Socialization as Media Effect

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Socialization is a process across the life span through which individuals acquire and interact with values and social standards of a specific society and culture. Media are considered a powerful agent of socialization, responsible for shaping an individual's socialization process. Major agents of socialization are the family, the school, peers, media, religion, work, the ethnic background, or political climate. Agents of socialization shape our norms and values regarding appropriate behavior and how we interact with others and highly influence our views and perspective on our community, our country, and the world at large. The amount of impact each agent has on an individual depends on the individual's stage of life, personality, and experiences. Socialization is about becoming a member of society and is characterized by milieus, psychosocial developmental tasks, societal adaptation processes, and the wish to belong to one or several specific social groups. Ultimately, socialization processes take time: repeated exposure to specific social standards, rules, and values is required before these become individually engrained.

Historically, scholars described socialization as an exogenous process in which individuals adapt to their social environment. Over time, an interaction-based approach has prevailed in socialization research, with an understanding that individuals' social norms and values get shaped by various agents of socialization but that—depending on personality and other factors—individuals interact with the system of values, norms, and beliefs differently and may even retroact on specific agents of socialization. As some of the most important socialization occurs in childhood and youth, minors tend to be the main focus of socialization research. However, socialization is a lifelong process, during which social interactions, social expectations at various stages of life, shifting developmental tasks, life experiences, or cultural shifts keep influencing an individual's social norms and values. Socialization theories stem from various disciplines such as developmental psychology, sociology, and pedagogy.

Research on media socialization is about assessing the impact of media use and exposure on socialization processes. This research increased in the latter half of the twentieth century as television moved into most Western households. Effects of media use on socialization have been identified in numerous studies (mainly focusing on television): *long-term implications for behavior*, for example violence, prosocial behavior, eating disorders, sexual experiences; *cultivation of worldview and values*, for example perception of gender, political attitudes, stereotypes of minorities; *potential for learning*, for example language, school-related curricula, cognitive skills (Lemish, 2015). Major dimensions of media socialization are *access* to particular media content through various devices, *duration* of media usage and exposure, *preferences* for specific media genres

and programming, *media skills* and literacy, *usage divides* (e.g., regarding age, culture, and socioeconomic status), *risks and resources* of media use. Media socialization is characterized by an ongoing "mediatization" process. Mediatization has become a key concept in the field of media and communication studies in the decade 2005–2015. The concept analyzes the interrelation between change in media and communication, on the one hand, and change in culture and society on the other (Livingstone, 2009). Change in media consists mainly of an incremental convergence between mobile communication technologies and the Internet that establishes new communication networks and routines within society, which have become an integral part of daily life in the industrialized world. Additionally, the increased amount of devices—smaller, mobile, and hyperconnected devices—and a larger variety of passive and interactive media have led to an increased amount of time spent with media in everyday life over the past decades. Several studies show that there has been a significant increase not only in media exposure but also in media multitasking. The rapidly increasing pervasiveness of digital media and the potentially novel media effects on socialization contribute to a dynamic and timely field of study.

Media as a powerful agent of socialization

Media socialization is mostly an implicit learning and cultivation process. Media—as well as conditioning by family, peers, and cultural context—allow for observational learning, which is a process of encoding lasting behavioral scripts and cognitions simply as a consequence of observing others (Bandura, 1977). Technological determinism describes the assumption that technology dictates social structures and processes. However, numerous studies have refuted early media effect theories, stating that media consumption affects everyone in the same way (Kirsh, 2010). In order to understand media, taken collectively, as an agent of socialization sui generis, it is essential to consider how other agents of socialization interact with the media. The role of media in socialization processes is hardly quantifiable, as it depends on the interplay of a wide range of influences such as content, context, family, peers, personality, motivation, educational and cultural background.

