



Socialization

Part III

Our normal expectations about reality are created by social consensus. We are taught how to see and understand the world. the trick of socialization is to convince us that the descriptions we agree upon define the limits of the real world. What we call reality is only one way of seeing the world, a way that is supported by social consensus.

Carlos Castaneda



Socialization throughout the Life Cycle

- Socialization is a continuing, life-long process. All societies have to deal with the life cycle that begins with birth and ends with death.
- The life cycle consists of childhood, adolescence, young adulthood, middle adulthood, older adulthood and death.
- Although linked to the biological process of aging, essential characteristics of each stage of the life cycle are socially constructed.
- Socialization is different based on race, gender and class.



Socialization throughout the Life Cycle

- Each stage presents characteristic problems and transitions that involve learning something new and, in many cases, unlearning what has become familiar.
 - **role socialization**: involves anticipatory socialization, altering roles and exiting from roles
 - **social interaction**: the process by which people act and react in relation to others
 - **Rites of passage** occur at most stages. They have an impact on how others perceive the individual, how the individual perceives him/herself and what is expected of the individual.





Socialization throughout the Life Cycle

- Social structure guides human behavior rather than rigidly determining it.
 - General patterns relating to age are always modified by social variables such as race and gender.
 - All phases of the life cycle vary with social class position.
 - People's life experiences vary depending on when they were born.
 - **cohort**: category of people with a common characteristic, usually their age



Socialization throughout the Life Cycle: Childhood

- birth to 12 yrs
- establish identity and values
- Childhood became an increasingly separate phase of life with industrialization.
 - **child labor:** Industrialization prolongs childhood and discourages children from work.
- currently becoming shorter





Socialization throughout the Life Cycle: Adolescence

- 13 to 17 yrs
- form a consistent identity
- Adolescence is often a period of social and emotional turmoil reflecting cultural inconsistency. It is a time of social contradictions when people are no longer children but not yet adults.
- adolescence and the development of self among high school students: Adolescence is a time when people are concerned about identity. Grace Kao documented the importance of racial and ethnic stereotypes in students' developing sense of self.

