Agents of socialization are both formal and informal, that help in replication of the social order. The Sociologists, social psychologists, anthropologists as well as educationalist and politicians use the word socialization in reference to the process through which an individual inherits the norms, customs and ideologies of the social order they live in. Socialization is necessary for making an individual capable of interacting within the society and a society itself shares the common values, customs, norms, traditions, languages, etc. Socialization is a lifelong process by which one keeps learning and developing oneself as a human being. A person learns socialization through agents of socialization.

The process of socialization is very important as it teaches one to behave in a society. Without socialization, one would not be able to learn the accepted customs, norms, symbols, languages and behavior. Socialization helps one develop and shape ones place in society by learning social skills. As a person moves through society, he needs to alter his behavior according to the individuals and agents of society. In a society, an individual or institution has the task of instilling the social order in an individual. These individuals or institutions are called agents of socialization. The transfer of rules, expectations, values, etc. is carried out by these agents of socialization. Let us see some of the agents of socialization that help shape a healthy society.

What are the Agents of Socialization?

According to agents of socialization definition, it is the people like parents, peers, social institutions like schools and religious institutions that help in integration of an individual with society. The four major agents of socialization in society are family, school, community culture and peers (friends). The other agents of socialization include mass media, gender and work. The agents of socialization are divided into socialization groups. These socialization groupings are as follows:

- **Primary Agents of Socialization:** The primary agents of socialization include those people who are closest to an individual. These primary agents of socialization include family and friends. The most important primary agent of socialization, family, plays an important role in shaping the life and behavior of an individual within the society.

- **Secondary Agents of Socialization:** The secondary agents of socialization are those institutions or places that help an individual find his place within the society. These include religious institutions, schools, work places, etc. The secondary agent of socialization, school, helps a child in improving social skills that helps the individual in integrating well with the society around him.

- **Social Classes:** Social classes are those agents of socialization, that divide an individual within the society. These classes include the lower class, working middle class and the higher élite class.

Effects of Agents of Socialization Over Time

There are many effects of agents of socialization not only on an individual, but on an entire population. These effects are as follows:

- **Effect on Life Cycle:** The effects of socialization can cause an individual or a group of individuals to alter their beliefs and behavior over time. This effect is commonly seen during political revolutions, where masses tend to follow the ideology of the political party that inspired them.

- **Period Effect:** The period effect of socialization affects not an individual, a group of people, but the entire society. The most common examples of period effects are Black Plague, Great Depressions, etc.

- **Cohort Effect:** Cohort effect is a social event that creates a major impact on a specific group of people. This can be explained by the Hiroshima Nagasaki bombings or the Vietnam War.
Influence of Agents of Socialization

The individual responds differently to different agents of socialization. The following paragraphs will help to explain the influences of agents of socialization on an individual.

1. **Family**—The most important agent of socialization, family helps mold an individual. The family values, beliefs, religious inclinations and political views shape an individual’s outlook towards society. Parents are the biggest influence for the social development in children.

2. **Schools**—After family, schools are probably the most important influence on an individual. Schools help pass on knowledge, create awareness and inculcate the feelings of tolerance in individuals. The second step to socialization is schools where a child meets different children and learns to make out the right and wrong in society.

3. **Community and Culture**—Community and culture help pass on the religious views and cultural traditions in an individual. A community is the group where an individual meets people with similar ideologies and interact for personal and community growth.

4. **Peers**—Meeting like-minded people, making friends and hanging out together may seem like a teenagers life. But in fact, each and every individual in society loves to have social contact. Peers have great impact on an individual's thoughts and line of thinking. An individual learns to behave in a manner that they think will be acceptable to their peers. Peer acceptance is an important part of socialization.

5. **Mass Media**—In today's world, mass media is one of important agents of socialization. People are influenced by the social norms portrayed by the mass media. Political, religious and social views are enforced in a hard way through the repeated exposure and arguments put forth by the agents of mass media.