Family is usually considered the agent with the greatest impact on the socialization process. As infants, individuals receive from the family their first system of norms, values, and beliefs. The value system reflects a family's social status, religion, and cultural or ethnic background. School, another important agent of socialization in childhood, is about knowledge transfer and skills. Additionally, schools shape an individual's behavior implicitly, by providing a system of norms and values such as teamwork, discipline, or the imperative to follow directions. Peer groups help people develop social skills still further, for example by making them accept differences, resolve conflicts, or help others. An individual's media use and communication behavior are linked to corresponding family habits, the media and communication practices of peers, and the way media use gets promoted during that individual's education or in his/her professional environment. Various agents of socialization shape an individual's approach to media in terms

of habits, his/her assessment of the quality of media content, or the way s/he is receptive to specific stereotypes portrayed in media.

Socialization is closely interconnected with sharing the norms, the values, and the language of a specific culture. Culture can be defined as "the software of the mind" or "a collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others" (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minokov, 2010, p. 6). Diversities and commonalities in media cultures around the globe are challenging to assess. Nonetheless, there is empirical evidence that the role of media and Internet use in various countries is significantly linked to cultural dimensions, for example plurality of the press, press freedom, movie genre preferences, Internet penetration, or social media behavior. Culture shapes access to media and their role in society. Conversely, media structure cultural habits and rituals (like watching the popular *Tatort* crime series on Sunday nights in German-speaking Europe), tend to reinforce social and cultural stereotypes, and are at the center of specific youth cultures (in the form of movies, music, books).

Effects of media on socialization processes have traditionally focused on mass media such as television, radio, and printed media (books, newspapers, and magazines). Additionally, music and fan cultures around specific music groups or music genres have been the subject of research on media effects. The advent of a variety of digital and mobile media devices and the abundance of digital media content have transformed research on media effects correspondingly. Given the increasingly blurred lines between media producers and users ("produsers") and between personal and public communication ("networked public sphere"), recent research in the field has largely focused on how digital media impact social behavior.

Media socialization and the generations

In the digital era, media permeate all spheres of life at different ages: they are present in children's rooms, in schools, in families, and in senior citizens' homes. Media socialization interacts with the generations in two different manners. First, in childhood and youth, primary media socialization occurs through the predominant media of a specific era—cinema, radio, television, video, computer, Internet, mobile communication—and influences a generational cohort during crucial developmental tasks. Second, media continue to influence individuals over the course of their lives in a different way from that of childhood and adolescence, and this is due to two reasons. On the one hand, developmental tasks vary according to stages in life such as adolescence, early adulthood, family life, retirement. Different types of media matter at each stage, for example as a function of one's peer group, professional life, or family life with children. On the other hand, technology keeps evolving over time and offers increasing access to media and to a larger variety of media content. Novel forms of access through new digital devices shape the current media habits of older generations, whose members did not grow up with digital media.

In a seminal publication at the beginning of the twenty-first century, Marc Prensky coined the influential terms "digital natives" and "digital immigrants" (Prensky, 2001).

Ever since, these terms have been at the center of an ongoing debate about generations and digital media, in academia and beyond. Early definitions highlighted that the Internet is a natural companion in the lives of "native speakers of the digital language," one that changes the way these people learn and socially interact. Later definitions suggested that Internet users born after 1980 are "digital natives" (Palfrey & Gasser, 2008). Researchers and ~~marketing~~ professionals have defended a variety of positions regarding "digital natives." Many argue that they are a new technology-savvy generation, whose skills and learning preferences are not compatible with traditional education. However, scholars have called the "digital natives" debate an academic form of a "moral panic" (Bennet, Maton, & Kervin, 2008) or have shown that, despite having been immersed in technology, many young people lack digital skills and are in fact "digital naives" (Hargittai, 2010). The main criticism against the term "digital natives" is that it overgeneralizes a generation without taking into account major differences within it: interest in digital technologies, educational levels, and a large variety in Internet skills and general media literacy. Additionally, significant differences in media behavior have been found between different age groups among the generation of "digital natives." In more recent conceptualizations of the term "digital natives," age is not the single relevant category but is accompanied by levels of confidence, trust in using the Internet, and full integration of technologies into people's daily lives. Similarly, "digital immigrants," rather than being described as older users, are defined as using the Internet regularly but selectively and as being skeptical about many of its aspects, particularly data privacy and cybersecurity. "Digital outsiders" are not necessarily completely disconnected from the Internet, but rather anxious about it, and they hardly ever use it.

