

CULTURE & IDENTITY

SOCIALISATION, NORMS, VALUES AND ROLES:

Socialisation: the lifelong process of learning one's culture.

Primary socialisation: this is the learning of culture in the early years and refers to THE FAMILY as the primary agent of socialisation.

Secondary socialisation: this refers to the continued learning of norms and values over one's life and includes other agents of socialisation including, peers, education, media, work and religion.

Re-Socialisation: this refers to learning new norms and values when our roles or situations change, e.g. this can happen slowly as we become adults, or can be more abrupt, e.g. joining the army.

Anticipatory socialisation: this refers to the fact that we often know a little bit about roles before we take them on and can "rehearse" them or imagine ourselves in the role. E.g. becoming a mother, entering medical school.



Socialisation involves learning a shared set of symbols, often quite specific to your culture.



Kidd (2002) Points out that culture is partly composed of symbols that people used to convey meaning.

Abbott (1998) notes, language is the most obvious set of symbols through which members of society share meanings - think about how powerful the verbal and non-verbal symbols of swearing in terms of their ability to shock others.

In reality this boy is simply raising one of his fingers, in some cultures this has no meaning. However in our culture we attach a specific meaning to this gesture and therefore it has the power to shock.

KEY CONCEPTS: norms, values & roles

Through the socialisation process we learn **values**. These are general beliefs about right and wrong and the important standards that are worth maintaining in a society. Examples in contemporary society include the belief that human life is sacred and it is important to work hard at school.



We also learn **norms** through the socialisation process. These are social rules which define correct and acceptable behaviour. For example, in a job interview you are expected to dress smartly and not swear; however, when relaxing with friends we can behave differently.

We also come to understand **social roles**. These are the expected patterns of behaviour of people occupying different positions in society, for example a mother is expected to be loving and a judge is expected to be authoritative. We learn those roles through the socialisation process.



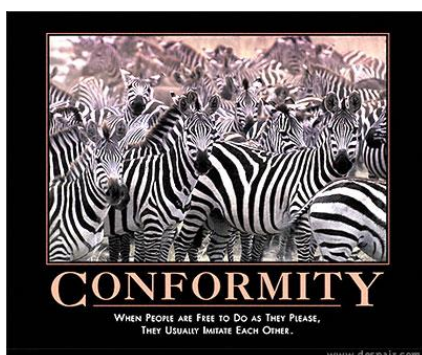
Some people may experience **role conflict** when the expected behaviour of one of their roles conflicts with that expected in another, e.g. a working mother who struggles to balance time between business and mothering, a student who has a part time job.

Our roles are often linked to **STATUS**, meaning our social standing, or the amount of social importance we have in the eyes of others.

This status can be **ascribed status** which means we gain it at birth. Examples include royalty, being a person's son or daughter, ethnic group, sex, place of birth... usually these cannot be changed.

An **achieved status** on the other hand is one that is gained through an individual's own effort or activities, e.g. a promotion, qualifications at school, election into a position of power etc.

Socialisation can be linked to **social control**. This is the methods used in society which encourage people to **conform** to norms, values, roles, traditions etc.



Generally people follow the rules because otherwise there are punishments, and often there are rewards for conforming. These are known as **sanctions** and can be **positive** (rewards) or **negative** (punishments). **Social control** can be **formal** or **informal**. Formal rewards/positive sanctions include things like a pay rise or a knighthood; formal punishments/negative sanctions include fines, dismissals and imprisonment.



Informal methods can be ridicule, or being grounded, more positively, praise and friendship.

The aim of social control is to stop **deviance**. Deviance is **norm breaking behaviour** and can range from the eccentric, to the seriously criminal.

AGENTS OF SOCIALISATION:

FAMILY: (Primary socialisation) this is the most important agent during our early years when we form important relationships and learn many of the basic norms and values of our culture which often become so much a part of our identity that we take them for granted.

We learn through imitation of parents who are "**role models**", and positive and negative sanctions.

Examples include, how and what to eat, when to eat, table manners, social interactions, sharing, a sense of cultural tradition and history and importantly language.

- ✓ **Bernstein** believed that there were social class differences in the type of language a child learns. Working class children are more likely to use simple sentences with little clear explanation, while middle class children learn a more complex vocabulary.
- ✓ **Bourdieu** also noted social class differences in terms of the values and norms passed on by parents. He believed that middle class parents emphasised higher cultural knowledge and this led to advantages for their children in later life.
- ✓ **Feminists** such as **Oakley** see family life as benefitting men, while girls learn that their future role is primarily as a housewife and to be subordinate (lower than) their husband.



