



# superconnected

THE INTERNET, DIGITAL MEDIA &  
TECHNO-SOCIAL LIFE, 2ND EDITION  
MARY CHAYKO

## 6. TECHNO-SOCIALIZATION AND THE SELF

# SOCIALIZATION, SELF, AND IDENTITY

Sociologists consider the individual *self* to develop as part of the same process by which one becomes a member of society.

This process is called *socialization*, and it can be thought of as two sides of the same coin: As we begin to shape our personhood (the self) out of the raw matter of infancy, we learn the ways of society (socialization) and become participants in it.



Image Source: Smartvectorpics



# SOCIALIZATION, SELF, AND IDENTITY

The internet and digital media can play a large part in socialization and the development of the self, for this process takes place as we interact with others.

For many people who live in tech-rich communities and societies, plenty of interaction occurs online.

*Techno-socialization* takes place as people engage with those whom they know online, face-to-face, and in both contexts.



Image Source: Alamy.com

# SOCIALIZATION, SELF, AND IDENTITY

There are differences between self and *identity*. Your self is your personhood—literally, the person that you are, physically, psychologically, and socially.

Your identity comprises your personal qualities and characteristics—what you are *like*. This includes your internal self-definition—preferences, values, beliefs, interests.



Image Source: [blog.csoftintl.com](http://blog.csoftintl.com)

# DEVELOPMENT AND PERFORMANCE OF THE SELF

Selves and identities develop in concert with other people.

Internet and digital media specialize in bringing people into contact with one another.



Image Source: iStock



# TAKING THE ROLE OF THE OTHER

People “try on” the attitudes, behaviors, and even physical items (like clothes) of other people. This is very much in evidence as people check out one another’s profiles, postings, and creative works.

People do this with regard to *specific others* (particular individuals looked to as role models, such as caregivers, siblings, friends, and even some who are not personally known) and with *generalized others* (groups of people who are observed, both close up and at a distance, and who represent a type of person or a way of life, such as groups of teachers, musicians, or football players).

Classical sociologist George Herbert Mead has called this “taking the role of the other.”



Image Source: Depositphotos

# LOOKING-GLASS SELF



Image Source: 123RF

Individuals also develop their selves and identities by using those in their immediate vicinity as a kind of mirror to the self.

They look carefully at people's reactions and responses when "trying on" a new behavior, characteristic, or preference. If something elicits a positive response, it is more likely to engender a sense of confidence, and such a quality is more likely to persist. If the response from others is negative, one's self-esteem may suffer, and the self may flounder.

Another classical sociologist, Charles Horton Cooley, called this the "looking glass self."



# THE PERFORMATIVE SELF

According to a third classical sociologist, Erving Goffman, people do a great deal of performing as they “act” their selves into being. They play parts very much as actors in the theater do, managing and fixing up their identities so that they can produce certain impressions for the benefit of others. Doing this helps them develop their selves at the same time that it provides society with a certain degree of stability or order (because we can count on this to happen).

Though Goffman lived in a pre-internet era, his theory explains much about how and why people behave and form connections online, and why they “fix up” and edit words, photos, and interactions online so as to make them more positive, more flattering, more distinctive.

This does not mean that people are being inauthentic when they do this; rather, they are developing their identities in a normal fashion. And despite fear of online deception, most people want to make sure that their true, authentic selves are represented, both online and offline.