For many, the smartphone has indeed become a companion in any situation and most young users keep in constant touch with their friends via online communities and app-based messengers. Digital media use is more frequent among younger users, and generation is a major divide globally but also within countries. Studies have documented many differences in online behavior among young Internet users—at a global level mainly geographical divides, and at a more local level predominantly educational divides. In industrialized countries with a high Internet penetration, young users live in different milieus (especially regarding educational levels), have different approaches to the Internet, and have diverging attitudes regarding cybersecurity and different levels of trust in online activities. Consequently media usage preferences are not only shaped by age and generation, but also by variables such as country of residence, educational levels, income, gender, personality, technical affinity, and cultural and ethnical background.

Nevertheless, children and youth are generally considered to be more exposed to the effects of media. Especially the predominant screen in younger children's lives—the television—has been the subject of extensive research on media effects over the past decades. Influential media theorist Neil Postman argued in the early 1980s that new media, especially television, were leading to the rapid disappearance of childhood (Postman, 1982). Three decades later, similar semi-scientific bestsellers with titles such as "digital dementia" (Spitzer, 2012) are Postman's culturally pessimist descendants. However, children and youth do not adapt passively to their environment. They actively construct an understanding of the world through interactions with their social and

cultural environment, of which media are part. They use media to accomplish developmental tasks such as identity development, testing boundaries, separation from the parents, or first intimate relationships. While culturally pessimistic scholars focus on the potential risks of media effects, critically optimistic authors emphasize the opportunities and the possibility to prevent negative media effects and euphoric scholars focus on benefits while neglecting potential risks (Süss, 2004).

In the twenty-first century an increasing number of screens populate households in which children and youth grow up. These screens are part of their everyday life: mobile devices, computers, television, game consoles, cinema. Youth are increasingly emotionally attached to their Internet-enabled mobile devices; in Western Europe the average age at which children become owners of a mobile phone is 9 years. Nevertheless, television, music and books remain essential media for children and youth. The more family households are technologically equipped, the more children tend to be autonomous about integrating media in their daily lives. Television has turned into a medium that is used in order to strengthen bonds between family members, for instance through their watching a TV show together every week or a sports program. Meanwhile, ubiquitous and multifunctional devices, combined with access to global media content, have led to an individualization of media use.

Generally adults spend much more time watching television than children and youth. Even though the numbers of adult social media users is still on the rise in industrialized countries, the percentage of social media users among the young remains significantly higher. Older adults predominantly use the Internet to keep in touch with family and friends. Their online behavior depends on whether they used digital media in their jobs or not and on whether they are generally interested in technology or not.

Identity formation through media

Psychological research identified a number of developmental tasks that teenagers need to undertake to make a successful transition to adulthood. A key developmental goal is identity development, which is related to such tasks as adjusting to maturing bodies and feelings, developing and applying abstract thinking skills and decision making, identifying meaningful moral standards, values, and belief systems, renegotiating relationship with parents, or forming friendships and relationships (Simpson, 2001). Identity is an individual concept of the self and encompasses cultural and ethnic values, social belonging, gender role and sexual identity, career aspirations, political and spiritual values. Part of identity development is about finding out what is unique about oneself and how one interrelates with specific social groups. Social comparison theory describes the ubiquitous processes in which individuals compare their own attitudes, abilities, and beliefs to those of others, as a way of coming to know themselves (Festinger, 1954).

