

Culture and Socialization

"I don't think about people's race, class, or gender. I just see people as human."

This chapter explains the process of socialization and the interplay between our individuality and our membership in social groups (such as race, gender, and class). We also explain how important it is for us to understand that our ideas, views, and opinions are not simply individual, objective, and independent, but rather are the result of social messages and conditioning forces. We describe how, in addition to our families, institutions and other social forces work together to influence our worldview. Examples are provided to illustrate the power of socialization and how it works as an unconscious filter shaping our perceptions.

Vocabulary to practice using: dominant culture; binary; normalized (norm, normative); gendered; racialized; minoritized

Imagine that you are in a class or workshop and your instructor makes any one of the following statements:

"White people receive the message that they are more important and more valuable than people of Color."

"Members of the middle and upper classes have an easier time getting into universities and getting jobs."

"When men enter women-dominated fields, they quickly rise to the top to positions of leadership over the women."

"Heterosexuals publicize their sexuality daily in a multitude of ways."

Several people in the class, perhaps including yourself, hear this and have an immediate defensive reaction: "Wait a minute, you can't generalize like that! You don't know me, and you definitely don't know what obstacles I faced getting into college. I was taught to see everyone as equal. I have a female boss! I don't talk about my sexuality in public!"

Such reactions are common when discussing politically charged issues such as race, class, gender, and sexuality. But defensiveness is triggered by more than a difference of opinion about what the instructor is saying. In order to understand the instructor's statements and why they so often cause defensiveness, we have to have a thorough understanding of culture and socialization.

What Is Culture?

Each one of us is born into a particular time, place, and social context—into a particular *culture*. Culture refers to the characteristics of everyday life of a group of people located in a given time and place. Some of these characteristics are visible and easily identified by the members of the culture, but many (indeed most) of them are below the surface of everyday awareness.

The iceberg illustration presented in Figure 3.1 is a helpful visual representation of culture. While we may be able to identify superficial elements of culture (such as food, dress, and music), deeper levels of culture (such as notions of modesty and concepts of time) are more difficult to see. Like a fish that is immersed in water from the moment of consciousness and thus cannot know that it is separate from the water, we too are immersed from birth in the deep water of our culture.

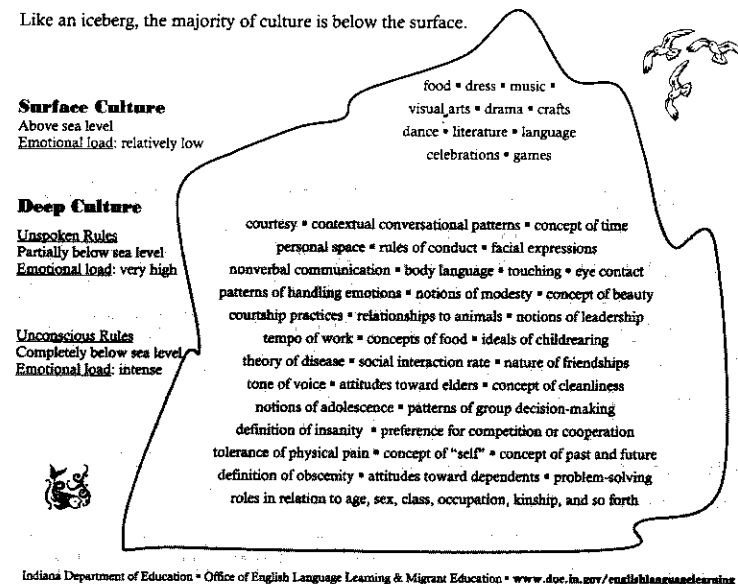
What Is Socialization?

Socialization refers to our systematic training into the norms of our culture. Socialization is the process of learning the meanings and practices that enable us to make sense of and behave appropriately in that culture. Notice the massive depth of the iceberg under the water and how many aspects of socialization are below the surface—not consciously thought about; we just *know* when someone is “friendly,” or is “acting weird,” or has “poor hygiene.” We know because we have been socialized into the norms of our culture, norms that regulate these aspects of social life, and if our friends have been socialized this way too, getting along is easy. Socialization begins at birth and continues throughout life. Indeed, the

✓ **PERSPECTIVE CHECK:** Of course, some members of this class may be excited to hear the instructor make these statements precisely because they challenge dominant ideas and/or affirm their own experiences.

📖 **Culture:** The norms, values, practices, patterns of communication, language, laws, customs, and meanings shared by a group of people located in a given time and place.

Figure 3.1. The Iceberg of Culture



Source: www.homeofbob.com/literature/esl/icebergModelCulture.html

forces of socialization are gathering even before birth, when our families begin to project their hopes, dreams, and expectations onto our lives.

