

## **SS Summative Essay 1: Explain how identity is shaped in society**

### **Definitions**

1. Our personal identity is defined by our membership in different groups in society – and thus our personal identity is an aggregate of our social/group identities (eg boy, Rafflesian, scout, prefect, Chinese, Singaporean)
2. A group establishes its identity by:
  - a. Marking its boundaries
  - b. Appointing leaders who make decisions
  - c. Cultivate a sense of belonging
  - d. Set goals and directions to steer the group towards achieving certain objectives
3. Society is made up of different groups, and these different groups (primary/secondary/reference) exist to meet the different needs of individuals.
4. Interaction is integral to groups; our membership creates an interdependent relationship between self and other members. Our interaction shapes our individual identity, and is defined by:
  - a. The nature of group,
  - b. Our role in the group
5. Comparison strengthens group identity, because members contrast their group with other groups and derive positively-valued distinctiveness arising from it. This leads to a salient group identity.

### **Nature of Groups**

A social group consists of a number of people who:

1. Have a common identity
2. A feeling of unity/obligation towards the group
3. Shared goals
4. Shared norms

Members of social groups:

- Interact with one another based on their status within the group

Members of a group interact according to established norms and traditional statuses and roles. As new members are recruited to the group, they move into these traditional statuses and adopt the expected role behaviour – if not gladly, as a result of group pressure.

Even though primary groups are more tolerant of their members' behaviours, people tend to conform more closely to their norms than to those of secondary groups. This is because people value their membership in a primary group (with its strong interpersonal bonds) for the sake of their membership itself (primary group membership is desirable). This is unlike their membership in a secondary group, which is valued not for the interpersonal bonds, but for what the group can help the members achieve.

A reference group is a group or a social category that an individual uses to help define behaviours, beliefs and values. It provides a comparison point against which people measure themselves and others. A reference group is a category which we may not belong to, but we identify ourselves with. (Example, Singaporeans, (read the highlighted part, and make reference to Singaporeans))