An abundance of research indicates that media play an important role in identity development. Earlier studies have focused on television and advertising, more recent studies on videogames and the Internet. Adolescents discover individual media preferences, identify with media characters and media personalities, and test the boundaries of self-representation online. Fictional characters in movies or on television, in comics,

video games, and books, along with real-life celebrities portrayed in the media offer opportunities for identification. Social networking sites serve as platforms for identity exploration.

Social media use and identity development interact mutually depending on an individual's tendency to self-monitoring. Individuals who strongly monitor their self-representation tend to have a different behavior around social media from that of individuals who have a weak tendency to monitor how others perceive them. Neuroscientific research revealed that an individual motivation for gains in reputation—positive social feedback—can predict social media behavior such as a more intense use of Facebook (Meshi, Morawetz, & Heekeren, 2013). At the opposite end, there is scientific evidence about Facebook quitters. Former users who decided to quit Facebook were found to be significantly more cautious about their privacy, had higher Internet addiction scores, and tended to be more conscientious than Facebook users (Stieger et al., 2013). In a strategic act of self-representation, many social media users post about their happy rather than their unhappy moments. Accordingly, scholars have argued on the basis of social comparison theory that browsing social media newsfeeds may cause feelings of envy or depression, because users compare their lives to the ones suggested by other people's posts. Nonetheless, this seems to apply mainly to passive social media users. Increased status-updating activity on social media sites can make users feel more connected to their friends and therefore reduce feelings of loneliness (Deters & Mehl, 2012).

Identity building is highly connected to a sense of belonging to social groups, which generally leads to a strong peer orientation in adolescence. Frequent online connectivity via mobile devices brings complications. On the one hand, the Internet provides opportunities for getting in touch with peers and for individual experimentation. On the other hand, continuous peer presence makes it challenging to escape from additional group demands. Excessive connectivity behavior correlates significantly with high impulsivity scores and a negative relationship with parents (Waller & Süss, 2012).

With global media and a rapid uptake in Internet penetration, socialization and identity development become more global. Identity construction is a process of integrating both global contents and local cultural tradition (language, religion, ethnicity), and media technology has significantly accelerated intercultural and transnational exchange. Consequently there is a global tendency toward cultural mainstreaming and homogenization. Regardless of the country and its local traditions, people listen to similar popular music (e.g., Lady Gaga, Psy), entertain themselves with similar books, movies, and TV shows (e.g., *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, *Grey's Anatomy*), play similar computer games (e.g., Call of Duty, FIFA), and use similar social apps (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat)—all of which are often based on North American culture, which is in turn linked to internationally similar fashion trends and assimilates beauty standards, converging food preferences, and similar celebrities. Conversely, cultural stereotypes tend to get reinforced as part of local identities in the midst of converging cosmopolitan identities.

Advertising is a virtually inescapable part of media exposure. A fair amount of studies have been dedicated to assess its impact on identity development and consumer socialization. From their early childhood onward, young people are confronted with

a variety of media sources and their commercial content far beyond what was available to former generations. The digital revolution added to the venues in which marketers can attract increasingly younger consumers. Consequently childhood is now described as a mediated childhood, but also as a consumer childhood. Children and youth become socialized in consumer cultures and are a target group for advertising in a highly competitive market and in the battle for attention. Commercials—implicitly or explicitly—promote the idea that consumer goods and instant gratification increase individual happiness, which eventually shapes the ongoing sense of identity that young media users develop throughout their youth. Media influence adolescents' brand consumption behavior. They use brands to express their identity, for example through clothing style (John, 1999). The notion of a "second self"—an individual's digital identity or representation online—has been criticized and held responsible for the increasingly blurred lines between mediated and nonmediated selves. In hyperconnected societies in which most of the population has mobile broadband Internet access, being a networked individual has become somewhat of an identity in its own right. A digital lifestyle and identity may entail for some to be "always on," or to regularly check in on their social media profiles, post pictures or status updates, or own the latest fashionable gadgets.

