Socialization and the Life Course – SOC 43713
Prof. Jessica L. Collett, Spring 2012
Grace 346, T & R 11am-12:15pm

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Course Description:
Socialization is a fundamental concept in sociology. It is our discipline's contribution to the "nature-nurture" debate. Students will come away from this course with a deep appreciation for the countless ways in which external stimuli – society, culture, language, interaction with others – constantly molds, shapes, and influences everything from our beliefs about the world and ourselves to our actions and emotions. In short, this course focuses on how our social world affects us over the entire course of our lives, from the very moment we are born until we are no longer counted among the living.

Course Goals:
At the end of this semester you should 1) understand the socialization process, 2) be able to identify important agents of socialization, and 3) recognize outcomes of socialization. In addition to these topical goals, I expect that you’ll hone your research and writing skills – and your sociological imagination – as you complete course assignments.

Books & Readings:
There aren’t any required books for this course. Instead, all the readings are on Electronic Reserve. If you don’t like reading things online, I highly recommend printing them all out at the beginning of the semester – or in batches every few weeks – and keeping them in a binder to make reading easier. Unfortunately, the university no longer offers increases in print quotas for classes like this, but I assure you this is a less expensive option than a course packet through DCL.
Course Expectations:

Regular Attendance: Since sociologists like statistical facts so much, I’ll drop one here – the single largest predictor of a final grade in any course is attendance (with doing the reading following a close second). This is a seminar course and discussion and class participation are integral to the success of both the course and the students. You must be present to truly engage with the course. You will receive two “freebies” at the beginning of the semester for unexcused absences. After those two your grade will decrease incrementally (an A becomes an A- which becomes a B+ and so forth) with each additional absence.

Participation and Preparation: Just being present is not enough. Seminar members are also expected to complete the required reading prior to the meeting and to participate actively in class discussions. Much of this will be informal participation at times that you have something to share, but I will also randomly call on students to summarize the readings, to answer questions, and to offer examples.

Class Conduct: Because of the subject matter, we are bound to cover topics close to people’s hearts and experiences. Discussion is an important aspect of this course. Let people have their say. You will have yours. Please respect the views, experiences, and opinions of others. Treat others as you would like to be treated; trying to avoid destructive criticism and offer constructive criticism instead.

Academic Integrity: Academic misconduct of any kind will not be tolerated in my courses. If I have reason to believe that you have violated the honor code, I will follow through with the guidelines in the academic code of honor handbook: http://www.nd.edu/~hnrcode. You should be familiar with most punishable forms of cheating. If you have any questions or are in doubt, please ask me.

Assignments and Evaluation:

Participation (20%): I expect you to be actively engaged in the class and discussion. As is true in many aspects of life, quality is more important than quantity here.

Relevant Reading Paper, Presentation, and Discussion (20%): I selected 25 books relevant to the class (listed on the last page of the syllabus, those that are available from the Hesburgh Library are marked with an *). On the first day of class everyone will select one of these to read in addition to our regular course readings. On the day we discuss the topic relevant to the book you choose, you will be responsible for a short assignment and presentation and will be expected to take a leadership role in class discussion that day. I will provide more detailed information on expectations as the due dates (beginning February 9th) draw closer.

Reflections (20%): Throughout the semester I will assign at least twelve short assignments (1-2 pages) that ask you to explore socialization in the world around you – whether in the media, on the internet, or in considering your own life and experiences. You must complete eight of them.
Final (40%): You have two choices for the “final” grade in this paper – a take-home exam or a final paper – either which will be due at the date of the final exam (May 8th):

- In the take-home exam you will draw on lectures, readings, discussions, and your reflections to answer a series of essay questions. I will pass the questions out the last day of class. I expect the total length of the exam to be 8-10 pages. While this is an exam, I hope you’ll find it a useful exercise in helping you realize how much you’ve learned in this course and what you’ll take away when it ends. ☺ The strongest answers will not only reflect an understanding of the material, but an engagement with the ideas and will incorporate a variety of sources (e.g., readings, lectures, discussion, your book, movies, reflections, and experiences).

- The final paper will draw on the types of information we discuss in class – personal experience, individual and media accounts, and research – to explore in more detail a substantive topic related to socialization. You are not meant to choose one type of material or another, but to synthesize this information to create a persuasive, informed, piece of writing about social influences on individuals at a particular stage in social life. If you choose this option you will be required to meet with me at various points in the semester to check in and for feedback. The final paper will be 10-12 pages.

