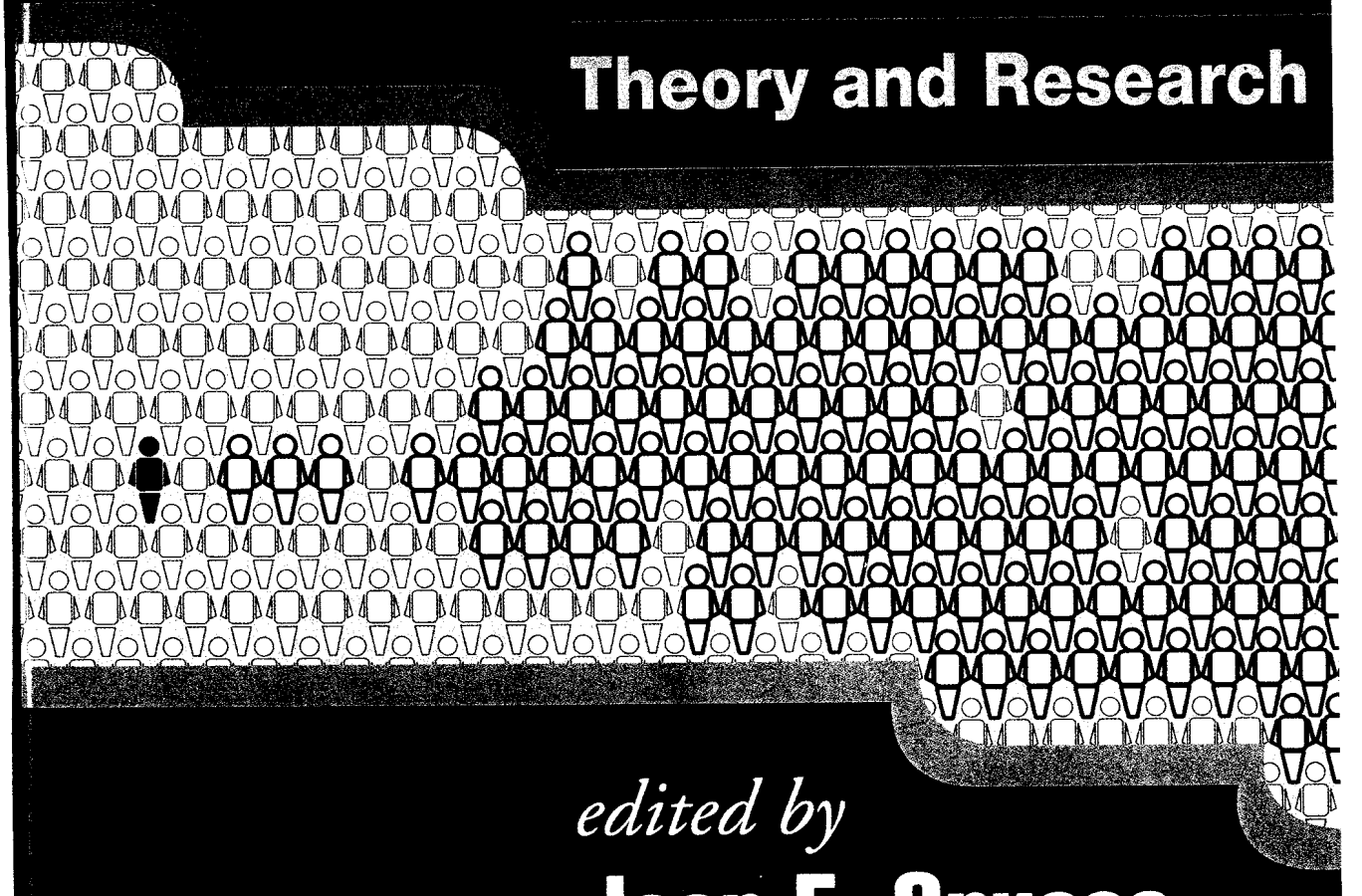
Handbook of

SOCIALIZATION

Theory and Research



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CHAPTER 8

Socialization in Emerging Adulthood

From the Family to the Wider World, from Socialization to Self-Socialization

JEFFREY JENSEN ARNETT

Emerging adulthood is a period of life that has developed in recent decades in industrialized societies, lasting from about age 18 to 25. A number of influences led to the rise of this new period. Economic changes from a manufacturing to an information-based world economy increased the need and desirability of obtaining additional education and training beyond secondary school. A scientific advance, the invention of the birth control pill, made it relatively easy for young people to become sexually active in their late teens without a high risk of pregnancy. Corresponding social changes, specifically, increased acceptance of premarital sexuality and cohabitation, further weakened the traditional belief that marriage must be entered before sexual activity begins. Median ages of entering marriage and parenthood rose into the late 20s.

Thus the period of life lasting from the late teens through (at least) the mid-20s changed in less than a half century from being a period of entering and settling into adult roles of marriage, parenthood, and long-term work to being a period when young people typically focus on their self-development as they gradually lay the foundation for their adult lives. During this time they gradually attain a subjective sense that they have reached adulthood and are ready to take on the full range of adult responsibilities (Arnett, 1998). It has been proposed that, developmentally, emerging adulthood can be characterized as *the age of identity explorations, the age of instability, the self-focused age, the age of feeling in between,* and *the age of possibilities* (Arnett, 2004, 2006a). These features have received empirical support (Reifman, Arnett, & Colwell, 2006). Further empirical investigation may change our understanding of the specific features that characterize this age period developmentally and reveal important variations according to

socioeconomic status, ethnic/cultural group, and other characteristics, but this much seems clear: Full adulthood is reached later than in the past, and a new period of life has opened up in recent decades, as reflected in broader participation in higher education and later ages of marriage and parenthood (Arnett, 2004). I proposed the term "emerging adulthood" in order to apply a new term to this new period of life, and to distinguish it from the adolescence that precedes it or the young adulthood that follows it.

The question of the nature of socialization in emerging adulthood presents a variety of intriguing problems and challenges. The focus of most theory and research on socialization has been on the family–that is, on how parents socialize their children (Bornstein, 2002). But most emerging adults leave their parents' household and consequently are much less exposed to parental socialization than they were at younger ages. Even those who remain home or return home tend to be much more autonomous than they were in adolescence, as both parents and emerging adults adjust in response to emerging adults' increasing capabilities (Aquilino, 2006). So, the first challenge for a conception of socialization in emerging adulthood is to assess whether socialization still takes place during this period.

IS THERE SOCIALIZATION IN EMERGING ADULTHOOD?

Because the focus of socialization theory and research as been on childhood and adolescence, there is little to draw on directly for conceptualizing socialization in emerging adulthood. Some previous theoretical ideas have indirect implications. Erikson (1950, 1968), in his psychosocial theory of development across the life course, described early adulthood as a time when the focus of development is on the capacity for forming an intimate partnership. In discussing the challenge of intimacy versus isolation, Erikson implied that socialization was largely over by this time; the challenge is to risk one's identity, newly formed in the course of the socialization experiences of childhood and adolescence, by forming a committed intimate relationship with another person. Erikson also discussed the concept of a "psychosocial moratorium" during this period, which was the idea that some young people delay forming an intimate relationship for some years after adolescence and spend this time exploring various possibilities for their future. Here again, however, there was no suggestion that socialization was a major part of development during these years. The young person experiencing the psychosocial moratorium was depicted as an independent agent, guided by individual choice.