Motivations, cultivation, and stereotypes

The impact of media on socialization depends on personal motivations to use specific media. The uses and gratifications approach in media studies specifically looks into what gratifications media users try to derive out of their media experience. The approach assumes that media users actively seek out specific content in order to satisfy individual needs. Additionally, it assumes that media users choose media content for a variety of reasons: they have *cognitive motivations* (e.g., to learn about the world and to control one's environment), *affective motivations* (e.g., to achieve mood management), *habitual motivations* (e.g., to structure one's day), *social motivations* (e.g., to have parasocial interactions). In their content creation, social media seek to satisfy five psychosocial needs: showing affection, venting negative feelings, gaining recognition, getting entertainment, and fulfilling cognitive needs. Depending on the gratifications they expect, users turn to various kinds of digital media for content creation online. Despite being one of the most influential theories in media usage studies, the uses and gratifications approach has been criticized for assuming that media audiences are aware of their needs and motivations. Since the 1950s, escapism theory serves as an explanation for media use as a means of escaping the reality of an unsatisfying daily life. From this perspective, media use is a form of mood management and is often associated with highly emotional media genres such as comedy, romance, eroticism, action, and violence. Other individual motivations that have an impact on media usage behavior and eventually on media effects can be attributed to specific personality types. Extraverted individuals prefer face-to-face interactions to mediated social interaction. Conversely, introvert personality types try to avoid face-to-face interactions with other people due to their shyness; thus they prefer communicating digitally. Narcissistic personality types

find it rewarding to be in constant contact with many people, which makes them feel important and beneficial.

Media usage cultivates worldviews and values, for example political attitudes and cultural, gender, or minority stereotypes. Mass media have been described in numerous studies as powerful agents of political socialization—agents that influence political attitudes and voting behavior. Specific news usage significantly predicts political participation. However, there is not necessarily a causal relationship here, because interest in politics generates interest in political news. In cultivation research, TV viewers have been the main focus. Studies reveal that frequent TV users tend to be significantly more anxious than infrequent viewers. Frequent viewers—those who watch television more than 4 hours a day—have been shown to overestimate the chances of involvement in violence and generally to agree that crime is rising. Analyses show that the higher the educational level, the smaller the cultivation effects; but the differences between frequent and infrequent TV viewers remained more important than educational gaps. More recently, violent video games have been at the center of a fair number of studies of media effects on violent or aggressive behavior.

Stereotypes are generalized assumptions about specific groups of individuals. Both positive and negative stereotypes tend to be simplified concepts of personal or cultural characteristics. Comprehensive studies on the representation of gender, racial, and sexual minorities in the most popular American movies have exposed stereotypical depictions and a massive underrepresentation of girls and women, racial minorities, and the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender communities (Smith, Choueiti, & Pieper, 2015). Regarding technology skills, gender stereotypes tend to get reinforced. Mass media portray competent technologists, computer nerds and gamers, coders, or hackers virtually exclusively as male.

Media risks and parenting

Parents in the media age often experience media as secret coeducators, implicitly or explicitly encouraging values they might not approve of. Parents—and some experts and politicians, too—particularly emphasize the following risks of media content for children and youth: violence, sexuality and pornography, drug abuse, biased beauty standards, glorification of political extremism. In the past, media literacy programs focused on youth as part of media audiences. More recently, youth are understood not only as recipients of media content but also as consumers and as communicators and producers online. Cyberbullying, Internet or gaming addiction, reduced attention span and a corresponding rise in attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and digital privacy invasions are perceived as major behavioral risks for young people as online agents.

Thanks to mobile devices, most users feel more connected to friends and family. Especially for youth, connecting with peers is crucial, and even more so if they are isolated for physical or social reasons. Parents are intrinsically motivated to buy their child a mobile phone. In fact in most cases parents give their children mobile phones notably in order for these children to be able to reach them anytime. In adolescence mobile devices seem to complicate parent–child relationships. Parents contact their

children digitally, to know where they are, but a crucial developmental task in adolescence is incremental separation from parents (Turkle, 2011). Additionally, the ubiquity of mobile devices has become a parenting issue, for example when it comes to preventing their use in social settings like meals or as digital distractions during homework and to ensuring enough sleep for texting teens. Parents and scholars have been debating potential risks for children's behavior. However, survey-based research in Western Europe found that a significant number of parents admit that their children have complained to them about the parents' excessive smartphone use and that many parents have lost sight of their child because they were busy with a smartphone. Then, again, many parents report having come across useful information specifically about parenting on social media.

