

Chapter 5 – Socializing the Individual

Section 3 – Agents of Socialization

What is an agent of socialization?

- Remember what socialization is? Interactive process by which individuals learn the basic skills, values, beliefs and behavior patterns of a society
- An 'agent' is something that causes something to occur
- So..... agents of socialization are specific individuals, groups and institutions that provide the situations in which socialization can occur

There are 4 main agents of socialization in the United States

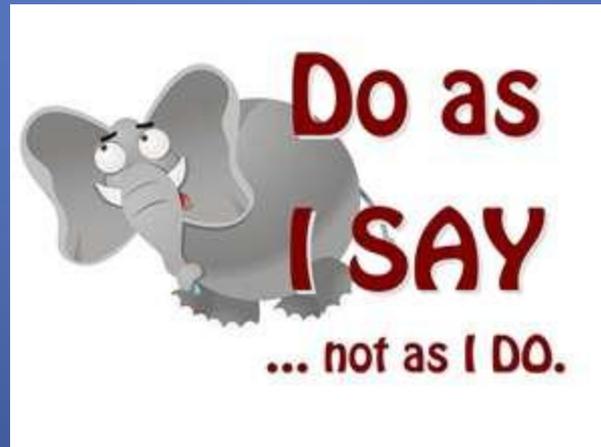
- Family
- Peer group
- School
- Mass media

Family

- The most important and first agent of socialization
- The principle socializer of young children
- Teaches how to behave in socially acceptable ways, to develop emotional ties and internalize values and norms
- Individuals share the patterns of the larger culture, but retain unique values and behavioral traits as learned from their family
- Socialization can be both deliberate (structured) and unconscious (unintended) “...do as I say not as I do”.

Remember the PSA: “I learned it by watching you, dad!”

“Parents who use drugs have kids who use drugs”



Peer group

- Defined: a primary group composed of individuals of roughly equal age and social characteristics (your friends)
- Other peers that you encounter can also influence you
- More influential as children grow older
- To be accepted by our peers we often behave certain ways – we try to be the kind of person we think they want us to be
- Desire to fit in - there's a focus on group interests and acquiring skills needed to fit into a subculture
- Socialization is not “structured”
- Groups goals can be at odds with larger society/parents/schools



PEER PRESSURE

If all your friends jumped off of a bridge, would you do it too?

Schools

- Structured - the emphasis is on acquiring skills that will enable us to fit into a larger society
- Plays a major part in our socialization because we're in school for so long
- most socialization is deliberate: activities teach skills whether vocational, academic or social
- extracurricular activities teach us teamwork, practice
- anticipatory socialization for the world of work because of deadlines, schedules and learning how to fit in to the larger society
- transmission of values
- unintentional socialization – some teachers and peers become role models for students
- peer groups are abundant in school

crud!!!



Mass media

- Forms of communication that reach large audiences with no personal contact between those sending and receiving the information – TV, newspaper, radio, films, magazines, Internet, etc...
- TV is the most influential of all mass media (there is at least one in every home – said to watch an average of 7 hours a day).
- Positives and negatives of TV...
- Where (geographically) would mass media NOT play a role?