Other theorists have also contributed ideas that have limited application to socialization in emerging adulthood. Keniston (1971) described a period of "youth" between adolescence and young adulthood. However, Keniston (1971) viewed youth as a time of "refusal of socialization" (p. 9) and rejection of what the adult world has to offer to the young. His views were based on the student protesters of the 1960s and have an anachronistic quality by now. Levinson (1978) called ages 17–33 "the novice phase" of development, and argued that the central task of this phase is to move into the adult world and build a stable life structure. He emphasized the primacy of mentors as socialization influences during these years, but no research since then has verified this claim.

Thus the question whether and how socialization takes place in emerging adulthood remains wide open and in need of a fresh conceptualization that would apply to contemporary emerging adults. This question can be addressed by focusing on what socialization

entails. According to Grusec (2002), socialization is how "individuals are assisted in the acquisition of skills necessary to function as members of their social group" (p. 143). In this process, elders and novices collaborate, with the elders helping the novices to develop the values, behaviors, and motives necessary to becoming a part of the social community. By this standard, socialization clearly continues through emerging adulthood. In fact, as noted, one of the social changes that has led to the development of emerging adulthood is the increased pervasiveness of post-secondary education and training, where emerging adults acquire from "elders" (i.e., teachers, professors, trainers, employers, and experienced workers) the skills that will enable them to participate in the modern economy. This process involves acquiring not only knowledge and behaviors but also values such as reliability and motives such as the attainment of self-sufficiency (Arnett, 1998).

Grusec (2002) further proposes that socialization involves three specific outcomes: (1) the development of self-regulation of emotion, thinking, and behavior; (2) the acquisition of a culture's standards, attitudes, and values, including a willingness to accept the authority of others; and (3) the development of role-taking skills, strategies for resolving conflicts, and ways of viewing relationships. I have proposed a similar framework of three goals of socialization (Arnett, 1995a), but here I use Grusec's (2002) conceptualization, as it applies especially well to socialization in emerging adulthood. However, I prefer "goals" to "outcomes," because the term implies intentionality and volition. All cultures have a conception of what it means to become an adult (Arnett, 1998), and the adults in a culture typically socialize the young toward gradually developing the beliefs and behavior they believe an adult should have. As part of the socialization process, adults convey to young people whether or not they are making adequate progress toward those goals.

In industrialized cultures, all three of the goals of socialization arguably continue to be developed in emerging adulthood. Self-regulation is by no means attained by the end of adolescence, for most people. With respect to emotional self-regulation, mood fluctuations are greater in adolescence than in childhood or adulthood, and depressed moods are common (Larson & Richards, 1994; Arnett, 1999). Emotional self-regulation improves substantially in the course of emerging adulthood, and consequently overall emotional well-being rises steadily from age 18 to 25 (Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006). With respect to behavioral self-regulation, emerging adulthood is a period when a variety of types of risk behavior are highest, including substance use, driving while intoxicated, and unprotected sex (Arnett, 2000, 2005; Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006). However, toward the end of emerging adulthood, in the mid-to-late 20s, frequencies of risk behavior decline substantially, suggesting the attainment of behavioral self-regulation.

With respect to the second goal of socialization, the acquisition of a culture's standards, attitudes, and values, here, too, socialization is incomplete at the end of adolescence and continues into emerging adulthood. Most notably, in Western societies, a central cultural standard is that, in order to attain adult status, young people should learn to become self-sufficient, to accept responsibility for themselves (Arnett, 1998). In numerous studies, across a variety of socioeconomic classes, ethnic groups, and nationalities, accepting responsibility for one's self has been found consistently to be the top criterion for reaching adulthood (Arnett, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004; Facio & Micocci, 2003; Nelson, Badger, & Wu, 2004; Mayseless & Scharf, 2003). Furthermore, this criterion is rarely met by the end of adolescence; in these studies, few adolescents believe they have reached adulthood. It is during emerging adulthood that the cultural standard of accept-

ing responsibility for one's self is gradually attained and people move from feeling in between adolescence and adulthood to feeling that they have reached adulthood.

Emerging adulthood may also be a key time for the development of the third goal of socialization, that of learning role-taking skills, strategies for resolving conflicts, and ways of viewing relationships. In their relationships with parents, emerging adults become notably more adept at role-taking, and their relationships with parents improve in part because they are better at taking their parents' perspectives (Aquilino, 2006; Arnett, 2004). Whether parents actually teach (explicitly or implicitly) role-taking skills that promote this change or whether the skills simply develop as a consequence of other social and cognitive changes in emerging adults is uncertain. It also seems likely that emerging adults change in their methods for resolving conflicts and in their ways of viewing relationships. Certainly, in their romantic relationships emerging adults become capable of a greater degree of interpersonal intimacy with a romantic partner than they had as adolescents (Collins & van Dulmen, 2006). However, whether this is due to advances in resolving conflicts and in viewing relationships is an intriguing but heretofore unexamined research question.

Overall, it seems clear that socialization is not complete by the end of adolescence and important developments in socialization take place in emerging adulthood. This leads to a second key problem in conceptualizing socialization in emerging adulthood: If parents play less of a role in the socialization of emerging adults than they do for children or adolescents, what are the sources of socialization in emerging adulthood? Most of this chapter is devoted to this question. First, however, I summarize my socialization theory and offer a few comments on the contexts of socialization.

CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, AND DEVELOPMENTAL CONTEXTS

As a framework for the remainder of the chapter, I use my theory of broad and narrow socialization (Arnett, 1995a, 2004). In this theory, I specify seven levels on which socialization takes place: the cultural belief system, the family, peers (including friends and romantic partners), neighborhood/community, school/work, media, and the legal system. The cultural belief system is the level that underlies all the others. Cultures tending toward broad socialization have cultural beliefs that value individualism, independence, and self-expression. Cultures tending toward narrow socialization have cultural beliefs that prize obedience, duty, and conformity. These beliefs then influence how parents parent, how teachers teach, and so on.

This basic contrast in socialization, between an emphasis on individualism and self-expression on the one hand and conformity and obedience on the other, has been a staple of theory and research on parenting in the United States for decades, using a variety of terminology. Two characteristics distinguish the theory of broad and narrow socialization from other approaches. First, it is a cultural theory, meaning that the focus is on the cultural beliefs that underlie socialization rather than on the parenting practices that reflect cultural beliefs. Second, the theory emphasizes the range of individual differences that cultures allow or encourage—relatively broad in the case of broad socialization, relatively narrow in the case of narrow socialization. In my view, the heart of socialization lies in the boundaries cultures set on the development of individuals. As Scarr (1993) observed, "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" (pp. 1335, 1337; emphasis in original). Similarly, Child described socialization as "the whole process by which an individual born with behavioral potentialities of enormously wide range, is led to develop actual behavior which is confined within a much narrower range—the range of what is customary and acceptable for him according to the standards of his group" (quoted in Clausen, 1966, p. 3).

