Chapter 4 - Part 1 - Socialization

**What is Socialization?**

Socialization is the cultural process of learning to participate in group life.

Socialization begins at birth and continues throughout life. Successful socialization enables people to fit into all kinds of social groups. The most important learning in socialization occurs early in life. Without socialization, a human child cannot learn attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors associated with being an individual.

**How does the Functionalist Perspective explain socialization?**

Functionalism stresses the way that groups work together to create a stable society. Schools and families work together, for example, to socialize children by teaching them the norms, beliefs and values of a culture.

**How does Conflict Perspective explain socialization?**

The Conflict Perspective views socialization as a way of continuing the differences in society that already exist, for example: Class in society, social and economic status, attitudes toward different groups, etc. The powerful people keep things the same.
How does Symbolic Interactionism explain socialization?

Symbolic Interactionism places a great importance on the idea of socialization. Symbolic Interactionism uses several different ideas to explain the process of socialization.

- Self-Concept
- The Looking Glass Self
- Significant Others
- Role Taking
- The Generalized Other

What is the Self-Concept?

Your self-concept is your image of yourself as having an identity separate from other people.

What is the Looking Glass Self?

The looking glass self is our self-concept based on the idea of others’ judgement of us. In other words, we imagine how others are judging us and this affects our self-concept.

What are Significant Others?

Significant others are the people in our lives whose judgements are the most important to us. For a child, significant others are usually mother, father, grandparent, teachers and playmates. For adults, significant others might include, spouses, parents, friends, religious leaders and employers.

What is Role Taking?

Role taking is the process in our minds when we imagine situations and anticipate what others will say and do. For example, if you are going to ask your employer for a salary increase, you will likely imagine the conversation with your employer and anticipate what he/she will say to you. The process allows you to be better prepared for the real situation because you can think ahead and anticipate what to say.

What is the Generalized Other?

The Generalized Other is our concept of the norms, beliefs and values of the members of our society.

Questions for Consideration

1. What is the looking glass self? What would happen if we are wrong in the way we imagine others are judging us? For example, if we think someone does not approve of us. But, in reality, they do approve of us. How might this situation give us the wrong self-concept?

2. Why is role taking such an important process in socialization? What advantage does it give us?