Topics, Assigned Readings, and Due Dates
Reading is a vital part of learning, discussing, and understanding the course material. All readings listed must be read before the class day listed. For example, you should come to class on January 19th prepared to discuss the Time article, “What Makes You Who You Are?” as well as the article from The Journal of Politics on friendship, genes, and political ideology.

01.17.12 Course Introduction

I. Foundations
Nature and Nurture
“Friendships Moderate an Association between a Dopamine Gene Variant and Political Ideology” – Settle et al. (2010, The Journal of Politics)

Socialization
01.24.12 “Foundations of Socialization” – Handel, Cahill and Elkin (2007, Children and Society)
01.26.12 “Processes and Outcomes of Socialization” – Handel, Cahill and Elkin (2007, Children and Society)

II. Early Influences
In Utero Experiences
01.31.12 “The Womb as Classroom” – Verny and Weintraub (2002, Tomorrow’s Baby)
“Prebirth Gender Talk” – Smith (2005, Women and Language)
02.02.12 “On Fetal Sons and Daughters” – Rothman (1986, The Tentative Pregnancy: Prenatal Diagnosis and the Future of Motherhood)
Parental Expectations
02.07.12 "I Wanted a Soul Mate’: Gendered Anticipation and Frameworks of Accountability in Parents’ Preferences for Sons and Daughters” – Kane (2009, *Symbolic Interaction*)

Birth
02.09.12 “Top-Selling Childbirth Advice Books” – Kennedy et al. (2009, *BIRTH*)

Preschool
02.16.12 “Children and Civility: Ceremonial Deviance and the Acquisition of Ritual Competence” – Cahill (1997, *Social Psychology Quarterly*)

Elementary School
“Elementary School Girls and Heteronormativity” – Myers and Raymond (2010, *Gender and Society*)

III. Growing Up
Adolescence
03.01.12 “Boyhood, Organized Sports, and the Construction of Masculinities” – Messner (1990, *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography*)

High School
03.06.12 “‘Dude, You’re a Fag’: Adolescent Masculinity and the Fag Discourse” – Pascoe (2005, *Sexualities*)
03.08.12 "Beyond Belief: Mainstreamers, Straddlers, and Noncompliant Believers" – Carter (2005, *Keepin' It Real: School Success Beyond Black and White*)
03.13.12 Spring Break
03.15.12 Spring Break

College
03.22.12 No Class
03.27.12 "Gendered Sexuality in Young Adulthood: Double Binds and Flawed Options" – Hamilton and Armstrong (2009, *Gender and Society*)

Other Paths
IV. Adulthood

Relationships


04.05.12 “A Decade of Advice for Women and Men in the Best-Selling Self-Help Literature” – Zimmerman et al. (2001, Family Relations)

Family


04.12.12 “Taking Care of the Baby: Reproducing Gender Differences and Divisions” – Fox (2009, When Couples Become Parents: The Creation of Gender in the Transition to Parenthood)
“Childfree and Feminine: Understanding the Gender Identity of Voluntarily Childless Women” – Gillespie (2003, Gender and Society)

Work


04.24.12 “Class, Occupation, and Orientation” – Kohn and Schooler (1969, American Sociological Review)

Later Years


05.01.12 “Socialization for Impending Death in a Retirement Village” – Marshall (1975, American Journal of Sociology)

05.08.12 Final Exams or Papers Due (before 12:30pm)

Relevant Reading Book List:

Birth:
1. Birth as an American Rite of Passage, Robbie E. Davis-Floyd (1992 or 2004)*
2. Conceiving Risk, Bearing Responsibility: Fetal Alcohol Syndrome & the Diagnosis of Moral Disorder, Elizabeth M. Armstrong (2003)*

Preschool:
4. We’re Friends, Right?: Inside Kids’ Culture, William A. Corsaro (2004)*
Elementary School:

Adolescence:

High School:

College:
  13. *Educated in Romance: Women, Achievement, and the College Culture*, Dorothy C. Holland and Margaret A Eisenhart (1990)*

Other Paths:
  15. *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*, Erving Goffman (1961 or other editions)*

Relationships:
  18. *You Just Don’t Understand: Men and Women in Conversation*, Deborah Tannen (1991 or later)*

Family

Work

Later Years: