SOCIALIZATION AND GENDER: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

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The objective of this article is to show the relevance of socio-cultural contexts in any description of socialization, particularly gender socialization. Fundamentally, this perspective considers how culture affects socialization or how culture organizes individuals. Of particular interest is the cultural construction of gender and how this relates to social experience. It is suggested that future research on gender socialization, using a post-structural framework should be towards more contextually specific and detailed studies where focus is on the gendered individual.

SOCIALIZATION

Socialization is the life span process by which someone learns the behaviours and beliefs of a given society or social group. Enculturation was introduced in U.S. cultural anthropology as a substitute or alternative term for socialization. Participation in a socio-cultural system entails learning and internalizing appropriate behaviours, knowledge, values, expectations, and attitudes in order to become an effective member,[1] that is, both a social and cultural being. Children are born into a world of shared symbols, established patterns, and acknowledged positions all of which already exist. Societal norms, values, statuses, and roles are acquired in different ways primarily through social relationships; others wittingly or unwittingly, teach through their guidance, examples, responses, and emotional attachment (Elkin, 1968:5).

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This definition assumes that 'everyone knows' what it means to an effective member of society (Cook, 1973:297). Further, individuals do not acquire all the features of culture presented to them (for example, see Mageo, 1991:405 where the society's collective orientation is resisted by both parents and children), nor are the same things in the same order learned (see Spindler and Spindler 1991; Wolcott 1982, 1991). Surprisingly, derogatory and constraining images are often accepted and even internalized.

In classical antiquity, children were trained to conform to the pattern of the group: only so there could be safety against hostile strangers or jealous gods. The child was initiated into State ceremonials and taught how to behave to men and gods (Oxford Classical Dictionary, 1957:306). Historical parameters must be taken into account in any analysis of socialization since child-rearing and socialization practices have differed considerably over the centuries. Furthermore, caution must be taken when attempting to assign "typical" child rearing characteristics to a particular historical period. Rather, families and individual parents tend to employ different modes at different points during their life cycles (Petschauer & de Mause, 1989:1-34).

The significance of the socio-cultural context

Children or those being socialized learn what is socially and culturally appropriate and the manner in which they learn this is socially and culturally mediated. Attitudes towards 'the socialized' determine and shape the socializing practices that develop from these beliefs. The following ethnographic examples illustrate this point. Among the Sherbros of West Africa socialization is viewed as a process which transforms protosocial children who are egoistically greedy and wilful into initiated adults; a fully social state. Careful training is carried out by their parents who feel that children do not have 'sense' and need 'training' (MacCormack, 1982:95). In comparison, the Hagen of the Papua New Guinea claim that a child 'grows' and can be nurtured into social maturity rather than being trained into it; children are not seen as needing training into adulthood from a pre-social state (Strathern, 1982:196).

In theories of how culture affects socialization, individuals are defined, categorized, shaped, or determined by social practices that reflect social and cultural priorities. Children from an all-Aboriginal environment, in which their identities are formed and in which they are loved and protected, suffer from severe culture shock when turned over to white schools. Although, failure in the school system is the result of complicated issues, it is clear that the lack of cultural relevance and often the subtle but significant differences in the socialization of Aboriginal children play a significant part and show the defectiveness of the system, rather than reflect the failure of students (Kaplan and Eckermann, 1994). Nursing is a social practice that reflects social and cultural priorities in a traditional Mandinka village of the Casamance Region of Senegal. A Mandinka woman nurses her offspring in part to achieve the socialization of the particular child and the ongoing negotiations between the mother and child help to forge emotional intelligence (hakilo), an attribute that sustains a Mandinko throughout life. Thus, Mandinka women know that to nurture is not only to feed and shelter, but also to dali lo, to accustom the infant, toddler, and child to a social geography of well-being or socialization to the "Mandinka way" (Whittemore and Beverly, 1996:59).

Characterizations of socialization patterns

Jeffrey Jensen Arnett (1995a) discerns two general types of cultural socialization, broad and narrow. He asserts that broad socialization is intended to promote independence, individualism, and self-expression. In contrast, cultures with narrow socialization hold obedience and conformity as their highest values, and discourage deviation from cultural expectations. Arnett contends that although it is generally possible to characterize socialization patterns of a culture as either broad or narrow, this does not mean that cultures can be dichotomized into two homogeneous types because socialization may be relatively broad through some sources but relatively narrow through others. In addition, there is also variation within cultures. Thus, variation is likely to be greater in a culture characterized by broad socialization. In contrast, narrow socialization promotes a narrow range of variance not only in the characteristics of those who are being socialized but also in the practices of those who are doing the socializing.

In essence, all the sources of socialization are related to one another and act together to promote the socialization goals of the culture. Arnett claims that the family, peers, school/work, community, media, legal system, and cultural belief system are all sources of socialization (1995a:619-624):

i) Family practices reflect and transmit the values of the culture as a whole,[2] parents do not create their parenting practices de novo but are likely to follow role requirements for parents in their culture which they have learned as a result of their own socialization which reflects the expectations of the community. Children in nuclear families are much less tightly embraced within the environment of the family since they are more exposed to socialization influences outside the family-(peers, child care workers, TV characters). By diminishing the number of people within the family to whom they owe obedience they are exposed to a greater range of possible models and viable influences.

ii) Children and adolescents in industrialized cultures spend a considerable amount of time with peers and their socialization may be in conflict with other sources (e.g., encouragement of alcohol use, high-speed driving) Socialization by peers becomes narrower in adulthood, even in cultures characterized by broad socialization.

iii) There have been recent trends in American education to make classroom learning entirely individualistic, such that the teacher does little teaching and

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Tarifa and Kloep discuss the role that the family plays in the "political" socialization of children by focusing on child rearing techniques and parental educational styles. They found that Albanian children are not afraid of either poverty or war but are bothered by ghosts and imaginary dangers of darkness (1996:27). The authors claim that in such authoritarian societies or father-centered cultures the political socialization of children is procrastinated but continued for a longer period compared to, for example, the United States, where it starts at 3 and is completed by 13.

attempts to tailor the curriculum individually to each child (Linney and Seidman, 1989 cited in Arnett 1995a). This is a quintessential example of broad socialization, specifically designed to recognize and enhance individuality.

iv) The workplace replaces the school setting, socialization is relatively narrow because roles consist of definite expectations for performance, rewards, and punishments.

v) Community size and cohesion (or lack of it) determine the nature of social life and socialization. Small scale communities have more power over the individual and are able to bind the individual strongly to the will of the community. In contrast, in the West, most communities have neither much involvement in nor much influence over the socialization of children. Geographical mobility acts to weaken long-term attachments and obligations between community members (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler and Tipton 1985 cited in Arnett 1995a).

vi) Cultures vary in the range of media they allow their members to consume (cable TV (religious programs, educational programs, pornography) and desktop publishing. Self-socialization is possible, in which individuals are free to choose the materials that contribute to their socialization. They choose the ones that best suit their individual preferences and personalities. In this respect, media differ from other socializing agents in that individuals can exert greater control over their media choices (Arnett 1995b:519). In cultures characterized by narrow socialization, the media may be tightly controlled by the government and used by the government to promote conformity to government-approved ways of thinking and behaving.

vii) The cultural belief system is a system of norms and moral standards of a society, the standards of right and wrong, good and bad, which in turn, set expectations for behaviour. This sometimes takes the form of definite religious institutions or a political institution. This is not a source of socialization in its own right but provides an ideological basis for socialization through other sources. In cultures characterized by narrow socialization, the cultural belief system promotes values such as self-restraint, self-denial, self-sacrifice, and conformity to a particular way of thinking. Individualism, self-fulfillment, and self-esteem, rather than a set of religious or political beliefs are the most important and influential sources of broad socialization. They form the ideological foundation for socialization through other sources.

Culture as multiple discourses

The mentioned sources of socialization all contribute to a commonly possible characterization of socialization patterns. As (Scarr, 1993:1335-37) noted, "Cultures set a range of opportunities for development; they define the limits of what is desirable, 'normal' individual variation... Cultures define the range

and focus of personal variation that is acceptable and rewarded." However, the symbols and values that create the culture's ideological frame(s) of reference are not unique and ahistorical. More specifically, in complex societies, divisions of gender, class, race, and ethnicity fundamentally constitute the make-up of a given society. Subsequently, the core dimension of the concept of culture is not shared by all members in the same way under the same conditions. Nor is it necessarily durable and stable. Moreover, we need to see culture as multiple discourses, occasionally coming together in large systemic configuration, but more often coexisting within dynamic fields of interaction and conflict (Dirks, N.B., Eley, G. and Ortner, S.B. 1994:3-4). Clearly, the socio-cultural contexts of socialization must be taken into account, since these contexts are important to description and understanding of human behaviour.

How do individuals organize culture?

Thus far, the possible ways in which society and its respective culture affects socialization have been outlined. Transmission models (see, Spindler 1974, Mead 1935, Whiting & Whiting 1975) tend to overlook individual variations because they assume a kind of "fax model" of learning (Strauss, 1992:9) in which cultural facts are simply copied into internal structures, a model in which culture is learned as the fax is received. These models examine "how culture organizes individuals" and tend to overlook "how individuals organize culture". Aptly, anthropologist Margaret Eisenhart (1995:5-6) asserts that we must understand how culture is remade and affected by individuals over time. She suggests that one means by which individuals actively organize culture is through the 'stories of self' that they express or enact when they join new social settings. Thus, the culture is seen to unfold as it is molded by the interactions of newcomers and agents of "cultural learning". Cook (1973) argues that socialization is not a matter of learning the rules and applying them, but of developing a set of 'interpretative procedures' a set of taken-for-granted assumptions that enables the member to see the rules in the first place. In conclusion, analytic focus should be on the milieu context that encompasses all conditions so far mentioned as well as the part of individuals in these specified contexts.

GENDER

Essentialism and Social Constructionism

Gender has been used to refer to social, cultural and psychological patterning of differences between males and females. Many anthropologists assert that the essentialist position e.g., woman is a natural category; that she is nurturant, relational and non-violent, is untenable. This view concedes that a universal woman's nature exists, despite cultural variations, such that biological sexual differences are stable and presocial and are reflected in the socially

constructed gender categories. If this framework were true, it would be possible to trace the transformation of sex into gender by locating stable mechanisms of cultures. Ortner and Whitehead (1981) argued that while there are, no doubt, some natural bases of gender distinctions, and of sexual and reproductive behaviour, these are relatively minimal in terms in which gender, sexuality, and reproduction are culturally defined, shaped, and woven into the social fabric in any given society at any given time. Ira L. Reiss (1986) challenges biological determinism by providing evidence of the impact of societal factors on gender roles. She asserts that although male aggressiveness does appear to be hormonally based, there is a considerable overlap between the sexes, and social training is of immense importance in directing aggressive tendencies. It is worth noting that many different meanings have been given to 'essentialism' extending beyond its usual biological connotations. For example, Luce Irigaray attempts to ground a radically different feminine culture in the specificity of the female body that challenges the foundations of much patriarchal thought. However, critics have accentuated the problems of essentialism in her work due to the ways in which the female body is seen to be the basis of this different feminine culture (Stacey, 1993:69). It has been argued that essentialism and social constructionism are a false dichotomy and should be seen as a continuum open to competing classification (Stacey, 1993:71).

The constructionist position maintains that gender is socially, culturally, and historically constructed, shaped, and assessed. Moreover, gender construction and reconstruction are within a framework that interacts with biological considerations; but are not unalterably controlled or contained by that biology. Thus, in relative constructionist terms, how are sexual differences constituted through socio-cultural and historic discourse and interaction? How does one become or acquire a gender and what are the mechanisms of this cultural construction or learning? The scientific research traditions that have contributed to a better understanding of this process will be dealt with at the end of this article. Simone de Beauvoir (1973:301) claimed that "one is not born a woman, but, rather, becomes one".[3] Essentially, this is not a neoteric idea, Erasmus first claimed that 'man is fashioned not born' in his treatise On the early scien-

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In her elucidation of the sex/gender terminological distinction Judith Butler points out that nothing in de Beauvoir's account guarantees that the 'one' who becomes a woman is necessarily female (Butler, 1990:111). In other words, she dissociates gender from sex-sex does not cause gender; it cannot be understood to reflect or express sex. Monique Wittig (quoted in Butler, 1990:112) makes no distinction between sex and gender. She claims that the category of 'sex' is itself a gendered category that is neither invariant nor natural, so 'one is not born female but becomes female'. Further, she contends that there is no reason to divide up human bodies into male and female sexes except that such divisions suit economic needs of heterosexuality, that is, a woman only exists as a term that stabilizes and consolidates a binary and oppositional relation to a man. Errington (1990) makes the distinction between 'sex', 'Sex', and 'gender'. By 'Sex' she refers to a particular social contrast of human bodies. The term 'sex by contrast refers to the physical nature of human bodies, while gender refers to what different cultures make of sex. John Hood-Williams draws on recent work in genetics to demonstrate that sex, like gender is a discursive construction. He claims that it is wrong to assume biological differences as naturally given (Hood-Williams, 1996:1-16).

tific education of children. (1529) (cited in Niestroj, 1994:28). It is worth noting here that there is a lack of isomorphism between genetic sex and gender in the minds of people in many cultures. Further, there are cultures that have more than two genders. One of the best-known examples occurs among the Navajo Indians in North America. They have a third gender known as the na-dle. The entry into this gender is by two pathways: (1) if an infant is born with ambiguous genitalia that makes it difficult to know if the child is a male or female and (b) if a person feels unhappy in the male or female gender role and wishes to change to another gender (Reiss, 1986:85).