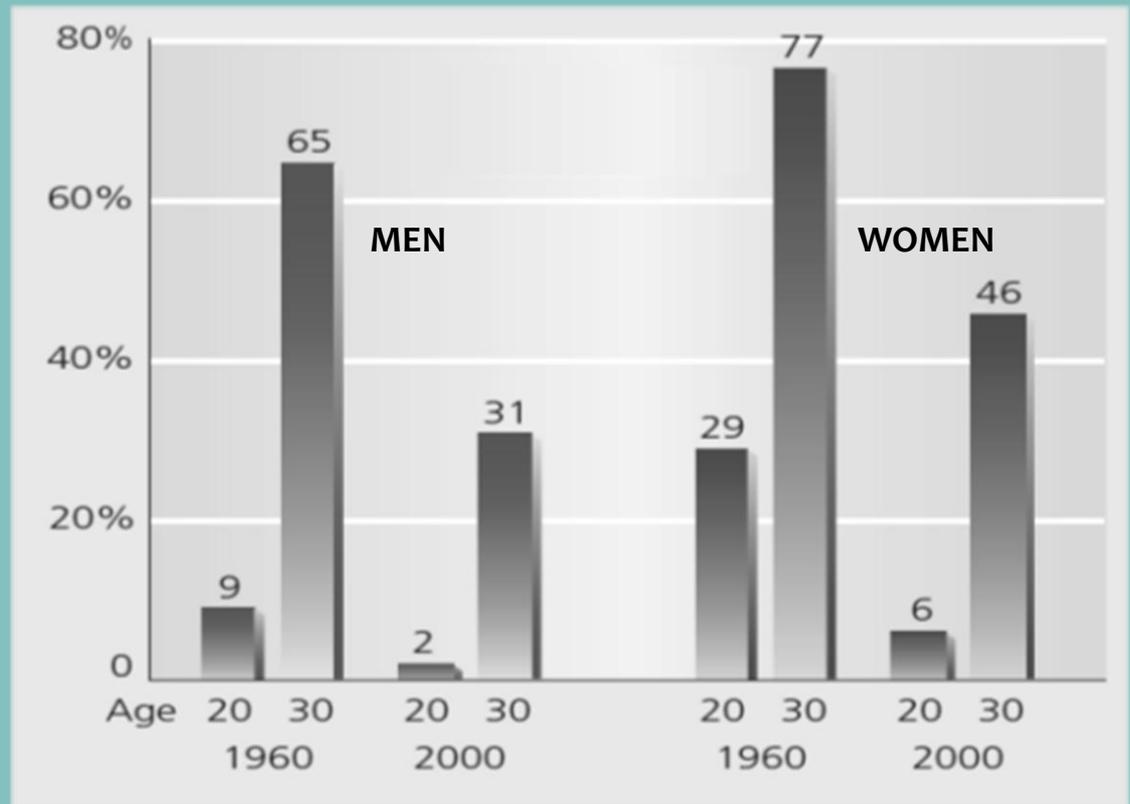


Socialization throughout the Life Cycle: Transitional/Young Adulthood

18 to 29 yrs

involves working
toward goals set
earlier in life

learn new roles and
expectations in adult
life



The data show the percent who have completed the transition to adulthood, as measured by leaving home, finishing school, getting married, having a child, and being financially independent.

Source: Furstenberg et al. 2004.



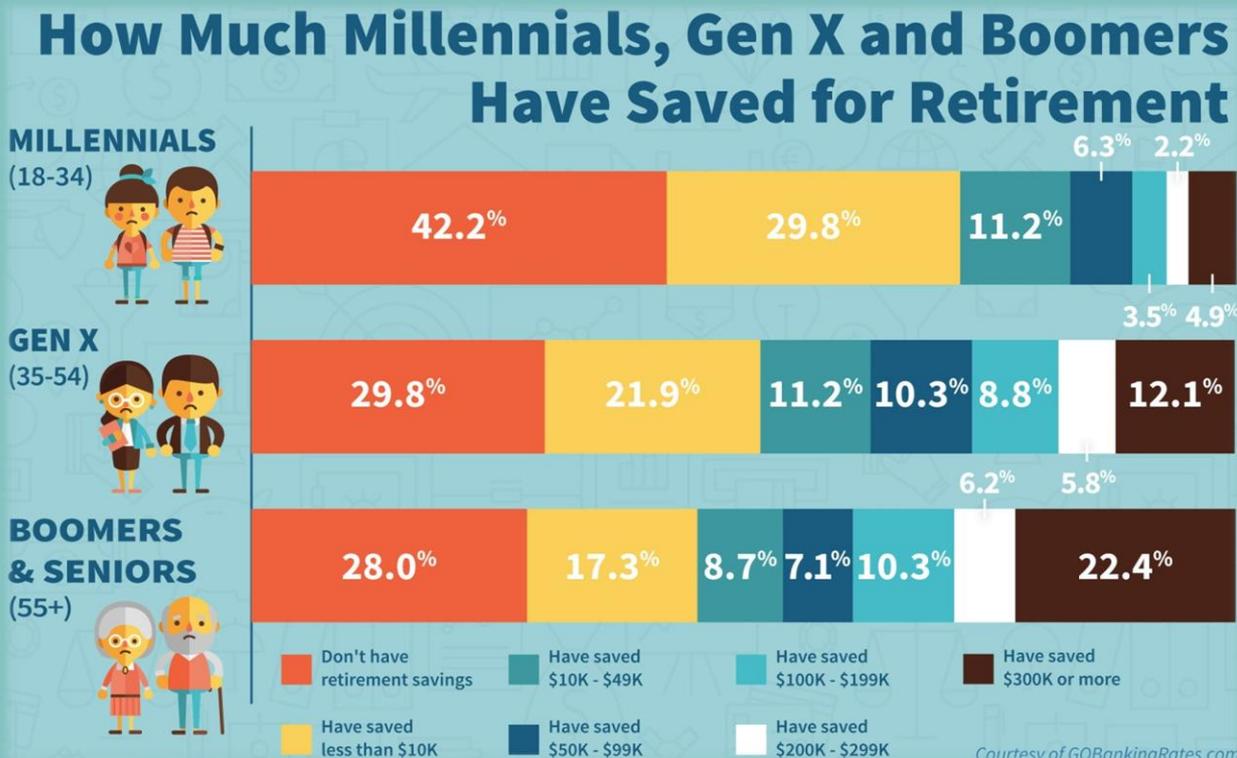
Socialization throughout the Life Cycle: Middle Adulthood

- 30 to 65 yrs
- characterized by greater reflectiveness
- early middle years: 30 to 49 yrs
- later middle years: 50 to 65 yrs



Socialization throughout the Life Cycle: Older Adulthood

- 65 years and older
- The US is currently experiencing an increase in the older population.
- retirement
- early older years
- later older years





Socialization throughout the Life Cycle: Death and Dying

- Elisabeth Kübler-Ross identifies five stages in coming to accept death: denial, anger, negotiation, resignation and acceptance.
- Today fear and anxiety about death are common but greater acceptance is likely in the future.
- The hospice movement provides a more humane approach to the dying experience.
- Americans are grappling with the issue of euthanasia: practice of intentionally ending a life to relieve pain and suffering.