The impact of media violence on aggressive or violent behavior has been a major research area. The assumptions of social learning theory have been applied widely to the study of media violence. Meta-analyses of media effects on youth development suggest that media appear to have a comparatively big impact on youth regarding both aggression and prosocial behavior (Kirsh, 2010). Short exposure to violent media content by playing violent video games causes an increase in the likelihood of behaving aggressively immediately afterward, and habitual exposure to violent scenes increases the likelihood of aggressive behavior and personality. Despite these results, longitudinal studies find that the overall impact of media on an aggressive and violent individual is relatively small by comparison to the impact of a socially disadvantaged background and of personality traits (Anderson, 2008). Thus the stimulus–response model's assumption that exposure to violent media content automatically leads to imitation and delinquent behavior has been refuted in research on media effects. However, scholars agree that media violence can have more negative effects under specific circumstances; this is the risk group approach. Risk factors include a climate of violence in the personal environment (family, peer group, everyday experience), parents' low media literacy, limited social skills, male gender, availability of audiovisual media in the bedroom.

A number of studies attempt to assess media influence on sexual socialization. Exposure to sexual media content starts early both on television and online. Adolescents have been found to choose media idols that are consistent with the stage of their own romantic interest as their sexuality develops. Teens report using media to learn about sexuality, love, and relationships. High exposure to sexual media content significantly increases the likelihood of an early initiation of sexual activity (L'Engle, Brown, & Kenneavy, 2006). The prevalence of exposure to online pornography in the case of pre-teens and adolescents is well documented and presents significant gender differences: male adolescents tend to be exposed to pornographic pictures or videos almost twice as often then their female counterparts. A small body of scholarly work suggests that repeated exposure to pornography may lead to negative outcomes such as feelings of sexual inadequacy, preoccupation with sexuality, or even sexual violence. Despite media effects on sexual behavior, adolescents are mainly influenced by their parents' implicit and explicit attitudes to sexuality. Lack of conversation about sexuality within the family results in insecurities and in stronger media effects of sexual media content on youth.

Resilient children and youth usually live in a stable social environment, have active stress-coping strategies, and deal better with negative media effects. Parents and educators can foster resilience by talking actively and age-appropriately to children and youth about sensitive topics (such as violence, sexuality, or pornography), by setting clear time and content boundaries in media exposure, and by respecting the classification of movies, TV shows, games, and social media platforms by age.

Media effects on social relationships

Media use is often socially motivated. Media content provides topics for conversation with family members, friends, and colleagues that may allow for deeper social bonding. Parasocial interaction is a theoretical approach established in the 1950s and designed to explain how audience members develop one-sided relationships with characters and personae in the media (e.g., fictional characters in movies or TV series, actors, athletes, celebrities, talk show hosts). Media users may start to feel that a certain character or persona is their real friend. The effect has mainly been described in the case of TV audiences. Hardly any research confirms so far that social media technologies potentially increase the effect because they allow for direct interactions with celebrities and for behind-the-scene sneak peeks.