It is important to emphasize that broad and narrow socialization are not two homogeneous categories but two points at either end of a continuum. Most cultures are not either broad or narrow, as pure types, but somewhere along the continuum, relatively broad or relatively narrow. Furthermore, in some cultures socialization is relatively broad on some levels, relatively narrow from others. Still, the various levels are interrelated and tend to reinforce one another, because the cultural belief system underlies and influences all the others. For example, if socialization in the family is narrow, it is likely to be partly because the cultural belief system is narrow. However, because each culture may be evaluated for the extent to which it is broad or narrow on each of the seven levels, the theory makes it possible to accommodate the great diversity in socialization practices of different cultures while also making a useful distinction between different general types of socialization.

The range of acceptable individual differences can vary between cultures, across history, and through the life course. Cultures differ in the degree of restrictiveness they impose, based on their cultural beliefs. Across history, as cultural beliefs change, socialization changes as well. Through the life course, socialization changes as people become more subject to or more exempt from the prohibitions and restrictions of others.

All three of these considerations, culture, history, and life course period, are important for understanding the socialization of emerging adults today. Culturally, emerging adulthood exists mainly in cultures that allow their young people a substantial amount of freedom from their late teens through at least their mid-20s—that is, cultures with relatively broad socialization. Emerging adulthood is a period in which people focus on their self-development as they consider the possible life paths available to them and gradually move toward making the choices that will structure their adult lives (Arnett, 2004). This requires a cultural belief system that values individual development over obligations and duties to others, especially the family. Such individualistic beliefs tend to develop mainly in cultures that are industrialized enough that economic interdependence among kin is not necessary for daily survival (Schlegel & Barry, 1991). Table 8.1 shows median marriage ages in various countries and suggests that emerging adulthood is experienced by the majority in economically developed countries but is not normative in developing countries.

Historically, emerging adulthood developed only in the past half century, as young people began to focus on their self-development in their late teens and early 20s and consequently the median ages of marriage and parenthood rose. There is substantial evidence that socialization in the U.S. majority culture broadened in the second half of the 20th century, when the individualism that has long been part of Western cultural beliefs became substantially more pronounced (Alwin, 1988; Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1986).

Within cultures, socialization may vary among subgroups, including periods of the life course. Socialization tends to be notably broader in emerging adulthood than at any other

TABLE 8.1 Median Marriage Age (Females) in Selected Countries

Industrialized countries	Age	Developing countries	Age
United States	25	Nigeria	17
Canada	26	Egypt	19
Japan	27	Indonesia	19
Spain	27	Ghana	19
Germany	28	India	20
France	28	Morocco	20
Holland	29	Brazil	21

age. Children have the boundaries for their behavior set by adults, even in a culture characterized by broad socialization. Adults generally decide what children will do and when they will do it, and adults communicate to children what is acceptable and unacceptable behavior in the culture, sometimes explicitly, sometimes by example. Adolescents, too, are under the authority of their parents. They may have greater autonomy than children (although not necessarily; in cultures that value female virginity before marriage, socialization may become narrower for girls when they reach adolescence; Schlegel & Barry, 1991), but their parents still set the rules and boundaries for their daily lives. Beyond emerging adulthood, once the adult roles of spouse, parent, and long-term worker are entered those roles set standards for behavior that adults are compelled to follow.

Socialization is broadest in emerging adulthood in the sense that this is when people have the most freedom to decide for themselves how to live and what to do and when to do it. Parents no longer have as much power as they did in childhood and adolescence, and obligations to a spouse or long-term partner, children, and long-term employer have not yet been entered. Emerging adulthood is a self-focused age, when social control is at an ebb and people have the greatest freedom to focus on their self-development (Arnett, 2004).

Consequently, emerging adulthood is the most diverse, heterogeneous period of the life course (Arnett, 2006a, 2006b). Nearly all children and adolescents live at home with one or both parents, and the great majority of adults live with a spouse or romantic partner, but emerging adults may live alone, with friends, in a college group setting, with a romantic partner, or with parents, and they change their living arrangements more often than persons at any other age period (Arnett, 2004). Nearly all children and adolescents attend school, and the great majority of adults are employed, but emerging adults have a dizzying range of combinations of school and work, and are also more likely than persons in any other age group to be "disengaged" (i.e., neither working nor in school) (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2006). Thus the consequence of the self-focused freedom conferred by broad socialization in emerging adulthood is that the variance in their living arrangements, school–work combinations, and other areas (to be discussed later) is greater than at any other age period.

THE RISE OF INDIVIDUALIZATION IN THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS

An important sociological concept that can be applied here is "individualization." According to sociologists and historians of the life course (Beck, 1992; Côté, 2000; Heinz,

2002; Mayer, 2004), the life course has become deinstitutionalized in recent decades. Institutions (such as family and community) have lost their binding power, and individuals have gained more control of and responsibility for the direction of their lives. According to Heinz (2002), there has been "a shift from standardized, institutionalized life course patterns that constitute an age- and gender-bound temporal order of life towards the individualized biography" (p. 43). The result is individualization, meaning that people are no longer as constrained or supported by institutions as they were in the past, and must work out their life course choices for themselves. As Beck (1992) observes, the life course is now a "biography of choice" that requires individuals to weigh alternatives, evaluate outcomes, and repair failures without much help from institutions.

Sociologists rarely frame individualization in developmental terms, instead applying it to the life course in general. Nevertheless, they discuss it especially in relation to life-course transitions that pertain mainly to emerging adulthood, such as transitions related to education, employment, partnership/marriage, and parenthood (Beck, 1992; Heinz, 2002; Mayer, 2004). Applying individualization developmentally to emerging adulthood is useful for emphasizing that socialization is both broader now than in the past and broader in emerging adulthood than in other age periods. As Heinz (2002) notes, due to individualization there has been "a de-standardization of the programmed trajectories, *increasing variations* in the timing and duration of transitions in relation to the family, education, and employment" (p. 49, emphasis added).

Heinz (2002) makes an explicit connection between individualization and socialization with his concept of *self-socialization*. The self-socialization framework has two main principles:

> 1) Individuals construct their own life course by attempting to come to terms with opportunities and constraints concerning transition pathways and life stages. 2) Individuals select pathways, act and appraise the consequences of their actions in terms of their self-identity in reference to social contexts which are embedded in institutions and markets. (p. 58)

Thus individualization requires people to construct their own life course, so that socialization is something that is done by the individual rather than imposed by outside social or institutional forces.

As with individualization, the self-socialization framework is not presented developmentally, but it is easy to see the developmental basis that underlies it and how it pertains especially to emerging adulthood. Children and adolescents have limited freedom to construct their life course and choose their socialization contexts, because many of their choices are either structured by their parents or made by their parents directly. As for adults, once they select their pathways through the choices they make in work and family, the structure of adult life that is set up by those choices tends to perpetuate itself and resists change. It is during emerging adulthood that self-socialization is most pronounced, as people have more freedom to choose their socialization contexts and construct their life course than they did before emerging adulthood or will once they enter the roles and responsibilities of young adulthood.

Let us now return to the question of where and how socialization takes place in emerging adulthood, with a focus on the levels of family, peers/friends, school/work, and media. Family is addressed (even though, as noted, family socialization usually wanes in emerging adulthood) because socialization theory and research have traditionally focused

mainly on parenting, and important changes in parental socialization take place in emerging adulthood. Peers/friends, school/work, and media are addressed because these levels of socialization are especially important in emerging adulthood.