One of the clearest examples of this cultural education is the process of gender socialization. Consider the first question most people ask expectant parents, “Is it a boy or a girl?” Why do we ask this question? We ask because the answer sets in motion a series of expectations and actions. For example, if parents are informed that they are having a girl, they may begin to buy clothes and decorate the room in preparation for their daughter’s arrival. The colors they chose, the toys they buy, their expectations for her future, will all be informed by what that culture deems appropriate for girls.

But even our conception of what girls and boys are is rooted in our culture. Although sex and gender are often used interchangeably, they mean different

✓ **PERSPECTIVE CHECK:** What’s below the surface is often easier to see when the deep culture you have been socialized into does not match the deep culture you are currently navigating. For example, if there is a difference between your home culture and your school or work culture.

things. *Sex* refers to the biological, genetic, or phenotypical markers that are used to categorize us into female and male bodies: genitals, body structure, hormones, and so on. These markers are related to reproduction. *Gender*, on the other hand, is what it *means* to have that body in a given culture. Gender refers to the roles, behaviors, and expectations our culture assigns to those markers: how you are supposed to feel and act based on whether your body is seen as female or male. Males are expected to learn to “act like a man”—they are trained into *masculinity*; and females are expected to learn to “act like a woman”—they are trained into *femininity*.

When we fit neatly into these binary categories, scholars sometimes use the prefix “cis” to describe us. *Cis* is Latin for *same* and indicates that one’s gender assignment and identity are the same or in agreement. Another way to think about this is that a person who is cisgender is not transgender. People who are transgender have a gender identity that is different from their assigned sex at birth. A transgender woman is someone who was identified as male at birth but whose gender identity is female and lives, or desires to live, her life as a woman. A transgender man is someone who was identified as female at birth but whose gender identity is male and lives, or desires to live, his life as a man. (And there are some people who don’t want to be in either of the gender categories; they are nonbinary.) One thing we all have in common, regardless of our gender identity, is that we live in a society that is set up to enforce the gender roles imposed on us from birth. Cisgender and transgender people have this in common, though they will undoubtedly have different experiences and feelings about being socialized as boys or girls during childhood, following a prescribed script throughout



Cisgender: The term for people whose gender assignment at birth and subsequent socialization are the same as their identity.

Transgender: The term for people whose gender assignment at birth is different from their gender identity.

Genderqueer, Genderfluid, non-Binary: People who do not identify in binary terms and /or whose gender identity and expression is fluid and dynamic.



PERSPECTIVE CHECK: Of course this binary construct is the dominant construct in Western society. In other cultures, there are “third” or alternate gender identities that are normalized, such as two spirit or Muxe in Indigenous traditions, Hijra from South Asian traditions, or Kathoey from Asian traditions (among many others). These traditions show that societies around the world have grappled with the complexity of gender and sexuality identity and expression for millennia.

adolescence about what it means to achieve manhood or womanhood, and existing as adults in a structure where compulsory gender norms continue to be imposed. We acknowledge that the terms we use here—“man,” “woman,” “male,” “female”—are neither natural nor unchanging. What we aim to communicate by using these terms, limited and inadequate as they may be, is the power of socialization; what society tells us it means to be a man or a woman, a boy or a girl, male or female, how it tells us, and what the consequences are. Thus, we use the terms men and women to illustrate the process of socialization within a cisnormative gender binary and how that socialization is rooted in sexism.

More often than many people realize, babies are born with variant sex characteristics that are not easily understood as being female or male, or with a combination of both female and male genitals (Bergvall, Bing, & Freed, 1996; Fausto-Sterling, 2000). Gender in many cultures is a binary system that insists on male/female opposites, and this binary has profound meaning and consequences. Because of this, doctors routinely opt to surgically and hormonally “correct” any variations and assign one or the other sex and gender status to the child even though many of these babies are healthy at birth. Through medical intervention, the bodies of sex-variant babies are reshaped into what is considered normal for a male or female and therefore understandable in terms of gender binaries.

Because we are taught that sex and gender differences are natural, we rarely notice how much we have been socialized into them. Indeed, as the title of a popular book from the 1990s tells us, men are from Mars and women are from Venus: so fundamentally different that they don’t even come from the same planet. Yet in fact, there are actually fewer, rather than more, differences between women and men (Fausto-Sterling, 1992). However, because society is invested in the differences (in maintaining the different social statuses of women and men), the research that validates difference between women and men is the research that gets promoted.