The significance of the socio-cultural context

Since, gender is a construct, representing a particular social and cultural way in which biology is presented and understood, the socio-cultural context is of significance in any analysis of gender. A strikingly illustrative ethnographic example is provided by Janice Boddy (1989:57). She asserts that through pharaonic circumcision, appropriate female dispositions are inculcated in young Hofriyati girls in Northern Sudan, but trauma alone is insufficient to shape the feminine self. Meaning is achieved through the use of metaphors and associations which combine to establish an identification of circumcised women with a morally appropriate fertility. A child is formally initiated to its gender between the ages of five and ten (when the child has developed minimal degree of 'agl, reason, self-awareness, ability to recognize and follow Allah's laws). Genital surgery performed by women (women actively and ongoingly construct other women) accomplishes the social definition of a child's sex, it completes and purifies a child's sexual identity. By eliminating any vestiges of maleness, they constitute women as separate entities and distinct social persons

GENDER SOCIALIZATION

Gender socialization is a process whereby humans in the course of social interaction as well as exposure and reactions to diverse information are molded and continually shaped to culturally appropriate images of femaleness and maleness. If we understand that gender is socially and culturally constructed, variable in composition and essence from one culture to the next, focus must be on the socio-cultural contexts. Likewise, differences exist within societies, hence it is inaccurate to assume a 'single society' because it is more likely that members of the same gender category, located differentially in the social structure, both subjectively and literally occupy different social worlds and realities. Thus, gender is never constructed in a vacuum, but always within a field of other constructions of inequality that both feed it and naturalize it (Dirks et al., 1994:35).

Nancy Chodorow has suggested that early gender socialization proceeds in universally similar ways. She establishes certain basic differences in the psy-

chological (interpersonal) orientations of male and female children. Chodorow (1974:43-66) shows how early involvement with a female figure has characteristic consequences for the development of both girls and boys.

A young girl has the option of becoming a 'little mother' and absorbed into womanhood without effort.[4] In this sense, woman's status comes 'naturally' (e.g. female initiation rites are more a celebration of natural, biological developments than a 'proof' of femininity). She has an adequate and intelligible picture of most of the possibilities and important relationships that will define her throughout life. A young girl's early development may proceed without conflict or challenge in a group that never questions her membership; where her age rather than her abilities or achievement is likely to define her status, which is both a liability and privilege. Finally, a young girl has more experience of others as individuals than as occupants of formal institutionalized roles, so she learns to pursue her own interests by being nurturing, responsive, and kind. In essence, she develops a 'feminine' psychology and gains respect, power, and status through personal relations with men. In comparison, boys must learn to be men, which is a feat in itself, since adult male activities are rarely available to young children. He must prove himself to become an adult and cultures treat this development as something achieved.

Generally, this argument is defensible. Quite familiarly, characteristics which are most adaptive for mothering/nurturing are often encouraged in females and girls do get direct practical training in nurturant and prosocial behaviour because they are expected to look after younger children. In contrast, boys are socialized to suppress feeling pain or tears, taught to accept 'toughness' and invulnerability and traits such as autonomy and self-reliance are encouraged and valued. However, this may not be strictly applicable in some socio-cultural contexts and the terms and descriptors may have significantly different connotations, such that the efficacy of translated standardized Western measures of psychological gender in cross-cultural studies is debatable. In addition, some traits may be accorded different values depending on the cultural context. For example, in Russia communal characteristics (tendency towards mutuality, interdependence, and the suppression of self-interest in favour of the group) are more positively valued than agency (tendency towards individualism, self-assertion, and self-expansion) (Kerig, Alyoshina, Volovich 1993:403). Clearly, a universalizing framework discounts the multiplicity of cultural configurations of male and female.