FAMILY

If we accept that socialization takes place during emerging adulthood, to what extent do parents continue to be part of the socialization process? And to what extent does parental socialization in childhood and adolescence have effects that endure into emerging adulthood? There is no doubt that the parents' role in socialization diminishes from adolescence to emerging adulthood, as it diminishes from childhood to adolescence. Parents control nearly every aspect of their children's environment from birth through early to middle childhood. Adolescents begin to gain more autonomy from their parents, and consequently they spend a considerable proportion of their time with friends, unmonitored by their parents or other adults (Larson & Richards, 1994). Emerging adults are even more different from adolescents than adolescents are from children with respect to autonomy from parents, because they typically move out of their parents' household. Once they move out, their exposure to socialization from parents becomes voluntary, to a large extent. Indeed, avoiding their parents' efforts to influence their lives on a daily basis is a primary motivation for moving out in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004; Dubas & Petersen, 1996). Once they move out, emerging adults are able to control the information their parents have about their lives and let them in on only what they want them to know.

Nevertheless, the influence of parents continues to be evident in emerging adulthood on all three of Grusec's (2002) socialization outcomes. With the respect to self-regulation, parents assist in the development of this quality to the extent that they support their emerging adults' increased capacity for it. This does not mean withdrawing parental support, emotional and financial, once secondary school ends and emerging adulthood begins. On the contrary, it means flexibility in adjusting to emerging adults' needs for autonomy and dependency as the balance of these needs gradually moves more toward autonomy, perhaps in fits and starts, over the course of emerging adulthood (Aquilino, 2006). Most parents of emerging adults do quite well at supporting their emerging adults' development toward greater self-regulation. For example, one study of college students found that 70% of them reported that a parent did or said something that implied that the emerging adult was growing up and gaining in maturity (Bjornsen, 2000). However, some parents express anxiety or reluctance about their emerging adults' growing capacity for autonomy (Bartle-Haring, Brucker, & Hock, 2002).

Moving out promotes the development of self-regulation in emerging adults and also makes it easier for parents to support it. While emerging adults remain home, for most parents the daily presence of their emerging adults in the household proves to be too much of a temptation for attempting to regulate their children's behavior more than most emerging adults believe they need or want. Emotional boundaries, physical privacy, and parental intrusiveness often become critical issues (Arnett, 2004; Aquilino, 2006). Parents' attempts to regulate their emerging adults' daily schedules, eating habits, financial practices, and sexuality become sources of conflict. Emerging adults' progress toward full self-regulation proceeds more smoothly for both parents and emerging adults if they do not live together. For example, Dubas and Petersen (1996) followed a sample of 246

young people from age 13 through 21. At age 21, the emerging adults who had moved at least 1 hour away (by car) from their parents reported the highest levels of emotional closeness to parents and valued their opinions most highly. Emerging adults who remained home had the poorest relations with their parents in these respects, and those who had moved out but remained within an hour's drive were in between the other two groups. This suggests that parents and emerging adults often have different perceptions of the degree of self-regulation the emerging adults can manage. They get along better if they see each other less because the more they are together the more this difference becomes a source of conflict.

The influence of parents is also evident with respect to the second socialization goal, the acquisition of the culture's standards, attitudes, and values. An important standard with respect to emerging adulthood is the expectation that emerging adults will move toward self-sufficiency, an expectation that reflects cultural values of independence and individualism (Arnett, 1998). Parents influence their emerging adults' progress toward this goal by communicating the values of independence and individualism long before their children reach emerging adulthood. By emerging adulthood, both parents and children usually concur that it is best for emerging adults to move toward independence from parents and learn to stand alone.

One area of research that has implications for this issue concerns perceptions of what it means to become an adult (Arnett, 1994, 1997, 1998, 2001, 2003, 2004; Facio & Micocci, 2003; Mayseless & Scharf, 2003; Nelson et al., 2004). Across numerous studies, in a variety of industrialized countries, the consistent finding has been that the top three criteria for adulthood are accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. All three of these criteria reflect common underlying values of independence and individualism (Arnett, 1998).

Both parents and emerging adults—in fact, persons of all ages—favor those three criteria as the most important criteria for adulthood (Arnett, 2001). Furthermore, all three criteria pertain to emerging adults' independence from parents. Accepting responsibility for one's self means not depending on one's parents to come to the rescue when unpleasant consequences result from one's actions. Making independent decisions means relying on one's own judgment rather than relying on parents for advice. Becoming financially independent means no longer requesting or accepting parents' financial help. By favoring the attainment of these three criteria for adulthood, parents may also communicate the importance of values of independence and individualism. However, studies have yet to be conducted indicating how much parents encourage the attainment of these markers in their emerging adult children, implicitly or explicitly.

Of course, independence and (more generally) individualism are not universal values but cultural values prevalent in industrialized societies, especially Western societies. But even within these societies, some cultural groups have values that depart from the values of the majority culture. With respect to conceptions of what it means to be an adult, an interesting contrast exists between the values of the majority culture in American society and the values of Asian Americans (Arnett, 2003, 2004). Like European Americans, Asian Americans place a high value on the individualistic criteria of accepting responsibility for one's self, making independent decisions, and becoming financially independent. However, a criterion that is highly valued among Asian American emerging adults but almost never mentioned by European Americans is becoming capable of taking care of one's parents. This is a criterion that is clearly derived from the traditional Asian value of

filial piety (i.e., respecting, obeying, and revering one's parents). (Indeed, emerging adults in China have also been found to place high importance on becoming capable of taking care of one's parents as a criterion of adulthood; Nelson et al., 2004.) Thus, it can be reasonably presumed that Asian American parents (and perhaps others in the cultural community) convey the value of filial piety to their children in the course of childhood socialization, and it is expressed in emerging adulthood in the importance placed on becoming capable of taking care of one's parents.

The third goal of socialization, the development of role-taking skills, strategies for resolving conflicts, and ways of viewing relationships, is strikingly evident in relationships with parents during emerging adulthood. Relationships with parents typically improve greatly in emerging adulthood, compared to adolescence (Aquilino, 2006; Arnett, 2004). Conflict is lower, and warmth and closeness are higher. This is partly because emerging adults typically move out of their parents' household, and it is easier for them to get along well when the friction that results from day-to-day living together is avoided. As noted previously, emerging adults get along considerably better with their parents if they move out than if they remain at home (Dubas & Petersen, 1996).

However, there is more to their improved relations than simply seeing each other less, and it is in precisely this area of enhanced role-taking skills and new ways of viewing relationships on the part of emerging adults. Emerging adults are considerably less egocentric than adolescents, and considerably better at role-taking with respect to their parents, which leads them to understand their parents as persons and not merely as parents (Arnett, 2004; Fingerman, 2000). They learn to view their relationships with their parents as more of a relationship among adults rather than strictly in terms of the roles of parents and children.

