**Chapter 5: Building Identity: Socialization**

Discussion Questions:

1. Explain the processes of socialization documented in the articles.
2. How do the people and groups represented in these articles negotiate their selves and identities?
3. How do social class, race and ethnicity, and gender influence the socialization process in articles presented?

Paul B. Stretesky & Mark R. Pogrebin

Gang-Related Gun Violence: Socialization, Identity, and Self

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 36, No. 1, 85-114 (2007)

<http://jce.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/36/1/85?ijkey=Ltwd9K7CULFiA&keytype=ref&siteid=spjce>

**Abstract:**

Few studies have examined how violent norms are transmitted in street gangs. The purpose of this research is to add to the gang-related literature by examining socialization as the mechanism between street gang membership and violence. To explore this issue, we draw upon in-depth interviews with twenty-two inmates convicted of gang-related gun violence. We find that the gangs are important agents of socialization that help shape a gang member’s sense of self and identity. In addition, inmates reported to us that whereas guns offered them protection, they were also important tools of impression management that helped to project and protect a tough reputation. Our findings provide greater insight into the way gang socialization leads to gun-related violence and has implications for policies aimed at reducing that violence.

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Nancy L. Malcom

"Shaking It Off" and "Toughing It Out": Socialization to Pain and Injury in Girls’ Softball

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 35, No. 5, 495-525 (2006)

<http://jce.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/35/5/495?ijkey=fQcvPUNL2Upmk&keytype=ref&siteid=spjce>

**Abstract:**

Ignoring injuries and playing through pain are expected in organized sports. But how do novice athletes learn these social norms? Using participant-observation research focusing on adolescent girls who participated in recreational softball, this study reveals how the clash of norms between traditional femininity and the sport ethic sheds light on the socialization process. In addition to shaking off their own injuries, coaches ignored the girls’ complaints, made jokes when the girls experienced some pain, and told them directly to shake off their minor injuries. Even though many of the girls entered the activity with traditionally feminine attitudes toward pain, most conformed to the norms of the sport ethic and learned to deal with pain and injuries by "shaking them off" and "toughing them out." Those girls who were more enthusiastic about playing softball and who displayed stronger commitments to the softball-player identity were more likely to display these norms.

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Debora A. Paterniti

The Micropolitics of Identity in Adverse Circumstance: A Study of Identity Making in a Total Institution

Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, Vol. 29, No. 1, 93-119 (2000)

<http://jce.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/29/1/93?ijkey=Vl8MGtPHxptZU&keytype=ref&siteid=spjce>

**Abstract:**

This article is about the micropolitics of identity construction by residents in a total institution. Data come from two hundred hours of participant observation during a four-month period of full-time employment as a nurse aide. Interactional analysis of observations suggests that residents' personal narratives, whether real or imagined, become who some residents conceive themselves to be and define residents' expectations for interactional others. Changes in institutional culture occur as staff begin to recognize in interaction the ways residents think of themselves. The narrative accounts and interactional struggles to define self that the author discovered in the institution are not unlike conceptions and processes of identity construction, maintenance, and change that confront all human actors. These accounts provide insight into the liberating possibilities of personal identity claims.

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Randi Wærdahl

‘May be I’ll Need a Pair of Levi’s Before Junior High?’: Child to youth trajectories and anticipatory socialization

*Childhood, May 2005; vol. 12, 2: pp. 201-219.* <http://chd.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/12/2/201?ijkey=EDl6KZYlSxgek&keytype=ref&siteid=spchd>

**Abstract**

Changing schools at the age of 12 also represents a change in social age identity. Children prepare for this change of age identity in different ways, and their strategies vary across sociocultural contexts as well as between individuals. In this article, some of these strategies are explored through ethnographic observation and interviews with Norwegian 12-year-olds preparing and anticipating a change of school, making use of Robert Merton’s concept of ‘anticipatory socialization’. Merton’s concept describes the building of personal abilities, alienation from one’s former group and adaptation to new norms as social processes identifying change of social reference group. These terms are employed here to identify social processes initiating children’s orientation to a youth identity. The functions that material possessions fulfil are related to the ability to symbolically communicate both categorically and self-expressively a growing normative awareness and a sense of value.

Desmond, Matthew  
**Becoming a firefighter**

Ethnography, Dec 2006; vol. 7: pp. 387-421

<http://eth.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/7/4/387?ijkey=vyJw7XQd9/b7Q&keytype=ref&siteid=speth>

**Abstract**:

Why do individuals seek out high-risk occupations when safer ways of earning a living are available? How do they become acclimated to the dangers of their profession? This article addresses these questions by examining how individuals become wildland firefighters. Drawing on in-depth ethnographic data I collected while serving as a wildland firefighter employed by the US Forest Service, I explore how individual competences and dispositions acquired from a certain family and class background pre-condition rural working-class men for the rigors of firefighting. In Bourdieu’s terms, I investigate how the primary habitus of self-described ‘country boys’ transforms into the specific habitus of wildland firefighters. Answers pertaining to why young men join firecrews and how they become seasoned to the hazards of wildfire are found not by examining processes of organizational socialization alone but by analyzing how processes of organizational socialization are specified extensions of earlier processes of socialization that take place during firefighters’ childhood and adolescence.