Imposition of gender roles

By reiterating some of the sources of socialization (family, community, mass media (consumption), and legal system) Arnett (1995a) listed we can observe

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This effortless absorption otherwise known as 'easy' socialization is a process that is more or less taken for granted. Pertinently, Alice Rossi propounds that this depends on the kind of woman one has in mind as an end-product of socialization. In other words, only if the woman is to be the 'traditional wife-mother' is this an easy socialization (Rossi, 1964:133).

how gender roles are imposed by different socialization agents cross-cultural-ly.[5] In essence, this shows how males and females are defined, categorized, shaped or determined by social practices that reflect social and cultural prior-ities.[6]

i) Numerous studies have examined gender role socialization in families and found that girls and boys receive gender-specific socialization messages. These messages are transmitted in a number of ways: through task allocation, mod-elling, and instruction. Anne Miles observed that the selective and negotiated nature of gender socialization is especially apparent among migrant families in urban contexts in Cuenca, Ecuador because rural and urban views of gender role behaviour differ significantly. The Andean rural tradition stresses comple-mentarity, with male and female contributions being different but equally val-ued. In comparison, the Hispanic urban model is one of submission and de-pendence for women, where emphasis is on the private. She claims that Cuen-cano parents teach their children about appropriate gender behaviour through the routines of work that promote specific gender-linked abilities.[7] Helping out is considered to be an intrinsic moral good and the telling of devil stories are used in addition to reinforce moral lessons. These recounts are mechanisms for encouraging appropriate gender behaviour, that ensure intended mes-sages are received and appropriately interpreted. (Miles, 1996:132-157).

ii) Pierre Bourdieu argues that the organization of space (in houses, villages, cities) and the organization of time (rhythms of work, leisure, holidays) embody assumptions of gender, age and social hierarchy upon which a particular way of life is built. As the actor grows up, and lives everyday life within these spa-tial and temporal forms, s/he comes to embody those assumptions, literally and figuratively (Bourdieu, 1994:155-199). The effect is one of near-total nat-uralization of the social order, the forging of homologies between personal identity and social classification. Relevantly, Little and Austin (1996:101-111) contend that 'rural' women are defined by the 'rural idyll' that is instrumental in shaping and sustaining patriarchal gender relations and incorporates, both consciously and unconsciously, strong expectations concerning aspects of household strategy and gender roles.

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African-American researchers, Shirley A. Hill and Joey Sprague (1996) found that the most strik-ing differences in socialization patterns were related to race and social class rather than gender, such that gender plays little in the socialization of black children.

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Asymmetry in the cultural evaluations of male and female appears to be a universal fact of human life that is highly variable both between cultures and between different realms within a single cul-ture (Rosaldo and Lamphere 1974; Leacock 1981)

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The allotment of household tasks after the age of 6 or 7 contrasts with middle and upper class households where mothers take pride in the fact that their children have no domestic responsibil-ities Miles (1996:155).

iii) Particular representational media and associated genres both register and themselves shape the construction of gender and sexuality in very concrete and historical ways (see Dirks et al. 1994 – specific cultural fields include photograpy (Williamson), film (Traube), television (Harding) popular music and video (McClary). Mass media facilitates selective consumption and subsequently encourages boys and girls to envision their futures based on a cultural ideal reflected in media images. In industrial countries, consumerism is a gendered construct with varying kinds and amounts of consumer behaviour expected for each gender. Stores also need to be considered as sites of education and socialization. Millie R. Creighton (1994:35-52) shows how retailing activities perpetuate Japanese gender roles. Clearly, the socialization of gender roles and of culturally appropriate consumer behaviour are not separate issues.

iv) In the following example Heying Jenny Zhan (1995:269-289) shows how the Chinese patrimonial state, with its centralized propaganda and coercive legal control has played an active part in forming Chinese notions of femininity. She asserts that the submissive position of Chinese women cannot simply be ascribed to Chinese "tradition" in general, or to "Confucianism" in particular. Manipulation of women by the state for purposes of social control can be seen clearly by examining how women were educated to be women, socialized to fulfill womanly duties, legally punished when they deviated from the ethical codes, or praised or glorified by the patrimonial state when their virtuous deeds were recorded. From these analyses, it is clear that emotions and cognitions are socially learned and culturally constructed.

Clearly, these ethnographic examples show that the contents, differences, and relations between gender categories that determine particular gender identities are socially and culturally relative.[8]

The role of language

In addition, consideration must be given to specific operating factors that reproduce and reinforce cultural constructions of gender. The whole process is orchestrated and mediated by language so emphasis must be given to words as a means of animating, stabilizing and objectifying what would otherwise be private experience. Language not only reflects but also shapes visual images and suggests appropriate feelings and attitudes (Hazou, 1990:22). Language is a vehicle for encapsulating and expressing cultural constructs or models of gender. Styles of communication, words, and expressions may reflect models of gender.[9] What is considered to be gender-appropriate behaviour, a particu-

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Anthropologists have long understood that "gender" roles, the normative activities of women and men which contribute to gender identity vary considerably fro culture to culture (see Mead 1935; Friedl 1975).