Whether this change in emerging adults is a consequence of parental socialization is unknown, and it seems unlikely that the direction of effects runs only from parents to children. Emerging adults may even drive the change in the relationship, through their development of new social cognitive skills (Labouvie-Vief, 2006). Parents welcome this change in their children, and parents change, too, becoming less didactic with their children and relating to them more as adults or at least near-adults. Their role as monitor of their children's behavior and enforcer of household rules diminishes, and this results in a more relaxed and amiable relationship with their children. Thus, socialization with respect to relationships between parents and emerging adults appears to be bidirectional, with both changing and both responding to the changes in the other (Arnett, 2004; Fingerman, 2000).

Parental Socialization and Emerging Adults' Psychosocial Development

In addition to research on parental socialization that pertains directly to the three socialization outcomes discussed earlier, there is a considerable amount of research describing the association between relations with parents and psychosocial development in emerging adulthood. This research is mainly in three areas: parenting and emerging adults' psychological well-being, parenting and emerging adults capacity for intimate relations with others, and emerging adults' responses to parental conflict and divorce.

With respect to psychological well-being, research pertaining to emerging adulthood confirms the long-standing finding of socialization research on childhood and adolescence, that the parenting combination of *demandingness* and *responsiveness* that charac-

terizes the authoritative parenting style is consistently related to positive outcomes in children. For example, in a study of college students, Wintre and Yaffe (2000) found that authoritative parenting was related to higher academic achievement and successful adjustment to college life. Similarly, research on attachments to parents in emerging adulthood confirms findings from research on children and adolescents that a secure attachment to parents is related to positive outcomes. For example, a 6-year national longitudinal study in the Netherlands extending through the 20s found that attachments to parents did not diminish over that period and the association between attachment to parents and psychological well-being remained strong and positive (van Wel, Linssen, & Ruud, 2000).

Although authoritative parenting and secure attachment are positively related to favorable psychological outcomes in emerging adulthood as they are in childhood and adolescence, the nature of authoritative parenting and secure attachment change with the age of the children. Authoritative parenting for emerging adults involves a different kind of demandingness than at earlier ages, with broader boundaries and less monitoring; parental responsiveness is likely to be on less than a daily basis, especially once emerging adults move out of their parents' household. Secure attachment, too, is likely to involve less frequent contact with parents in emerging adulthood than at earlier ages, and the "secure base" provided by parents is likely to be more psychological than literal (Allen & Land, 1999). With both authoritative parenting and secure attachment, competent parental socialization includes adapting to the new capacities that children develop in emerging adulthood and fostering their autonomy even as a strong emotional bond to parents is maintained (Aquilino, 2006; Allen, Hauser, O'Connor, & Bell, 2002).

With respect to parental socialization and relations with others in emerging adulthood, research indicates that parental socialization is related to emerging adults' intimate relationships. For example, in one longitudinal study that followed a rural sample from age 12 to 21, authoritative parenting (high in warmth, support, and monitoring) in early adolescence was predictive of behavior toward romantic partners in emerging adulthood that was also warm and supportive (Conger, Cui, Bryant, & Elder, 2000). In another longitudinal study, beginning with a sample ages 13–18 and following up 6 years later at ages 19–25, family cohesion in adolescence predicted self-reported happiness in romantic relationships in emerging adulthood, especially for women (Feldman, Gowen, & Fisher, 1998). These studies appear to indicate that socialization in the family affects the development of interpersonal skills, which are then later carried into emerging adults' romantic relationships (Conger & Conger, 2002).

With respect to the effects of parental divorce, substantial evidence indicates that emerging adults who experienced their parents' divorce during childhood are at risk for depression and other mental health problems in emerging adulthood (Aro & Palosaari, 1992; Zill, Morrison, & Coiro, 1993). One study of a large national sample in Great Britain even showed evidence of a "sleeper effect" of divorce, with its negative influence on mental health becoming more evident in emerging adulthood than it was in childhood (Cherlin, Chase-Lansdale, & McRae, 1998). Furthermore, several studies have found that parental divorce in childhood is negatively related to emerging adults' capacity for intimacy and trust in romantic relationships (Jacquet & Surra, 2001; Summers, Forehand, Armistead, & Tannenbaum, 1998; Toomey & Nelson, 2001).

There is evidence that it is the parental conflict surrounding divorce, and not just divorce per se, that accounts for the relation between parental divorce and negative out-

nes in childhood and adolescence as well as emerging adulthood (Sun, 2001). How-
r, studies that control for parental conflict have found that the effects of divorce
nain (Amato, 1993). Laumann-Billings and Emery (2000) noted that research on di-
ce typically focuses on disorders of behavior—how divorce affects functioning in
ool or work, for example—whereas clinical case studies typically focus on the distress
t results from divorce—how divorce feels to those affected by it. In two studies of
erging adults, one with college students and one with a low-income community sam-
e, they found that emerging adults often reported painful feelings, beliefs, and memo-
s concerning the divorce, even if in their behavior they seemed to have recovered from

he Question of Parental Influence

ike studies on parental socialization at other ages, studies of parental socialization in
merging adulthood must be examined with respect to questions of interpretation, specif-
cally, the question of the extent to which an association between parental socialization
nd children's behavior represents the influence of parents on their children or is due in-
stead to other factors. One of the most important considerations is the possibility of pas-
sive, evocative, and active genotype–environment processes (Scarr & McCartney, 1983).

Passive genotype–environment processes occur in biological families when parents provide both genes and environment for their children. This seems like a truism at first glance, but it has profound implications for interpreting socialization research. It means that in biological families, when an association is found between parents' behavior and children's outcomes, it is difficult to tell if this association is due to the environment the parents provided or the genes they provided, because they provided both. In socialization research involving emerging adults, including virtually all the studies cited in the previous section, associations between parents' characteristics and emerging adults' characteristics are routinely described in terms of parental "effects" and "influences." However, this interpretation may be questionable, as it ignores the role of passive genotype–environment processes.

Behavioral genetic studies have begun to address this problem in socialization research, mainly using twin studies and adoption studies to unravel the usual confound between genetics and environment that occurs in biological families (see Moffitt & Caspi, Chapter 4, this volume). Few behavioral genetic studies on this topic have included emerging adults, but it could be expected that parental socialization effects would be smaller in emerging adulthood than in childhood or adolescence, due to the fact that emerging adults are less likely to have daily contact with their parents (Aquilino, 2006; Arnett, 2004). However, it is also possible that parental socialization in childhood and adolescence has effects that endure into emerging adulthood.

Evocative genotype–environment processes exist when children's genetically based characteristics evoke responses from parents (and others) so that the children's socialization is due not simply to the effects of parents on children but to the children's effects on the parents. This is part of the broader idea of bidirectional effects (i.e., the idea that socialization is an interactive process in which the direction of effects goes not only from parents to children but from children to parents). There is substantial evidence for this in the literature on socialization in childhood (e.g., Deater-Deckard, Fulker, & Plomin, 1999; Reiss, Neiderhiser, Hetherington, & Plomin, 2000). In emerging adulthood, the

child-to-parent effect could be expected to be even stronger, because relationships between emerging adults and their parents becomes closer to a relationship between equals (or at least near-equals) than it is in childhood or adolescence (Arnett, 2004). But research on bidirectional effects in emerging adulthood is scarce.