Sociological Significance of the Life Cycle

- The life cycle does not merely represent biology.
- Social factors influence the life cycle.
 - Socialization occurs throughout the life cycle. It can explain how an orphan becomes socialized upon leaving the confines of the orphanage, the only place he/she has known; or the experiences of a prisoner who is released from jail and forced to re-enter society and redevelop ties with people; or how a small-town individual moves to a large urban area and learns how to socialize within a new environment.



Sociological Significance of the Life Cycle

- **Social location** (groups people belong to because of their place or position in history and society ... defined by their gender, race, social class, age, ability, religion, sexual orientation and geographic location) is very significant.



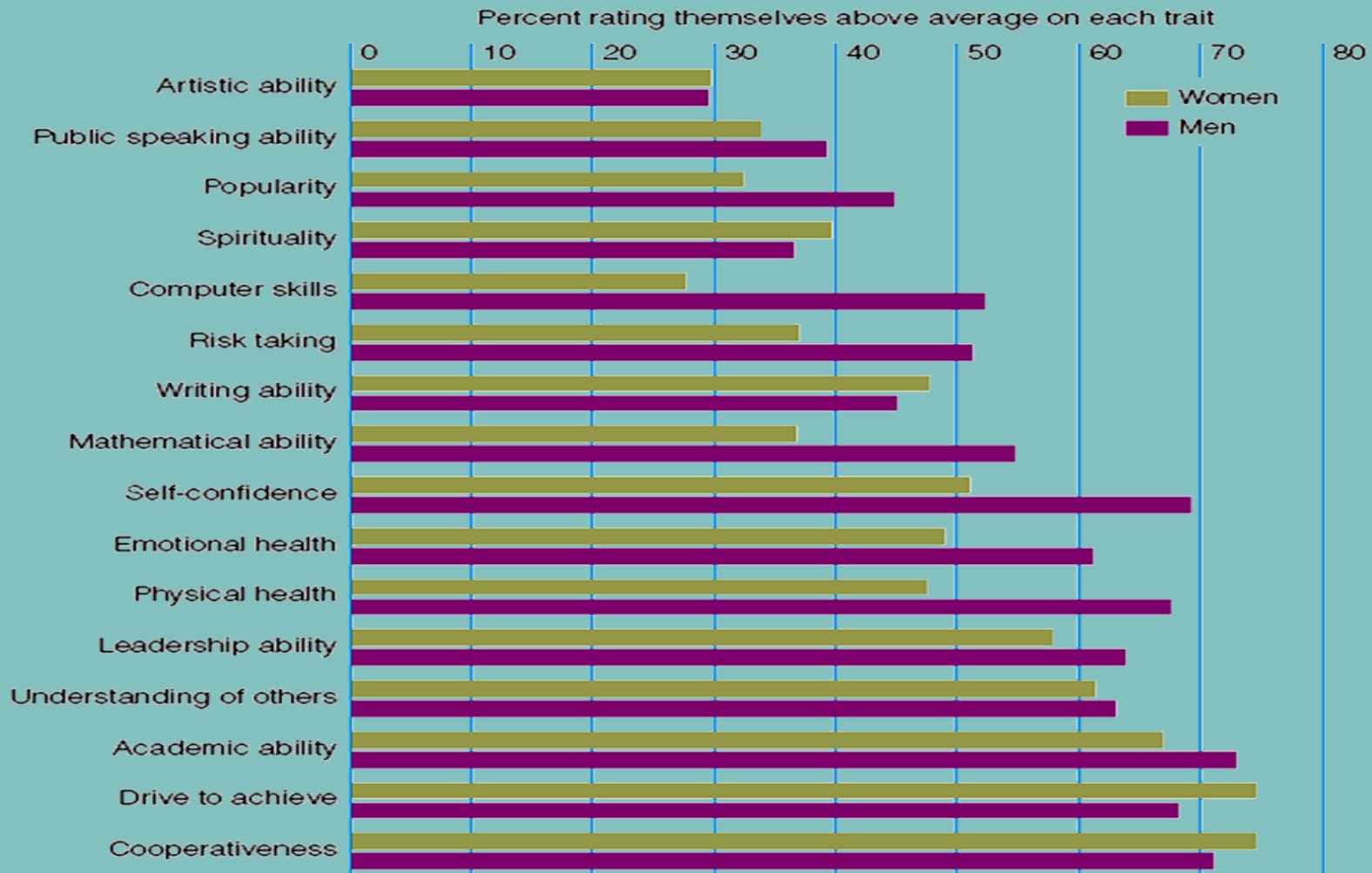


Socialization and Gender

- **gender**: behaviors and attitudes that a society considers proper for its males and females ... masculinity and femininity
 - gender messages in the **family**: parents, toys and play
 - gender messages from **peers**: Girls reinforce images of appearance and behavior appropriate for females. Boys police one another's interests and ways of discussing sex and violence.
 - gender messages in the **mass media**: advertising, television, video games, anime



Socialization and Gender





Socialization and Social Class

- **social class**: the wealth, power and prestige rankings individuals hold in society
- Parents socialize their children to enter into adult roles common to other members of their social class.
- The unequal distribution of resources in society have an impact on who we become.





Socialization and Self Esteem

- Self esteem - how much value one sees in oneself - is greatly affected by socialization and how one is seen by society.
- A national study of 9th and 12th graders examined eating behaviors:
 - 57% of the girls and 31% of the boys reported eating disorders.
 - Fear about one's appearance to others is associated with this risky behavior.





Socialization and Emotions

- **global emotions:** universal understanding of what certain facial expressions mean
- **expressing emotions:** body, voice and gestures ... the allowed expression of emotions differs across cultures
- We need more cross cultural research to help us understand how our society affects what we feel.
- **the self and emotions as social control:** society within us
 - expectations of family and friends
 - **social mirror:** people are not capable of self-reflection without taking into consideration a peer's interpretation of the experience



Socialization and Culture

- Socialization in smaller homogeneous cultures leads to uniformity and little tolerance for deviancy (Japan).
- Socialization in large heterogeneous cultures is not uniform, leading to ambiguity about norms and more tolerance for deviancy (US).



Japanese school girls