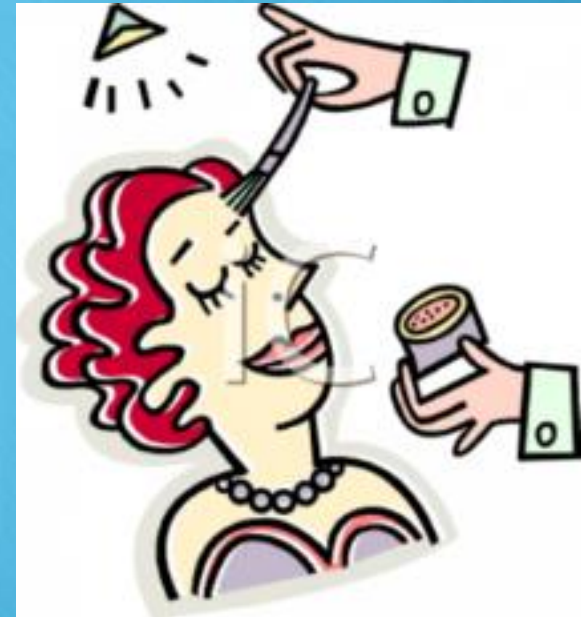


Image Source: [actress-acting-wikispace.com](http://actress-acting-wikispace.com)



# EXPRESSION OF THE SELF

From 2010 onward, video and photo image sharing has become a wildly popular mode of self-representation, expression, and documentation.

Through representing, expressing, sharing, and documenting themselves on the internet—primarily on social media—individuals' identities constantly develop and socialization continually takes place. As these representations accumulate over time, stories—full-fledged narratives about experiences, perspectives, and lives—come into being.

Social media lends itself to the act of storytelling, of constructing narratives about people and the lives they lead. And storytelling is key to social connectedness. We connect through stories.



Image Source: Freepik

# WHEN IDENTITY IS MARGINALIZED

People are not equally empowered to express aspects of themselves online without fear of harassment or danger.

When a person or a group is marginalized or threatened in some way, identity and self development take on new dimensions. It is all too common to see discrimination occur on the basis of such social characteristics as race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation, age, physical and intellectual ability, and any of a number of other factors.

This happens both online and offline and can strongly impact an individual's self-expression.



Image Source: vecteezy.com

# WHEN IDENTITY IS MARGINALIZED

Those who have been targeted or harmed due to socially marginalized aspects of their identities can use the same digital technologies to find one another, rally, and support one another. In the process, their group identities can be bolstered and their individual identities strengthened and extended into new directions. For those who have experienced such struggles, this can be so supportive as to be lifesaving.



Image Source: Dreamstime



# GROWING UP ONLINE AND OFFLINE



Image Source: [revistabula.com](http://revistabula.com)

Both mass and digital media are a major part of the everyday lives of most children in the developed world, and, as we have seen, cell phones are becoming more prominent and available for people's use even in less developed areas.

Through such activities as listening to recorded music and messages in the womb to watching TV and videos as babies to playing early games on iPads, the internet and mass and digital media serve as early agents of socialization.

# GROWING UP ONLINE AND OFFLINE



Image Source: 123RF

In the developed world, it is not uncommon for very young children to receive mobile phones from parents.

Often, these parents may be concerned about potential emergencies and want their children to be able to reach them at a moment's notice. In some cases, they may not want it to appear that they or their children are on the wrong side of a *digital divide* – the gap between those who use and skills in digital technology.

# TEENS ONLINE AND OFFLINE

Teens spend so much time online using social media and digital technology because that's where their friends are.

They are also in a time of intensive identity development, and spend a good deal of time and energy creating and editing social media profiles and avatars and using particular icons, ringtones, fonts, and so on that they feel represent them.



Image Source: Freepik



# SOCIALIZATION THROUGHOUT ADULTHOOD

Socialization continues until the day we die.

Sharing one's creative endeavors, talents, or points of view throughout one's lifetime, even into old age, can be highly satisfying, lead to personal growth, and even enhance one's physical and psychological health.



Image Source: Freepik

# SOCIALIZATION THROUGHOUT ADULTHOOD

Women, in particular, seem to find blogging empowering, as it can represent an opportunity to exercise their agency and expand their communities.

# *Blogger*



Image Source: Depositphotos

# SOCIALIZATION THROUGHOUT ADULTHOOD

People interested in documenting, quantifying, or improving aspects of their lives and identities track and record data about themselves that they deem critical.

This may be done via text, photos, or a computer program, and it can be done with reference to any number of characteristics: one's mood, level of stress, time spent working out, time spent studying, time spent doing any of a number of activities.

The data are then interpreted as potentially meaningful to the development of the self, a never-ending process.



Image Source: Vecteezy



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