Finally, the concept of active genotype–environment processes means that people pursue environmental niches on the basis of their genetically based characteristics (Rutter & Silberg, 2002). It could be expected that active genotype–environment processes would be more evident in emerging adulthood than at earlier ages, because emerging adults have the freedom to leave the environment provided by their parents and seek out their own niches, to an extent that children and adolescents do not. Here as with the other varieties of genotype–environment processes, few studies have been conducted that involve emerging adults.

There is substantial evidence that parental socialization influences development in childhood and adolescence, especially when parental socialization is at the negative extreme and especially in the area of antisocial behavior (Rhee & Waldman, 2002; Scarr, 1991, 1992). However, the extent to which parental socialization is influential in emerging adulthood has yet to be investigated in a way that takes genotype–environment processes into account.

PEERS AND FRIENDS

What kind of role do peers and friends play in the socialization of emerging adults? Because research on peers and friends in emerging adulthood is very limited, it may be useful to begin by examining the research on peer/friend socialization in adolescence, then consider how it might change from adolescence to emerging adulthood. The abundant research on peer/friend socialization in adolescence has led to several conclusions. First, peers and friends are highly important in the lives of adolescents. Adolescents are happiest in the company of friends (Larson & Richards, 1994, 1998), and are closer to friends than to parents in many respects (Youniss & Smollar, 1985). Over the course of adolescence, the amount of time adolescents spend with friends increases while the time they spend with family decreases (Larson, Richards, Moneta, Holmbeck, & Duckett, 1996). Issues of popularity and unpopularity are prominent in secondary schools, and adolescents are acutely aware of how they and others rank (Stone & Brown, 1999). Thus, because of their importance in the lives of adolescents, peers and friends have a great deal of potential power in the socialization process.

Second, like people in other age groups, adolescents tend to choose friends who are similar to themselves in many ways, a process known as *selective association* (Berndt, 1996; Rose, 2002). Consequently, when similarities are found among friends, it is likely that the similarities were there before they became friends and in fact led to their friendship rather than that the similarities were produced by "peer pressure" or peer influence. Adolescent friends do influence one another, but those influences are complex. Although the influence of friends in adolescence is often assumed to be negative, toward violations of the socialization outcomes of self-regulation and conforming to authority figures (e.g., toward illicit substance use), in fact adolescent friends tend to reinforce their preexisting similarities (Berndt, 1996; Hamm, 2000). That is, adolescent friends who have a tendency for deviance encourage each other toward deviance, whereas adolescent friends who tend to follow the rules reinforce that tendency in each other (Maxwell, 2002).

Third, intimacy in friendships is higher in adolescence than in childhood and rises over the course of adolescence (Berndt, 1996). Prior to adolescence, friendships are based mainly on shared activities, but adolescents rate intimate features such as trust and loyalty as more important to friendship than younger children do, and adolescents are more likely to value their friends as persons who understand them and with whom they can share personal information (Buhrmester & Furman, 1987). Thus, with respect to the third socialization goal, of teaching role-taking skills, strategies for resolving conflicts, and ways of viewing relationship, friends also play an important part.

Unfortunately, research on friendships is as sparse in emerging adulthood as it is abundant in adolescence. Nevertheless, a number of contrasts can be drawn between the socialization role of peers and friends in adolescence and in emerging adulthood, based on what is known. First, peers and friends play a less prominent role in emerging adulthood than they did in adolescence. Emerging adults leave the peer-centered context of secondary school, so they are no longer part of a peer culture on a daily basis and are no longer guaranteed to see their friends at least 5 days a week. Emerging adults who enter a residential college context may also have a wide circle of friends, but this is a minority of emerging adults even at ages 18–22 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2002), and after college the number of friends in emerging adults' social support networks drops sharply (Fischer, Sollie, Sorell, & Green, 1989). Emerging adults also spend more of their time alone than adolescents do; in fact, emerging adults ages 19–29 spend more of their leisure time alone than any group except the elderly (Larson, 1990). Furthermore, emerging adults are more likely than adolescents to be involved with a romantic partner, which typically leads a selective withdrawal from friendships with peripheral friends while close friends are retained (Fischer et al., 1989). Overall, it seems clear that the opportunities for socialization influence by peers and friends decreases from adolescence to emerging adulthood. With peers and friends as with parents, emerging adults' relationships become more volitional, that is, emerging adults have more control over the extent to which they are exposed to the socialization influences of others.

Second, selective association in friendships may be even more pronounced in emerging adulthood than in adolescence. Although adolescents tend to seek out friends who are similar to themselves, parents are able to influence the peer networks their adolescents are likely to experience and the pool of peers from which adolescents are likely to select their friends, through the parents' choices about where to live, where to send their adolescents to school (e.g., public vs. private school), and where (or whether) to attend religious services (Cooper & Ayers-Lopez, 1985). Parental control in all these respects diminishes in emerging adulthood. Furthermore, emerging adults may be less responsive to the influence of their friends than they were as adolescents. Even in the course of adolescence peer influence diminishes, after peaking in early adolescence (Berndt, 1996). In emerging adulthood this decrease is likely to continue, as emerging adults see their friends less often and have more control over when and where they see them. In addition, emerging adults become very intent on learning to make their own decisions as part of becoming an adult (Arnett, 1998, 2003, 2004), which may make them less responsive still to the socialization attempts of their friends.

Third, with respect to intimacy in friendships, evidence indicates that it increases from adolescence to emerging adulthood (Collins & van Dulmen, 2006). Friendships in emerging adulthood tend to be characterized by greater emotional depth and complexity and greater communication about topics of personal importance. Thus, in contrast to the

the socialization goal of learning role-taking skills, strategies for resolving conflicts, and ways of viewing relationships, friendships may rise in importance from adolescence to emerging adulthood (although little research has addressed this question directly).

What about romantic relationships as a source of socialization? There is a large literature on romantic relationships in emerging adulthood, mostly from studies of college students (Hatfield & Rapson, 2006). These studies generally focus on relationship quality and sexual issues. Although the results of the studies are rarely framed in terms of socialization effects, they pertain to the third goal of socialization, that of learning role-taking, conflict resolution skills, and ways of viewing relationships. These are all things that emerging adults learn in the course of having romantic relationships (Collins & van Dulmen, 2006). As with friends, the relationship skills learned in romantic relationships occur bidirectionally, between equals, in contrast to the power differential that usually applies when parents are socializing children.

In addition to the research on romantic relationships in emerging adulthood, suggestions regarding romantic relationships as a source of socialization can be found in the literature on the socializing effects of cohabitation and marriage. It has long been established that marriage has a variety of positive effects on physical and mental health (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Emerging adulthood, the period just prior to marriage for most people, is a low-risk period for physical illness and disease but the highest-risk period of the lifespan for a variety of disorders and injuries caused by behavior, such as substance use and risky sexual behavior (Bachman, Wadsworth, O'Malley, Johnston, & Schulenberg, 1997; Schulenberg & Zarrett, 2006). Marriage has the effect of reducing the behaviors that lead to problems and thereby improving physical and mental health. It is single men who especially engage in high-risk behavior in emerging adulthood, so the change in their behavior once they enter marriage is especially striking (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Although studies on the effects of marriage rarely frame their findings in terms of socialization, it seems evident that the decline in emerging adults' risky behaviors following marriage reflects increased conformity to their culture's standards, attitudes, and values. It also seems evident that their behavior becomes more well regulated after marriage, although this may be not so much self-regulation as mutual regulation in the marriage relationship.