Like gender, many other aspects of our socialization are also invisible to us. For example, how close do we stand when talking to someone? How do we know when someone is standing too close? And how do aspects of socialization (such as age, social class, religion) and context (such as at a party, in the office, or at home) influence our assessments of whether or not someone is standing too close? The norms of our culture are most often invisible until they are violated.

Cultural Norms and Conformity

Let’s consider the example of grooming norms to illustrate the power of cultural socialization. Imagine it is a hot summer day and you are having lunch in an outdoor café. You notice an attractive couple sitting at the table next to you. Just like many others, they are wearing shorts and tank tops, enjoying the warm weather. At some point, the man raises his arm to flag down the waiter. The café’s busy, and

the waiter doesn't notice. After a few minutes of being ignored, the woman raises her arm in an attempt to get the waiter's attention, and you see that she does not shave under her arms and has a thick patch of black underarm hair.

Many people would feel a sense of shock; some might even lose their appetite. You might point it out to your lunch mate, and tell your friends about it later that day. However, thinking back to when the man raised his arm, you might realize that you did not have any reaction at all to his unshaved armpits. In fact, they didn't even register. Yet underarm hair is completely natural to the adult human body—male *and* female. Why would the woman's hair disgust many of us, but not the man's? It is because we have been socialized to see underarm hair as inappropriate for women. This socialization is so effective that we actually have a physical reaction when the norm is violated. Further, this norm is specific to dominant culture in Canada and the United States. In a different social context (or place or time), underarm hair on women would appear natural, perhaps even sexy, to most people.

This leads to another key aspect of socialization—our beliefs need not be inherently *true* to have very real consequences. For example, it is not inherently true that underarm hair on women is disgusting. But if that is the norm in our culture, it will be true in its impact; we will still *feel* disgusted and this disgust will seem natural and appropriate. So despite not being inherently true, the effect and consequences of our socialization are real. Similarly, while the colors blue and pink are simply colors that occur in nature and are not naturally male or female, once we assign that meaning to them, they become real in their consequences. Any male who has worn pink (in the wrong shade or to the wrong place) will know this firsthand; young males in particular actually risk physical harm if this norm is violated in certain spaces. (Why then, you might ask, can a girl wear blue without risking violence? To understand why, you must understand social power, which we address in Chapter 5.)

On an abstract level most people grasp the concept of socialization. However, applying it personally to our *own* lives is more challenging. We live in a culture that teaches us that human objectivity (or independence from socialization) is not only possible, but that it can be readily attained through simple choice. In other words, if I *want* to be an individual who is not influenced by the forces of socialization around me, then I can just decide that I *am* an individual who is not influenced by those forces; it is presumed that this decision is all that it *takes* to break away from the undertow of socialization. Yet this breakaway from socialization is much more challenging than it may appear. There are social, psychological, and material

✓ **PERSPECTIVE CHECK:** Of course trans and genderqueer people face additional social threats and even violence when they transgress social expectations. These additional risks are amplified if they are trans people of Color.

rewards for conformity, such as social acceptance, being treated as “normal” by family, peers, and superiors, and even opportunities for career progression.

Conversely, there are also penalties for not conforming. Take our example of the woman with the underarm hair; while she has the right to not shave under her arms, she also has to deal with the consequences of that choice. For example, she will face looks of disgust, pressure from family and friends, and questions about her sexuality and her hygiene; this choice may even be cause for censure in the workplace. That is, by not playing by the rules, she jeopardizes her status as a “normal” member of that society. And the penalties do not necessarily go away if the woman has greater social power. For instance, female celebrities who do not shave their armpits are routinely criticized, mocked, and insulted on social media for their choice. Thus the social norms of a given culture, whether we conform to them or choose to challenge them, are powerful and unavoidable. Of course this still assumes that we can readily identify aspects of our socialization we want to change. Much of our socialization is so internalized and taken for granted that we don't even see it as a choice—we just believe that it's natural to feel and act the way we do.

Consider one of many studies of its kind regarding discrimination in hiring (Bertrand & Mullainathan, 2004). Seeking to understand the well-documented patterns of inequality between Whites and Blacks in the U.S. job market in terms of rate of employment and pay, researchers at the University of Chicago conducted a large study. These researchers responded to over 1,300 help-wanted ads in Boston and Chicago newspapers by sending out close to 5,000 resumes. While the qualifications on the resumes were consistent, they randomly assigned stereotypically White-sounding names, such as Emily Walsh or Greg Baker, to half of the resumes, and stereotypically Black-sounding names, such as Lakisha Washington or Jamal Jones to the other half. Resumes with White-sounding names received 50% more callbacks than the resumes with stereotypically Black-sounding names, regardless of the employer, occupation, industry, or size of the company.