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Adult women are said to have a different relation to language from men. Consequently, formal speech required for political activity and decision-making is commanded by men. Harris (1982:73)

lar social pattern in a particular cultural context is not only reflected in the language but also reinforced and facilitated by it. Winnie Hazou (1990) explores how the self-identity of women in the United States is shaped by cultural processes and explains how attitudes that devalue women are maintained through social stereotypes in language, nonverbal communication, rules of etiquette, and the media. Linguistic and stylistic variations arise to reflect and reinforce segmentation. Thus, styles that are culturally associated with each gender have become stereotypes which act as reinforcements because they encourage people to conform to socially prescribed norms. In addition, verbal and non-verbal language needs to be investigated since they reflect a particular ideology and store modes of thought that would otherwise remain more or less private.

Negotiation of gender discourses and practices

Gender socialization in many cases starts from birth.[10] Initially, gender typing may consist of purposive behaviour (pink-blue dichotomy) or differential treatment (gentle versus rough) Gender-specific socialization messages vary depending on the socio-cultural context. Subsequently, adoption of a gender identity follows, wherein young children do not usually have a fixed notion of what their categorical positioning implies socially.

How culture organizes gender can be read in the preceding ethnographic examples. Symbolic interactionists assert that we mentally reflect on and interpret what goes on about us, but rather than giving a direct response to images, sounds and sensations, we first assign meanings and then formulate actions based on these meanings. Moreover, negotiation of gender definitions and their analogous meanings that develop more slowly can be attributed to those being socialized and in effect show how individuals organize culture. Poststructural theorists of gender describe the negotiation of gender discourses and practices (Davies, 1989b:237-238; Walkerdine, 1990:xiii; Thorne, 1990: 110-113) as providing the context in which individuals construct definitions of appropriate gender behaviour, definitions that develop and change throughout the individual's life. These theories attribute greater agency to the child rather than imposition of gender roles by socialization agents. Through learning the discursive practices of a society they are able to position themselves within those practices in multiple ways, and to develop subjectivities both in concert with and in opposition to the ways in which others choose to position them (Davies, 1989a:xi).

The following ethnographic examples illustrate how individuals construct definitions of appropriate gender behaviour. Margaret J. Finders (1996:78) observed that early adolescent middle-class Euro-American females read teen

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For example, Hippocratic treatises or Aristotle rarely characterize prepubescent children by sex. (See also Boddy 1989, Harris 1982).

magazines in groups and use these textual representations to shape their so-
cial roles and relationships, which subsequently serve to define and constrain
their social roles. It could be argued that teen magazines are a source of so-
cialization but their contents are subject to selection and active interpretation.
Thus, negotiation of gender definitions is a group effort in which individuals
construct definitions of appropriate gender identity and behaviour. Using a
feminist perspective, Barrie Thorne analyzes the daily lives of children from
their point of view and explores how they actively produce gender arrange-
ments. Her analysis of children's gender relations reveals "how kids mark
cross, undermine, and challenge boundaries between girls and boys" (Thorne,
1993:135). Thorne (1993:157) argues that children, as well as adults, socially
construct gender through "forming lines, choosing seats, teasing, gossiping,
seeking access to or avoiding particluar activities".

Scientific Research

The major scientific research traditions that have influenced socialization with
attention to gender include:

1) Biological Do biological factors predispose males and females towards dif-
ferent patterns of behaviour? The biological approach advocates that genetic,
anatomical, and hormonal variations between the sexes are largely responsi-
ble for sex-linked behavioural differences, which, in turn, will predispose males
and females to adopt gender-consistent sex roles. Huston (1983) found that
sex-linked constitutional factors interact with environmental events to produce
sex-typed patterns of behaviour. For example, parents play more vigorously
with active, muscular sons than with docile, less muscular daughters. Thus,
the child's biological predispositions are likely to affect the behaviour of care-
givers which will elicit certain reactions from the child and influence activities
and interests that the child is likely to display. Lueptow and Garovich (1995:
509-530) conclude that valid social psychological explanations for gendered
personality traits cannot rest upon socio-cultural models alone but must in-
clude interaction of this unchanging genetic underlay with changeable social
structures and processes. They claim that current sociobiological research
holds that gender differences reflect innate differences between the sexes re-
sulting from their different reproductive strategies. Rosaldo and Lamphere (1974:
6) are certain that biological studies may illuminate the understanding of the
sexes and the range of possibilities but this does not determine the relations,
interpretations, and evaluations of the sexes in a cultural order.

