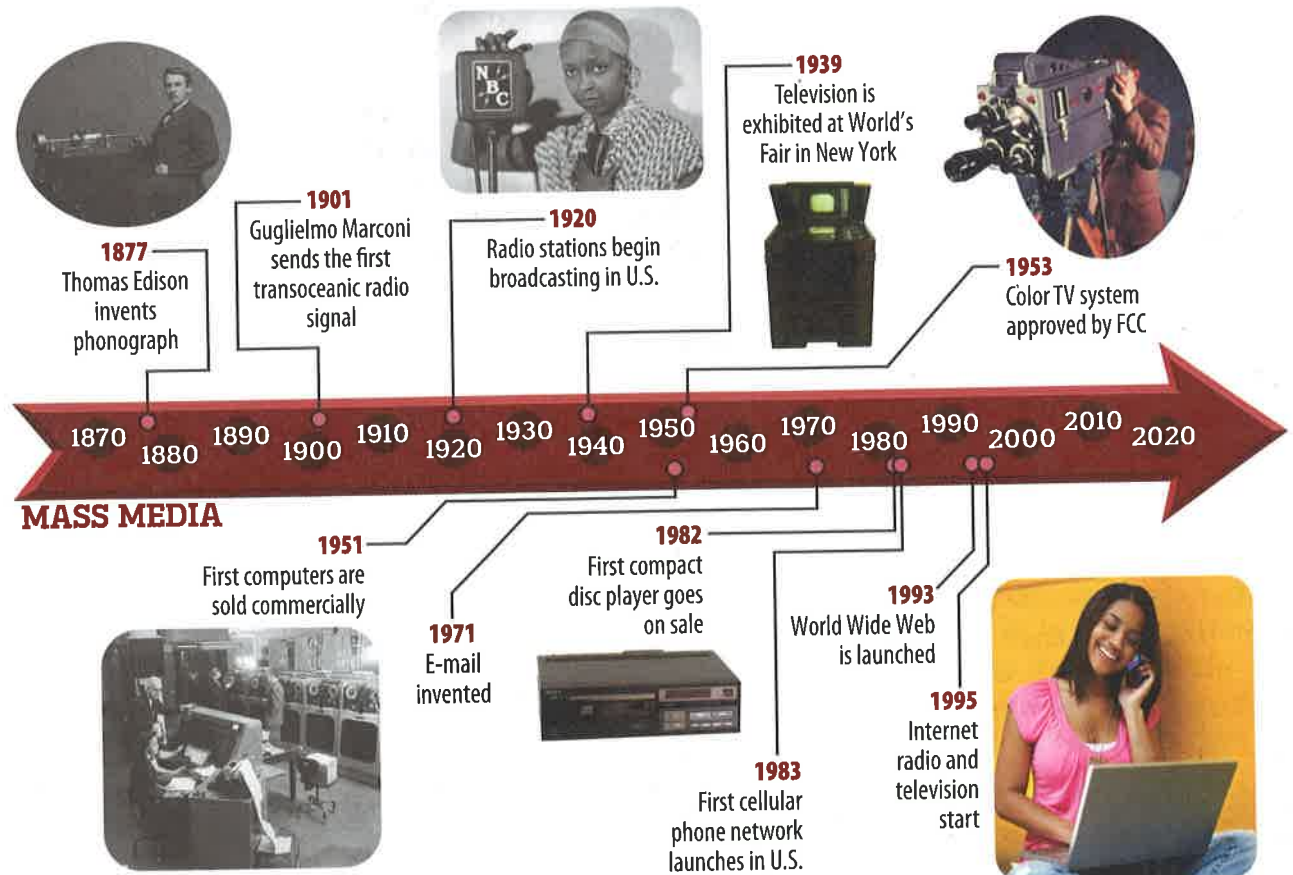
- Hypothesizing** In what year did the first radio station begin broadcasting in the United States? How might radio have affected socialization?
- Speculating** Why might the Internet have an even greater impact than radio on socialization and the spread of culture?

The **mass media** are means of communication designed to reach the general population. They include such things as television, radio, newspapers, magazines, movies, books, and the Internet. Many popular images presented in the mass media are highly distorted. For example, detective and police work are not as exciting and glamorous as depicted in books, in movies, and on television. Nevertheless, it is often through the mass media that children are first introduced to numerous aspects of their culture.

The mass media display role models for children to imitate. Learning these role models helps integrate young children into society. The mass media also offer children ideas about the values in their society. They provide children with such images and ideals as achievement and success, activity and work, equality and democracy.

On the negative side, however, consider the relationship between violence on television and real-life violence. By the age of sixteen, the average American child will have seen twenty thousand homicides on television. Social scientists have been reluctant in the past to recognize a causal connection between violence on television and real-life violence. Based on hundreds of studies involving more than ten thousand children, however, most social scientists now conclude that watching aggressive behavior on television increases aggression in society.

Consider a few examples. A two-year-old girl died when her older brother, age five, set the house on fire with matches while imitating behavior he had seen on the adult cartoon program *Beavis and Butt-Head*. Just on the basis of televised



MASS MEDIA AND SOCIALIZATION

The different types of mass media are powerful agents of socialization. Because they are so powerful, they generate a great deal of research interest on the part of sociologists and other social scientists. In addition to interest in the effects of mass media on violent behavior, sociologists and other social scientists examine how mass media affect gender socialization. Gender socialization—how we learn what is expected of us as males or females—is an important part of growing up. Television and movies present images related to gender that affect this socialization process. For example, studies have found that commercials geared toward children more often portray boys doing outdoor activities and girls doing indoor activities. Similarly, commercials are more likely to portray adult women as extremely attractive, and submissive and men as dominant and outdoorsy. Although television programs and cartoons have begun to show more forceful women and girls, male characters tend to outnumber female characters, particularly in evening shows. Sociologists point out that this reinforces the message that males are more important than females in American society.

CRITICAL THINKING

1. Evaluating Why does it matter how commercials and television portray the appearance and behavior of males and females?

2. Hypothesizing What effect on socialization might there be if television shows and movies offered a wider range of gender traits and behaviors?



Television is a powerful agent of socialization.

reports of violence, a rash of would-be copycat crimes followed the shooting massacre of thirteen students and one teacher at Columbine High School by two students who then shot themselves.

The effects of television and other mass media are usually more hidden, subtle, and long-term. For example, sociologists point out that mass media can be used as vehicles for propaganda to influence behavior. *Propaganda* is the use of ideas, information, or rumors to influence opinion. Propaganda is not necessarily harmful, if the information is objective. But when information is presented in a one-sided manner or inaccurately, propaganda takes on a negative connotation.

READING PROGRESS CHECK

Comparing and Contrasting How are the mass media both a positive and a negative force for socialization?

LESSON 3 REVIEW



Reviewing Vocabulary

- 1. Identifying** What do sociologists mean by *hidden curriculum*?
- 2. Naming** What forms of communication are considered mass media?

Using Your Notes

- 3. Explaining** Use your notes to explain why socialization is the result of many factors.

Answering the Guiding Questions

- 4. Assessing** What is the family's role in socialization?

Writing Activity

- 9. Argument** Some psychologists believe that peer groups have more influence on later socialization than the family group. Give reasons you agree or disagree with this premise.

8. Synthesizing

What role does the mass media play in socialization?

7. Interpreting

How do peer groups contribute to socialization?

6. Evaluating

How do schools socialize students?

5. Making Connections

What is religion's role in socialization?