Symbolic Interaction Theory of Socialization

individual learning
process

Children learn by taking the role of significant others.

We take the actions of ourselves and others into account and take mental notes accordingly.

formation of self

Self emerges as the creative self interacts with social expectations of others.

The self can be **passive** (developed by the way that others see us) and **active** (an initiator of action, an agent).

influence of society

Expectations of others form the context for learning social roles.



Functionalist Theory of Socialization

individual learning process

People internalize role expectations in society.

formation of self

Internalizing the values of society reinforces social consensus.

influence of society

Society relies on conformity to maintain social equilibrium. Different socializing agents support one another.



Conflict Theory of Socialization



individual learning
process

Aspirations that are part of identity are shaped by available opportunities.

formation of self

Group consciousness is formed in the context of a system of inequality.

influence of society

Social control agents exert pressure to conform.

Different agents have conflicting goals.

false consciousness: Those in power use socialization to manipulate others to support power structure that benefits elite.

Most individuals have very little power to decide or control their futures without **consciousness:** organized and mobilized for collective action.



Social Learning Theory of Socialization

individual learning process

People respond to social stimuli in their environment.

formation of self

Self created through interaction of mental and social worlds.

influence of society

Young children learn principles that shape the external world.





Object Relations Theory of Socialization

individual learning
process

Infants identify with same-sex
parent.

formation of self

Self emerges through separating
oneself from primary caretaker.

influence of society

Division of labor in the family
shapes identity.



Psychoanalytic Theory of Socialization

individual learning process

Unconscious mind shapes behavior.

formation of self

Self emerges from tension between id and superego.

influence of society

Societal expectations are represented by the superego.





Are we prisoners of socialization?

- Sociologists don't think so.
- You might conclude that people are mere robots. Socialization goes in and behavior, thoughts and feelings come out.
- But behavior is difficult to predict. There are countless variables to each individual.
- The self is not a sponge that passively absorbs influences from the environment but rather a vigorous, dynamic and essential part of our being.



Are we prisoners of socialization?

- As the self develops, we each internalize or put together innumerable reactions, producing a unique whole called the individual.
- Each of us is actively involved in the development of the self.





The End