The socializing effects of marriage presumably result at least in part from having a person around on a daily basis who monitors one's behavior and discourages behavior that reflects a lack of self-regulation or that violates cultural norms. It is surprising, then, that cohabitation appears to have little of the socializing influence of marriage (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). For example, with respect to substance use, the Monitoring the Future surveys have followed a sample from senior of high school through 10 years later (Bachman et al., 1997). Even in high school, the future cohabitors reported higher levels of drinking and marijuana use than those who had married or remained single a decade later. However, in the course of the decade following high school, the cohabitors reported very high and increasing levels of smoking, drinking, and other drug use, whereas those who married during that decade showed declines in all those substance use behaviors following marriage.

What explains these findings? Although emerging adults who cohabit are different in some ways from those who do not, such as being less religious and having higher rates of risk behavior in high school, these differences do not account for the differential effects of cohabitation and marriage. Even when these differences are taken into account statisti-

cally, the differential effects remain (Waite & Gallagher, 2000). Instead, there seems to be something about the institution of marriage itself that modifies the behavior of people who enter into it. Despite marked increases in cohabitation and divorce, young people continue to believe in what Waite and Gallagher (2000) call "the power of the vow" (i.e., in marriage as a permanent union that obligates those entering it to modify their behavior so that it is less risky and less violative of cultural norms). Thus, the socializing influence of marriage may be derived mainly from the beliefs that people have about what marriage requires of them.

SCHOOL AND WORK

Once adolescents finish secondary school, the main context of their daily experience becomes college, work, or some combination of the two (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2006). What kind of socialization takes place in these two contexts? Here again, few studies have looked at this question explicitly in terms of socialization issues, but other evidence can be used that has implications for socialization.

Let us examine school first. Although the majority of emerging adults in most industrialized countries are involved in some kind of schooling or occupational training in the first years of emerging adulthood, the nature of the school experience changes considerably from adolescence to emerging adulthood. The secondary school experience of adolescents is highly structured and closely monitored by adults. Adolescents are typically required by law to attend (at least until some time in their late teens, with the upper age varying among countries). They spend 4 to 7 hours a day in the classroom, where teachers record their attendance and monitor their behavior. Although they usually have some discretion in which courses to take, many of their courses are required as part of their general education. Thus, in addition to educating them, teachers and other school personnel are socializing adolescents to acquire cultural standards of doing what is required and conforming to or at least cooperating with the direction of authority figures.

The role of school in socialization broadens considerably in emerging adulthood. Involvement in school at all is discretionary, as there is no longer a legal requirement for attendance. There is a wider variety of schooling options to choose from, including an array of colleges and universities as well as vocational programs. For most of these options, the amount of time spent receiving direct instruction is relatively small, compared to secondary school, and more learning is to be done through assigned work that the students do on their own. Instructors are less likely to monitor whether or not the students come to class. Thus schooling in emerging adulthood requires greater capacities for self-regulation in order to succeed.

Like school, work takes place in both adolescence and emerging adulthood, but the nature of it as a socialization context changes, especially in the United States. Over 80% of U.S. adolescents have held a part-time job by the time they leave high school (Barling & Kelloway, 1999), and by their senior year of high school adolescents who are employed work over 15 hours a week, on average. However, the purpose of these jobs is mainly to obtain money to finance an active leisure life, not to obtain useful occupational training for the future. Most of the jobs U.S. adolescents hold are in restaurant work or retail sales (Loughlin & Barling, 1999) and are unrelated to the work they expect to be doing as adults (Schneider & Stevenson, 1999).

This has important implications for socialization. Because they have no personal investment in the long-term future of their work, adolescents have little reason to cultivate self-regulation on the job or to learn cultural standards of behavior that may be desired by their employers. Thus, although U.S. adolescents say they learn culturally valued qualities on the job such as responsibility, money management, and time management, longitudinal studies have shown that the more they work, the more they tend to engage in deviant behavior such as substance use, fighting, and vandalism (Mortimer, 2003). Also, a majority of working adolescents report some form of "occupational deviance" in the workplace such as stealing from employers or coworkers or giving away items for free or for less than their value (Ruggiero, Greenberger, & Steinberg, 1982). Thus, working in adolescence often undermines rather than promotes the socialization process.

Work in emerging adulthood has a much different nature. The stakes are higher, because most emerging adults are looking for employment not just as a way to provide money for the moment but as a way of building the foundation for the kind of work they will be doing in adulthood. This does not mean they suddenly become more responsible and less deviant in the workplace than they were as adolescents. On the contrary, employers are often reluctant to hire applicants younger than age 25 who have not obtained a college education, regardless of their secondary school achievements, because of the employers' experiences with emerging adults who have been irresponsible and did not prove to be worth the effort and expense involved in training them (Hamilton & Hamilton, 2006; Wilson, 1996). Nevertheless, most people gain in responsibility, future orientation, and planful competence over the course of emerging adulthood (Masten, Obradovic, & Burt, 2006; Roisman, Masten, Coatsworth, & Tellegen, 2004). The workplace rewards these qualities, so emerging adults have a strong incentive to respond to the socialization requirements of the workplace in order to succeed. If they fail to cultivate these qualities, they soon experience the painful consequences of being fired or failing to get the jobs and promotions they would like.

In European countries, there is not such a sharp contrast between work in adolescence and in emerging adulthood as there is in the United States. Work and school are more integrated, as most adolescents receive education and training in secondary school that is directly related to the occupation they plan to have once they leave school. Many adolescents are involved in apprenticeship programs that combine work with schooling that pertains directly to their work (Flammer & Alsaker, 2001). Thus in European countries there is more continuity in workplace socialization from adolescence though emerging adulthood, as self-regulation and cultural standards of responsibility and diligence are required and promoted consistently. However, this system is changing in response to economic changes resulting from globalization and becoming more flexible. The consequences of these changes for socialization in the workplace remain to be seen.

MEDIA

Media have held a substantial and growing place in the socialization environment of industrialized societies in recent decades (Arnett, 1995b; Dubow, Huesmann, & Greenwood, Chapter 16, this volume). For today's emerging adults, the media environment is more diverse and complex than it has ever been before. They are the "new media generation" (Brown, 2006), that is, the first to grow up with the Internet, virtual games, virtual

friends (e.g., chat rooms), and make-your-own CDs, in addition to the traditional media of radio, television, recorded music, movies, newspapers, and magazines.

The importance of media in the socialization process can be seen with respect to the three goals of socialization. First, the goal of self-regulation pertains in part to sexuality and aggression, especially in emerging adulthood when risk behavior in these areas tends to be high (Lefkowitz & Gillen, 2006), and a large proportion of media content, especially the content most popular among young people, contains sexual and aggressive themes. Second, the goal of learning cultural standards, attitudes, and values is communicated in the media, through cognitive and social learning processes. Moral situations are depicted, certain behaviors are shown as rewarded and others as punished, some characters are depicted as admirable and others as despicable. Also, values of materialism and consumerism are communicated through the abundant advertising that accompanies most media. Third, the goal of learning knowledge and skills concerning relationships is promoted through media depictions of relationships, including between parents and children, romantic partners, and friends (Ward, Gorvine, & Cytron-Walker, 2002).