2) Psychoanalytic (identification theory) Freud relied on the concept of identi-
fication, that is, a child's tendency to emulate another person, usually a parent
of the same sex. He argued that the adoption of gender identities and sex-
typed behaviours are the result of an Oedipus conflict that emerges between
the ages of 3 and 6. However, even though children often begin to show clear-

ly sex-typed behaviour long before three or four years of age, this tendency is not verifiable and generalizable across socio-cultural contexts. In addition, this theory focuses on the holistic, expressive aspects of parent-child communication, without corresponding attention to specific scripts, such that the stress on the emotive led to a neglect of language in the field of child rearing research (Cook, 1973:301).

3) Social Learning Theory (Cultural transmission theory) Bandura 1977; Mischel 1970 have argued that children acquire their gender identities, sex role preferences, and sex typed behaviour through direct tuition and observational learning. Direct tuition refers to the tendency of parents, teachers, and other social agents to reinforce the child's sex-appropriate responses and to punish or discourage inappropriate behaviour. For example, boys are encouraged to be tough, assertive, competitive and play with action toys that are gender consistent, whereas girls are encouraged to be gentle, cooperative, to play with dolls and dish sets and to assume a caretaking role. Fagot (1985) reports that peer pressure for 'sex-appropriate' play begins very early, even before they establish a basic gender identity. Observational learning entails the observation of activities of same-sex models, including peers, teachers, older siblings, and media personalities. According to Bandura (1977) children acquire a large percentage of sex-typed attributes by observing and imitating same-sex models. The issue here is that there is only minimal attention to internal processing, that is the child's understanding, and similar behaviours are assumed to have similar meanings across diverse cultural settings and contexts. Cook (1973:304) attributes this to the treatment of language as an elaborated cue condition which is a limited view of language, where specific signs and symbols activate behaviour.

4) Cognitive-Developmental According to Kohlberg (1966, 1969), once a child realizes that he is a boy forever (gender constancy occurs at 5 or 6), he becomes highly motivated to learn the behaviour that is expected or appropriate for that gender. However, sex typing is already underway before a child acquires a mature gender identity, e.g., 3-year-olds of both sexes have learned many sex-role stereotypes and prefer same-sex activities and playmates long before they begin to attend more selectively to same-sex models. Kuhn, Nash, and Brucken (1978); Maccoby, (1980). According to J.A. Cook (1973:319) the linguistic transmission of cultural knowledge is neglected, such that language is regarded as a transparent medium and the way in which the form of the language shapes the information is not dealt with. In these theories, attention is given to a child's understanding but these frameworks do not incorporate a direct, interactive study of children's social relationships (Cook, 1973).

5) Integrative Theorist Maccoby (1980) advocates this perspective that is a combination of biosocial, social-learning, cognitive-developmental and gender schema approaches. She suggests that biological characteristics and social learning mechanisms play a central role in the sex-typing process, and that these

factors interact with one's cognitive structuring abilities and information-processing biases (gender schemata) to determine the course and outcome of sex-role development.

During the prenatal period a fetus develops morphological (biological) characteristics of male or female. From birth to three years, the child is labelled, reminded of his or her gender, encouraged to engage in gender consistent behaviour, cross-sex activities are discouraged and the child acquires some sex-typed behaviour preferences and a basic gender identity. From three until six years of age the child begins to seek information about sex differences, form gender schemata and become intrinsically motivated to perform sex appropriate acts. When acquiring gender schemata, children attend to both male and female models, but imitate sex-appropriate behaviour when their gender schemata are well established. At the age of six or seven and beyond children acquire gender consistency and rely on the behaviour of same-sex models and less exclusively on gender schemata to acquire mannerisms and attributes that are consistent with their firm categorization of self as male or female.

All of these theories attempt to render gender socialization as universal or apart from concrete, social experience. In essence, this denies authenticity and the potential multiplicity of cultural configurations.

6) Symbolic Interactionism Role learning in this theory specifically addresses how and why internalization occurs, that is, how the reality of society enters the intrapsychic life of the individual. Symbolic interactionists (The critical early generation of G. Mead and C. Cooley was succeeded first by H. Blumer and then later by E. Goffman and E. Friedson) maintain that our definitions of the situation are critical to social interaction. Definitions of the situation may differ, it is only as we arrive at common understandings that we are able to fit our action to the actions of other people – the 'generalized other' incorporates the varied content of person's experiences. The significant others, those persons whose values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours become increasingly important to people because of thier attachments to them, are persons influenced by their own social and cultural backgrounds, backgrounds conditioned by forms of social stratification, such that children respond to and internalize the symbols of meaning produced by the cultural and social memberships of their significant caregivers. J.A. Cook (1973:318) argues that we need to study the content, context, and the linguistic shape of the explanations between the caregiver and child in order to begin to consider the socio-cognitive implications for the child. Thus, there is a strong need in socialization research to look for the organizing principles as the 'culture bearers' define them and as the child perceives and responds to them. In contrast, post-structural theorists of gender (see Davies, 1989b; Walkerdine, 1990; Thorne, 1990, Jordan, 1995;) argue that negotiations of gender definitions and their analogous meanings are actively sought by those being socialized such that they are not mere, passive recipients of the norms and values of a particular socio-cultural context.

