

Socialization: Peer Groups and Media

by Sophia Tutorial



WHAT'S COVERED

This tutorial will cover several contributing factors to socialization, through the definition and discussion of:

1. Peer Groups
2. Mass Media

1. PEER GROUPS

Sociologists are particularly concerned with the idea of socialization--how people come to be functioning adults in society--and there are many different aspects and contributing factors of socialization. Two of these contributing factors are peer groups and the mass media, both of which help you to socialize and develop.

A **peer group** is defined as a group of individuals who share a common trait or traits, such as interests, age, and class position. When you establish a peer group--typically when you start going to school and into your teen years--you are establishing relationships on your own that you parents don't have much control over.



THINK ABOUT IT

Did you ever wonder why your mom and dad were concerned about who you were hanging out with? It's because they know the influence of a peer group.

Peer groups will form around interests and hobbies that parents may or may not approve of, such as drinking, doing drugs, or having sex. Peer groups tend to be interest groups. They're hugely influential in your short term, day-to-day activities--what you do today, what you do tonight, what you're going to do this weekend, etc. While the peer group works for explaining short term activity, your parents still have more influence on your longer term goals.

Along with the peer group, there is what is called **anticipatory socialization**, which is learning the social behaviors of a group to which you desire to belong, for example, sororities and fraternities, co-workers and bosses, the football team and the cheerleaders.

➦ **EXAMPLE** Imagine you're moving to a new school and you want to get in with a peer group, so you learn the behaviors and ways of that peer group. This is anticipatory socialization.

IN CONTEXT

Have you ever watched the television show *The Office*? There was an episode in which two branches of Dunder Mifflin merge. One character, Andy, comes to the Scranton branch and says to himself, "I'm going to succeed. I'm going to be number two in this company in no time because I'm going to execute personality mirroring," by which he means copying the personality of his boss, Michael. Sure enough, right away he starts mirroring Michael's mannerisms and sense of humor and before you know it, Michael is thinking, "I really love this new guy, Andy."

This is an example of anticipatory socialization, which is learning the social behaviors of a group to which you desire to belong.



TERM TO KNOW

Peer Group

A group of individuals who share common traits such as interests, age, and class position.

Anticipatory Socialization

Learning the social behaviors of a group to which you desire to belong; e.g. sororities and frats, coworkers and bosses, and the football team and cheerleaders.

2. MASS MEDIA

Mass media also play a role in people's socialization process. The mass media is defined as television, internet, radio, magazines, movies, newspapers, or any outlet of social and cultural information that can reach a mass audience impersonally--essentially a blanket dissemination of knowledge.

The mass media is the machinery of culture. It's how you get new ideas and is the primary source of information acquisition in society. When young, most people tend to start out watching tons of TV.



DID YOU KNOW

Studies have found that poorer people tend to watch more TV than richer people.

Today, YouTube and social networking sites are getting increasingly important relative to TV, especially with the near ubiquity of smartphones in the capitalist world. Any time you have a spare 30 seconds in line ordering your coffee, or on the subway, etc., you have that constant mass media outlet in your hand. Even in that short span of time, you can plug in and see what's happening, see what your friends are doing, see what they're buying, see where they are.

It's a constant surge, an onslaught of mass media information in the palm of your hand. As a result, though, the lines between human relationships and social activities, on the one hand, are constantly blurring and overlapping with marketing and capitalists interests, on the other.

IN CONTEXT

Have you ever used the popular smartphone app, Words With Friends? It's basically a way to play Scrabble on your smartphone with your friends. In order to download this app and play it, it contains a covert function--other apps do this as well--that allows it to have immense access to your phone

data, such as who you're talking to, text messaging records, etc.

This information then can be sold to agencies who can provide targeted offers to you on your phone via Facebook or via other applications. In this way, there is the constant overlap of social relationships, marketing opportunities, and capitalist interests.

As stated, the mass media is ubiquitous and always with you thanks to the smartphone. You may have started out watching a lot of TV when you were younger, but as you get older, TV becomes less important relative to YouTube and Facebook in this generation. Parents can tell their kids all manner of advice, but kids can still ignore their parents and access social media, and be exposed to literally anything, even controversial things. Therefore, mass media is a vastly important outlet of socialization in advanced capitalist society.



TERM TO KNOW

Mass Media

Any outlet of social and cultural information that reaches a mass audience impersonally; e.g. television, internet, magazines, radio, movies, and newspapers.



SUMMARY

Today you learned about two contributing factors of socialization, **peer groups** and the **mass media**. Good luck!

Source: THIS WORK IS ADAPTED FROM SOPHIA AUTHOR ZACH LAMB.



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