However, media also differ in an important way from other socialization sources, especially parents, school, and work (Arnett, 1995b). The goal of these other socializers is for children and young people to become socialized members of their culture, in the sense that they have attained adequate self-regulation; accepted mainstream cultural standards, attitudes, and values; and learned culturally appropriate ways of behaving in relationships. In contrast, the goal of most media is profit, the bigger the better. Thus the goal of the media is not necessarily consistent with and in fact may undermine the goal of the other socializers. Media companies are generally willing to sell content with sexual and aggressive themes even if it undermines self-regulation, which most media researchers believe it does (e.g., Cantor, 2000). Similarly, media content violating mainstream cultural standards, attitudes, and values will be sold if people will buy it, irrespective of whether it undermines that socialization goal. The cultural appropriateness of the ways that relationships are depicted is unlikely to be a major consideration among media makers, and content that is culturally inappropriate will be offered as long as it sells.

What role, then, do media play in the socialization of emerging adults, in particular? A good framework for answering this question is the media practice model (Brown, 2006; Brown, Steele, & Walsh-Childers, 2002; Steele & Brown, 1995). As shown in Figure 8.1, this model portrays media use as a dynamic process between the person and the media environment. The person's Identity (and, more broadly, personality) leads to the Selection of some media products rather than others. Even among those who select the same media products, their Interaction with those products results in differences in how they experience and make sense of them. They also vary in the Application of the media messages (i.e., the extent to which they incorporate or resist the messages). Their acceptance of the messages contributes to the further development of their identity. "Lived Experience" refers to the interconnections between media use and other contexts (e.g., when friends gather to see a movie or listen to music, or when parents and children disagree about the media content the children should consume).

Each of the elements of the model takes a distinctive form in emerging adulthood. Although Identity has traditionally been associated with adolescence, today identity issues are perhaps even more central to development in emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2004; Côté, 2000, 2006). With respect to media and identity development, in one study 70% of Canadian college students reported that they had a "celebrity idol," usually movie stars

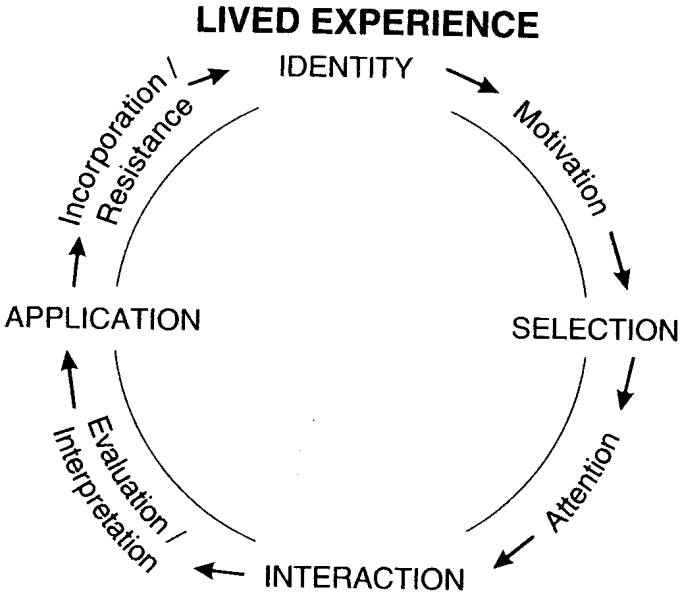

FIGURE 8.1. The media practice model. Copyright 1999 by Jeanne R. Steele, University of St. Thomas. Reprinted by permission.

or musicians (Boon & Lemore, 2001). More than half said their idols had influenced their attitudes and values, indicating the role of media with respect to that socialization goal. More than one-fourth said they had sought to change aspects of their personality to make it more like that of their favorite idol.

With respect to Selection, it is notable that media selection is less constrained in emerging adulthood than in any other age period. Children and adolescents have parents in the household who may disapprove, restrict, or prohibit their selection of certain media products. Beyond emerging adulthood, most adults have a spouse or live-in partner who may express disapproval or criticism of certain media choices. But in emerging adulthood, media choices are virtually unconstrained by any social influences. This may explain why the most avid audience for violent video games and Internet pornography is emerging adult men (Brown, 2006). Here, as in some other respects, socialization is never broader than it is in emerging adulthood.

However, the effects of media on emerging adults may be different than they are for children and adolescents, due to developmental differences in interaction and application. Although very few studies have compared adolescents and emerging adults in their responses to media, research on cognitive development has demonstrated that emerging adults think in ways that are more complex, reflective, and insightful (Labouvie-Vief, 2006), and this may mean that they are more capable than adolescents of stepping back from media content, evaluating it, and consciously resisting it. Even in adolescence, the effects of media are not as strong as they are in childhood (Huesmann, Moise-Titus, Podolski, & Eron, 2003), and it seems likely that the dilution of direct media effects continues into emerging adulthood. In emerging adulthood even more than earlier development, media effects are likely to be subtle and conditional. Nevertheless, media effects on college students have been reported in diverse areas, including aggression, body image, occupational choice, and political ideology (Brown, 2006). But more research is needed on non-college emerging adults and comparing adolescents and emerging adults. More research is also needed on potential positive effects of media use in emerging adulthood

see Dubow et al., Chapter 16, this volume), such as providing information in areas of education and occupation.

CONCLUSION

In industrialized societies, and in the growing middle class of developing countries, adulthood is reached later today than in the past (Arnett, 1998). Economic changes have made it more desirable for young people to obtain education and training past secondary school in order to qualify for jobs in the new information-based world economy. More important, growing individualism has allowed young people greater freedom to decide when to enter adult roles of marriage, parenthood, and long-term work, and given this freedom many of them wait until at least their mid-20s before doing so. As a result, a new period of the life course, emerging adulthood, has developed in between adolescence and young adulthood.

For emerging adults, the socialization goals of self-regulation, developing a set of beliefs and values, and learning roles and relationship skills are still very much in progress, not yet reached. However, the nature of the socialization process changes from adolescence to emerging adulthood. Parents and peers/friends are still involved in socialization for emerging adults, but to less of an extent than they were in adolescence. School remains a socialization context for emerging adults, but in a broader, less restrictive form, and only for *some* emerging adults. Thus institutional frameworks weaken in the socialization process and emerging adults experience individualization, as they are left on their own to make their way to adulthood through self-socialization. This freedom can be exhilarating, but some find it disconcerting and disorienting. Socialization can become so broad that it provides inadequate support and guidance, so that the goals of socialization may remain elusive. But the extent to which emerging adults thrive or struggle under their exceptionally broad socialization is still largely unknown.

The field of emerging adulthood is new, and the study of socialization in emerging adulthood is in a nascent stage. Although quite a bit is known about parental socialization in emerging adulthood, research on socialization with respect to peers/friends, school and work, and the media is sparse. This limits the extent to which a full picture of socialization in emerging adulthood can be drawn, but it presents great opportunities for creative theory and research for scholars seeking to contribute to this growing field.

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