

Discuss the impact that agencies have in defining identity and status

[Life](#), [Adolescence](#)



Discuss the impact that agencies have in defining identity and status There are a range of agencies of socialisation which influence our identity and status in society. Primary socialisation is the first stage in a lifelong process. The family, particularly the parents, are seen as central to primary socialisation. Baumeister (1986) said that family socialisation provides children with a sense of identity, in that they learn to be part of a family and have pride in a family name. Parents can use sanctions to reinforce acceptable behaviour and to punish unacceptable behaviour and these help children to learn the difference between right and wrong and to respect laws and rules, by encouraging the development of a conscience. Parsons, a functionalist, sees primary socialisation as a process which is essential to value consensus, social integration and social order. He believes that the family is a 'personality factory' in that the parents mould the child's personality in the image of society. Marxists such as Zaretsky suggest that cultural values in to which parents socialise their children are the product of ruling class ideology and intend for the child to turn into a conformist, passive citizen. Secondary socialisation occurs at the start of school and never stops throughout life. A secondary agency of socialisation would be the peer group. The peer group refers to people of similar status who come into regular contact with each other. It is very influential on adolescent's behaviour and attitudes, as teenagers feel that they have a right to engage in deviant behaviour, such as underage drinking, in order to be accepted by their peers. These friendship networks also put huge pressures on teenagers to conform by using negative sanctions such as gossip and bullying. Through interaction with our peer groups, we begin to develop a complex

understanding of ourselves and our identity. The work place and occupational peer groups are similar to peer groups. Work is important as it is an important source of identity and status, shown from the variation of social classes. The experience of the workplace teaches skills, work discipline, the informal rules that underpin work, professional ethics and a sense of community. Another secondary agency of socialisation is the mass media. Some sociologists claim that it is the most important form today. It often provides young people with role models and designs for living. Functionalists and Marxists are critical of the mass media. Postman, a functionalist, sees the mass media as responsible for cutting short children's childhoods by exposing them too soon to sex and violence. Marxists are critical as they believe it is responsible for the emergence of mass culture, which encourages consumerism and materialism. Because of this, poorer people are distracted from questioning inequality. They also believe that the mass media has led to a Hayley Dallman decline in serious and uncritical media in favour of mindless celebrity entertainment, discouraging people from thinking for themselves. The organisation of schools is likely to influence our identity and status, making education an important agency of socialisation. In secondary schools, there is a system of banding. If a child is in the top band, they're likely to have a more positive social identity than a child in the bottom band. Functionalists have a positive view of education as it teaches children that society is more important than the individual. Durkheim believed that through teaching children history of the past-achievements of their country, they are given a sense of nationalist pride. Marxists see education in a more critical light. Althusser suggested that

education is an ideological state apparatus that aims to socialise children into a hidden curriculum, a capitalist ideology that encourages conformity and an uncritical acceptance of inequality. Religion is an agency of socialisation that still has a role in defining the identity and status of believers. Some sociologists suggest that religion is becoming increasingly significant in defining identity and status as some people return to tradition as a reaction against globalisation. Functionalists believe that religion socialises people into greater moral communities, which encourages a sense of belonging and identity. Marxists describe religion as an ideological state apparatus. They believe that it reflects ruling class ideas and interests and serves the purpose of capitalism in that the working class need to work hard and obey authority.