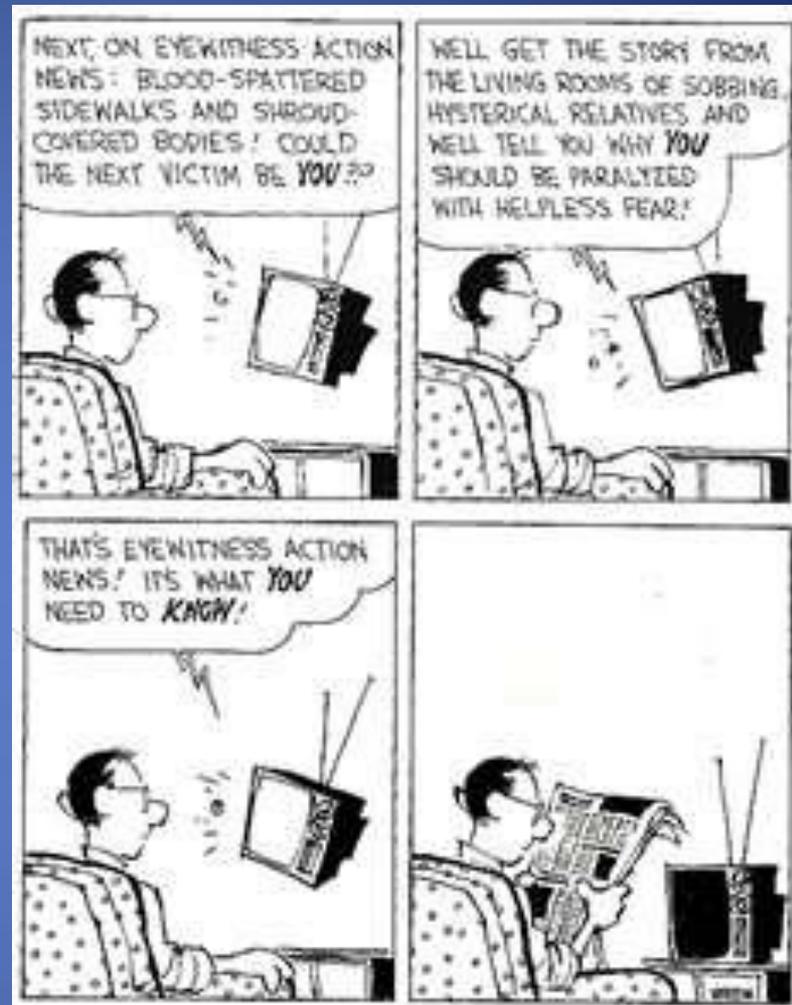


BODY IMAGE

THESE JEANS MAKE MY BUTT LOOK BIG.
I HATE MY LOVE HANDLES.
I FEEL FAT.

Body image is influenced by culture, media, family and peers.

But ultimately, you're the judge of your body image & it's the only body you've got, so love it, respect it & fuel it.



Other agents of socialization...

Can you think of any other things in our culture/world that shape us into who we are?

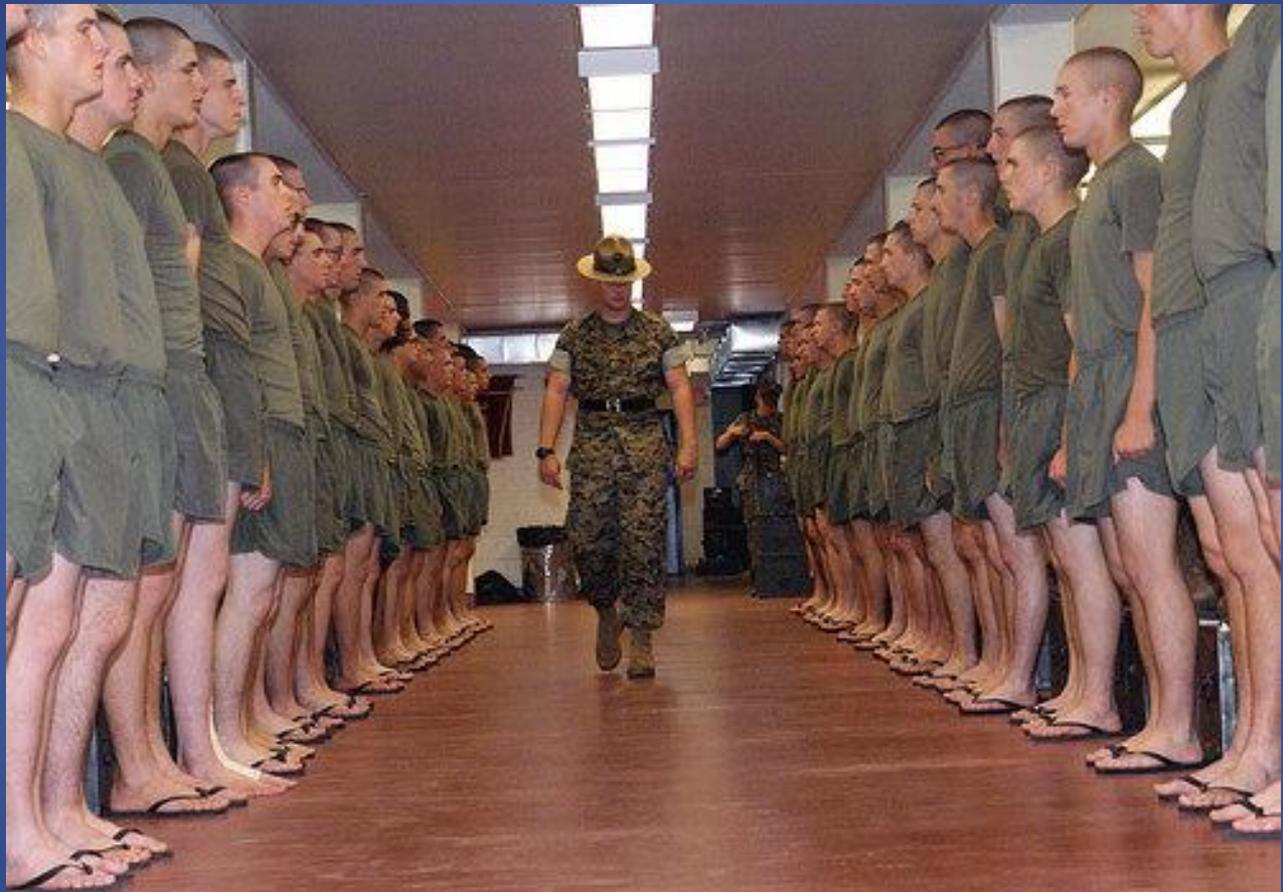
- religious institutions
- social classes
- government
- work places
- community and culture
- gender roles
- toys!!!!