Pervasive mobile devices lead to a reconfiguration of social settings. For many, the frequent use of a smartphone has come close to this decades-old definition of a cyborg: cyborgs blend biology with technology in order to enhance human capabilities. In the 1990s, cyborg experiments—in which researchers were connected to the Internet while interacting with other humans—revealed a sense of multilocality in social relationships: people could be both here, in the social interaction, and somewhere else. This illustrates a major paradox about mediated social connection: solitude is necessary in order to digitally connect, or users need to (temporarily) neglect those who are physically around them in order to offer their attention to others, who are physically absent (Turkle, 2011). A significant number of smartphone users in the United States report using their device in order to ignore others, and much higher numbers report having felt ignored because another household member was spending too much time online, especially on a mobile device (Lebo, 2013). Facebook users tend to have lower levels of "social loneliness" (the sense of not feeling bonded with friends) but significantly higher levels of "family loneliness" (the sense of not feeling bonded with family). Conclusively, the way we connect online has to do with previous experiences of connecting with family members. If we felt lonely within our families, we are more likely to experience an increased sense of loneliness online. Nonetheless, experimental research results suggest that actively reaching out on social media reduces loneliness. Social media (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) use has been shown to strengthen weak social ties, while messenger (e.g., WhatsApp, Snapchat) use strengthens strong social ties.

Some users experience an increased amount of social pressure while being almost constantly connected through digital information and communication technologies. Psychologists have published studies on the "fear of missing out" (FoMO)—the apprehension that others might be having rewarding experiences from which one is absent,

which creates the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing (Przybylski et al., 2013). Connectivity behavior influences social relationships in interactions with friends, family members, or colleagues and in social settings such as meals or business meetings. Recent studies indicate cultural and generational gaps in how socially appropriate individuals rate online connectivity during meals or meetings.

Media effects on romantic relationships in the digital age have become a popular research topic. Yet the field is too recent and dynamic to allow researchers to draw conclusions on the corresponding effects on socialization. A major research focus is on online dating via digital platforms and location-based apps—the online search for offline partners or love interests. Current studies reflect the social implications of algorithms that determine romantic compatibility, of the availability of cheating platforms, and of the fact that dating behavior is eventually changing. Another branch of research examines the role of social media and mobile devices on feelings such as happiness or jealousy in ongoing relationships. The role of digital communication tools in breakups is currently under investigation.

Blurring boundaries between professional and private lives

How do ongoing mediatization processes affect professional socialization? As of 2016, digital technologies are a fundamental part of most jobs in the industrialized world, but roughly 60% of the world population can be considered offline. The global inequalities of media and Internet access are still tremendous. In the Western world of work, debate about current information and communication media tends to revolve around the risks and the rewards of mobile work. Mobile-connected devices have been proven to significantly blur the boundaries between professional and private contexts. While sending messages has become very efficient in the digital age, quick emails and digital messages on and off duty may result in an unproductive "cycle of responsiveness" (Perlow, 2012). While for many people working anywhere anytime means more freedom in their jobs, a number of studies hypothesize that mobile devices prevent workers from psychologically detaching from work. An important result of the analysis of personalities and workplace connectivity is the discovery of individual preferences with regard to the separation or integration of one's private and professional lives. Separator personality types perceive blurred boundaries between work and nonwork as more challenging than integrator personality types. There is empirical evidence that many professionals are available via email, messages, or calls off duty—even if they have not specifically been asked to be. Depending on an individual's role in the company or organization, expectations of connectivity may vary. Some individuals report that they do not mind being contacted by their colleagues on vacation. However, many employees do mind having to check work-related email on holiday and studies show that regularly allowing oneself a break from work is what it takes for most workers to stay healthy, motivated, and productive. Engaging in a constant work-related connectivity behavior increases the risk for developing psychological effects such as chronic fatigue, burnout, and absenteeism. The way company leaders deal with online connectivity shapes the corporate culture with regard to the matter of balance across life domains. Managers and

directors are role models and their connectivity behavior sends implicit messages (e.g., sending emails on Sundays or late at night may translate as being very committed to the job). Surveys indicate that making connectivity expectations in professional contexts explicit is a relief for employees. However, this is not just about workplace connectivity: research reveals that professionals feel more pressure to be constantly connected to their family and friends than to their workplace (Genner, in press).