CONCLUSION

In order to become effective members we learn what is culturally appropriate in ways that are culturally mediated. In this article, I have argued that the socio-cultural context is important because individuals are defined, categorized, shaped or determined by practices that reflect social and cultural priorities. This perspective considers how culture affects socialization or how culture organizes individuals. Alternatively, it is worthwhile to examine how individuals organize culture. Pertinently, social and cultural facts are not always learned as they are received but are subject to interpretation, redefinition, and revision over time. Thus, a productive and illuminating approach may be towards more contextually specific and detailed studies where focus is on the individual as a potential organizer of culture.

Likewise, attention to the socio-cultural context is of importance in gender socialization since gender is constructed in a particular context and thus variable in composition and essence. Clearly, a universalizing framework discounts the multiplicity of cultural configurations of male and female. It is evident that a number of factors contribute to the constitution, differences, and relations of culturally relative gender identities. Specifically, gender-specific socialization messages regarding roles, emotions and cognitions are transmitted in culturally appropriate ways. Some of these include task allocation, modelling, education, control/manipulation/punishment, and language – verbal/non-verbal. Gender-specific socialization messages can be found in spatial and temporal forms and media genres. Significantly, any cross-cultural study requires insight that certain gender terms and descriptors may have different connotations in other cultural contexts and that gender characteristics may be accorded different values.

Finally, the major scientific research traditions were reviewed. In summary, all of the frameworks (except the symbolic interactionist approach) treat gender socialization as universal or apart from concrete social experience which denies the authenticity and potential multiplicity of cultural configurations of male and female. In comparison, the symbolic interactionist approach deals with how and why internalization occurs. Thus, in accordance with this approach, the organization of gender behaviour depends on the meanings we assign to our experiences. These meanings are produced in a particular socio-cultural context whereby shared definitions facilitate effective transmission. Post-structural theorists of gender extend this argument, by giving weight to the interpretations and subsequent definitions coined by the child. Interaction with others facilitates negotiation of gender discourses and practices. Since social expectations pertaining to gender are very difficult to elude, further ethnographic research is required on the ways in which gendered individuals remake and affect culture over time.

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SOCIJALIZACIJA I SPOLNOST: ZNAČENJE SOCIO-KULTURNIH KONTEKSTA

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Cilj je ovoga rada ukazati na relevantnost socio-kulturnog konteksta u bilo kojem opisu socijalizacije, posebno spolne (rodne) socijalizacije. Bitna je odlika ovakvog stajališta razmatranje utjecaja kulture na socijalizaciju, odnosno procesa kojima kultura djeluje na razvoj pojedinca. Poseban su interes kulturna konstrukcija spolnosti i odnos spram društvenog iskustva. Predlaže se da se buduća istraživanja spolne socijalizacije, u okviru poststrukturalizma, u većoj mjeri usmjere na izučavanje specifičnosti konteksta, pri čemu je pojedinac u središtu interesa.

SOZIALISIERUNG UND SEXUALITÄT: DIE BEDEUTUNG DES SOZIOKULTURELLEN KONTEXTS

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Ziel dieser Untersuchung ist hervorzuheben, wie relevant der soziokulturelle Kontext in der Beschreibung einer jeglichen Sozialisierung, insbesondere aber der (konnatalen) geschlechtlichen Sozialisierung ist. Zu den wesentlichen Merkmalen eines solchen Standpunkts gehört, daß der Forscher den Einfluß der Kultur auf die Sozialisierung bzw. den Einfluß jenes Prozesses, mit dem Kultur auf die Entwicklung des einzelnen einwirkt, beobachtet. Besonderes Interesse wecken die kulturbedingte Konstruktion der Sexualität und das Verhältnis zur gesellschaftlichen Erfahrung. Es wird vorgeschlagen, bei zukünftigen, im Rahmen des Poststrukturalismus sich bewegenden Forschungen zur geschlechtlichen Sozialisierung sich mehr auf die Untersuchung des spezifischen Kontexts auszurichten und sich auf die Rolle des Individuums zu konzentrieren.