However, there is now a large variety of family forms:

- ✓ Single parent (headed by mum, or dad, or shared between both)
- ✓ Reconstituted (step) family, with a wide range of different set ups.
- ✓ Nuclear family (two parents and their children)
- ✓ Extended family (involving grandparents or aunts & uncles)
- ✓ Same sex families
- ✓ Symmetrical families (parents who share equally, unlike the more traditional housewife/breadwinner split)
- ✓ Househusbands

Due to this **diversity** it is unlikely that primary socialisation will be the same for all children!!!! Some may lack a particular gender parent; some may have additional (step) parents with different norms and values, for others their social class and ethnicity or religion may have a big impact on the culture they learn.

REMEMBER: socialisation can be rejected!

PEER GROUP: (secondary socialisation)

- A peer group is a friendship group formed by people of roughly the same age.
- Peer groups meet as **equals** rather than being supervised by adults.
- Peer groups are especially important during **adolescence**, when kids spend less time with family and more time with friends.
- Play with peers is also valuable in early years as it teaches about social skills/roles etc.
- Peer groups may cause worry or concern for parents as they lose control over their children, who they may believe are going to be pressured to do things that they disapprove of, e.g. drugs, fast cars, truancy etc. **Peer pressure**.
- Peer groups expect loyalty, weaker members may be bullied, it can be a positive or negative experience.
- **Adler and Adler** studied peer groups in the USA and found that they were important for a child's self-esteem, being popular was imp.

EDUCATION: (secondary socialisation)



- The **secondary socialisation** received at school teaches children about their country's culture (including language, history, traditions and customs, values, norms)
- Schools **formally teach** knowledge and skills through the **national curriculum**.
- Pupils are also taught about their culture in an informal way through the **HIDDEN CURRICULUM**, all those things that you learn at school such as the value of hard work, competitiveness, teamwork, conformity etc. which are not part of the official subject

curriculum.

- Schools use *formal and informal social control* in the form of systems of rewards and punishments or sanctions.
- Sociologists differ in their views on whether education is a positive institution reproducing important shared culture, or whether education actually reproduces inequality. For example, the wealthy people in society can use expensive private schools to maintain their wealthy and powerful position.

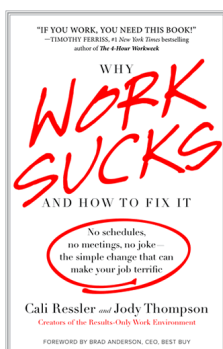
MEDIA: (secondary socialisation)

- Is an agent of secondary socialisation and is influential in showing us acceptable norms/values/roles for the modern world.
- We are exposed to the variety of types of media for a large amount of time. **POSTMODERNISTS** believe media is important in showing us new cultures and giving us new images and identity choices.
- Much of our experience is accessed via media rather than first hand, it is growing as an influence on culture and identity.
- Media present **stereotyped images** of groups and individuals, e.g. women as sex objects or housewives, disabled people as "abnormal".
- Media have a large part to play in creating the "cultural climate" within which we live. **MARXISTS** believe it transmits ruling class ideas and brainwashes the masses.
- Media provide role models, often use gender stereotypes.



WORK: (secondary socialisation)

- ❖ Work is a form of secondary socialisation.
- ❖ **Anticipatory socialisation** refers to the idea of preparing for a new situation/role at work by training or finding out what is expected of you.
- ❖ **Re-socialisation**: the idea that in a new job or post you may have to learn new ways of behaving and new expectations of your role.
- ❖ **Formal** socialisation: This is imposed by the management, who use a set of formal rules, codes and training.
- ❖ **Informal** socialisation: This is provided by the peer groups at work who have their own set of rules and expectations, like not working too hard.
- ❖ **Canteen culture**: A term used to describe the informal culture of police officers as they hang around the station exchanging stories, advice etc.



RELIGION: (secondary socialisation)

- Religion is an agent of secondary socialisation.
- Major religions are Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism, each one has its own set of **moral values**.
- People are exposed to the values of religion even if they don't attend a place of worship.
- FUNCTIONALISTS see it as important in creating a “sense of belonging” and providing a set of values by which to live, e.g. the 10 commandments.
- Religion can set laws, e.g. “thou shalt not kill”, “thou shalt not steal”.
- MARXISTS see religion as a form of social control. By encouraging people to see wealth as a sign of God’s favour, or promising rewards in an afterlife, those with power in society can keep their privileged position and those in poverty accept their place.
- Charlotte Butler's (1995) study of a group of young Muslim girls in the East Midlands showed how religious beliefs can be **changed** or **adapted** to fit the circumstances.
- Religion may be more influential as an agent of socialisation for certain groups, e.g. Catholics, Muslims. It overlaps with some ethnic identities.



Do you understand that sociology is interested in culture and how the norms and values and roles within cultures are passed on to the next generation via the process of socialisation?

TASK

Please find a news/media article which illustrates sociology and the things it is interested in understanding.....