Among the risks related to the omnipresence of media and to digital interruptions in professional contexts, scholars have expressed concerns over a reduced attention span and an information overload. The reservations are largely related to multitasking and digital interruptions during complex tasks. Scientific results on productivity and digital interruptions are inconsistent; some studies report recreational effects of private social media use or online browsing between tasks, others claim that interruptions and "cyberslacking" (the act of avoiding work by using the Internet, while on duty, for nonwork-related activities) lead to a massive loss of productivity and cost companies billions of dollars a year.

Media literacy as a goal and a tool

Numerous studies have demonstrated that media literacy can alter the experience of media consumption. In the context of socialization, media literacy can be considered both a tool for various processes and a goal. *Media literacy* designates the ability to use, analyze, evaluate, and create media content. However, competing approaches to media literacy, information literacy, and digital literacy are circulating as ongoing technological convergence keeps blurring the lines between media consumption and media creation, between different types of media such as newspapers, television, and radio, between media content and personal communication, between private and public communication, between private and professional communication. And, within social media, there is a shift from formerly more private or local spaces to larger, often unknown and even public, audiences online (Hobbs, 2015). Convergence and rapid technological innovation challenge the field of media socialization to address the implications of an increasing mobile media use, of different types of online content and applications, and of the blurring boundaries between face-to-face and virtual relationships or between mediated and nonmediated realities. In emerging studies on the risks of hyperconnectivity, timely definitions of media literacy include a notion of coping strategies for digital distractions, information overload, data-sharing and digital privacy, and social skills in mediated or semimediated social contexts.

Using media as a tool for socialization and identity development may entail allowing identification processes with fictional characters and media personae or using social media as a tool for identity exploration and for testing social interactions. Acquiring media literacy as a goal of media socialization consists of learning to use media as a resource; it also involves recognizing and limiting potential risks of media exposure. This means for instance using media to learn and get informed, while recognizing distorted media realities. It means realizing that reality TV shows—which create the illusion of portraying real lives—are usually heavily scripted. Or it means identifying unreal

or stereotypical media representations of romantic love, of normative beauty standards, and of gender roles and family ideals. Regarding social media, it means realizing that there is a bias toward positive aspects and life events in self-representation and recognizing the existence of algorithmic content filtering.

Media literacy has become an integral part of socialization: it means knowing how to use ubiquitous media generally, as a resource—for private, educational, and professional purposes; as a way of testing identity representations; and ultimately in order to find a role in society while recognizing the numerous media biases and the risks posed by information overload, by digital distractions in a rapidly changing media environment (e.g., Internet of things, virtual reality applications), and by the "datafication" of the world (e.g., quantified self, big data, and corresponding digital privacy risks).

SEE ALSO: Cultivation Theory: Idea, Topical Fields, and Methodology; Cultivation Theory: Effects and Underlying Processes; Content Effects: Violence in the Media; Content Effects: Advertising and Marketing; Identification; Mood Management Theory; Mediatization; Media Multitasking; Media Literacy Online Identity Construction; Parasocial Interaction and Beyond: Media Personae and Affective Bonding; Social Comparison Theory; Sexuality and Sexual Health: Media Influence on; Uses and Gratifications: Basic Concept; Uses and Gratifications: Evidence for Various Media

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ABSTRACT

Socialization is a lifelong process in which individuals learn and interact with social standards, rules, and values. Media are a key socializing influence among other major agents of socialization. Media effects on socialization have been identified in research in developmental psychology, sociology, media and communication studies, and pedagogy. Findings suggest that repeated mass media exposure has potential for learning (cognitive, social, or cultural skills) and long-term implications for behavior (prosocial or violent) and the cultivation of worldview and values (political views, gender stereotypes, body images). Increasingly pervasive information and communication technologies play a crucial role in socialization processes. Some of the most important aspects of socialization are formed in childhood and youth. Thus "digital natives" have been the subject of intense academic debates about the impact of the Internet on the socialization of younger generations. Media literacy can be considered a developmental task and a goal of media socialization.

KEYWORDS

developmental psychology; media effects; media literacy; mediatization; socialization