Resocialization

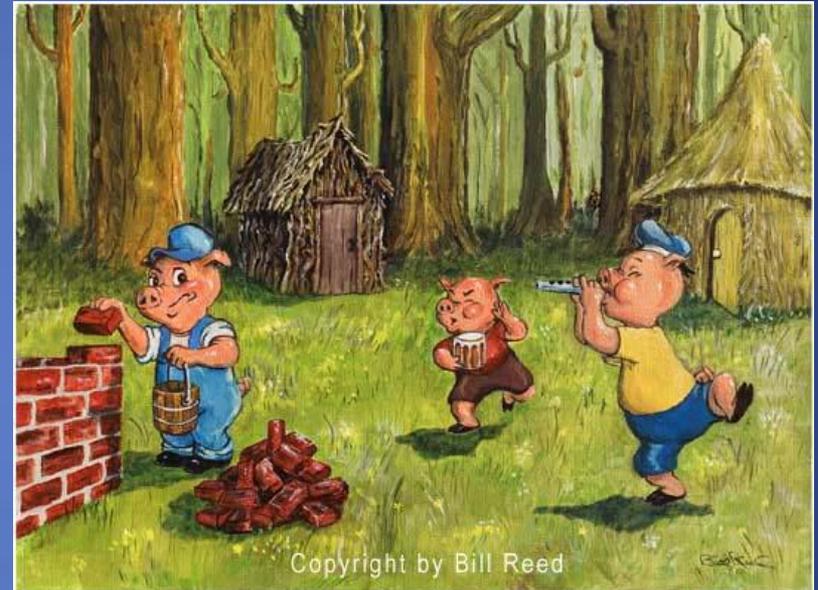
- Defined: a break with past experiences to learn new values and norms
- Can either be positive (monastery) or negative (prison)
- If you WANT to quit something, say smoking, you have to be resocialized a bit, same with if you change your lifestyle habits to get more exercise and eat better
- Sometimes you're forced to be resocialized by court order!!

Total Institution

- Defined: a setting in which people are isolated from the rest of society for a set period of time and are subject to the control of officials of varied ranks – prisons, boot camps, monasteries, psychiatric hospitals...
- Resocialization is often done in a **TOTAL INSTITUTION** (and if you remember the movie “Soldier”, socialization can also be done in a total institution)
- Resocialization in a total institution is a lot more intense and can be much more forcible than someone who chooses to resocialize themselves
- individuality is stripped away and replaced with an institutional identity: similar hair and uniforms, new standards of behavior and a regimented schedule



The Fairy Tale: A childhood agent of socialization



- <http://www.dltk-teach.com/rhymes/littlered/1.htm>
- <http://www.ivyjoy.com/fables/threeepigs.html>