The researchers also investigated how improvements in credentials affected the callback rate. While the resumes with White-sounding names received 30% more callbacks when the credentials improved, there was no significant improvement in callback rates for the applicants with Black-sounding names. In other words, there were no benefits to Black applicants for improving their credentials. The discrimination stayed consistent and did not vary across occupations, region, or industry; even when the applications of people perceived as Black were *more* qualified, they were still discriminated against. Although race was the focus of the study, it is virtually impossible to separate race from class, gender, and presumed religious affiliation.

While this study along with others of its kind (Gaddis, 2015; Kang, DeCelles, Tilesik, & Jun, 2016; Oreopoulos, 2011) provides clear evidence that racial discrimination is alive and well, it raises another question: What happened when the human resource workers screened these resumes? They were likely not aware

that they were discriminating, and would probably have vigorously (and sincerely) denied any suggestion to the contrary. They would not be intentionally lying when they denied discriminating, and herein lies the power of socialization: We often have no idea that we are discriminating. What we see appears to be the truth; that is, *this* batch of applicants appears to us as more qualified than *that* batch. But we have interpreted these resumes through our racial filters, filters that have been activated as soon as we read the names. When we read the resume and see, for example, the name Lakisha Washington, a name traditionally associated in our culture with Blacks, our racial filters are triggered. We are now unconsciously reading her resume through these filters, which are filled with the assumptions and expectations about her qualifications that we have absorbed from the culture at large.

Whether we are aware of these filters or not, we have associations based on names that cause us to see some in a more favorable light than others. Because dominant culture constantly reinforces the idea that Blacks are underqualified, even when the qualifications of an already qualified applicant with a Black-sounding name were *increased*, the resume readers still perceived them as unqualified. In other words, the facts are not enough to trump the socialized beliefs.

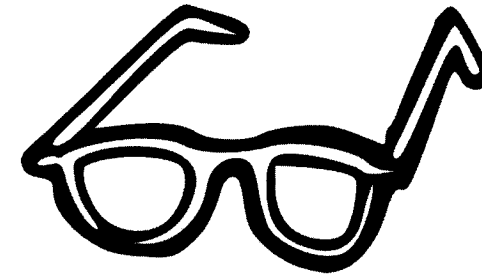
In the case of Lakisha, this happens instantaneously and is almost always unconscious—we will simply interpret her resume in a way that fulfills our expectations that she is less qualified based on assumptions about her race and class. Names such as Emily Walsh or Greg Baker don't trigger the same set of racial filters because they are associated with dominant culture and thus are neutral in terms of racial association (since Whites in mainstream culture are not racialized, it is peoples of Color who "have" race). The unconscious racial filters for these names allow us to interpret their resumes as from "normal" candidates, and thus we can take in the facts of their qualifications with different (more positive) bias. Regardless of the race of the readers of these resumes themselves, names convey ideas about race (and gender and class) to everyone, and these ideas are often unconscious, yet still play a powerful role in the presumed "fit" of one candidate over another.

This is both the power of our filters and the dilemma of our denial that they exist; if we can't see (or admit) that this is happening, we can't stop doing it or put protections in place to help minimize it. For example, because studies of this kind



STOP: While many of us believe that we treat everyone the same, this is not possible. Countless studies show that humans are not and cannot be objective (independent from our socialization) about one another. This socialization drives us to discriminate. Most of our discrimination is not conscious, but real nonetheless. There are ways to help us minimize this discrimination, but they cannot help us if we refuse to accept that we don't in fact treat everyone equally.

Figure 3.2. Frame of Reference Glasses Diagram



provided powerful proof of racial discrimination, many companies now block out the names on resumes before sending them to hiring committees in order to protect against unaware bias.

In order to develop critical social justice literacy, we must be able to see how our ideas, views, and opinions are not objective and independent, but rather the result of myriad social messages and conditioning forces. The first layer of socialization we might easily identify is our family. While our families do indeed form the first unit through which we learn language, values, and behaviors, our parents and families are not the sole or dominant forces of socialization. There are many other socializing forces including schooling, media, and religion, which also wield great authority. Thus the common conception that families are the sole forces of socialization is an incomplete view because our families themselves are products of socialization. In order to critically reflect on the forces of socialization that shape us, we must understand the role of broader society.

"You" in Relation to the "Groups" to Which You Belong

Humans are social beings who depend on the humans around us to make sense of our world. A useful metaphor for understanding how we learn to make sense of our world is to think of our culture as a pair of glasses that we wear at all times (see Figure 3.2). Just like the fish is always immersed in water, we are always wearing our cultural glasses and cannot ever truly take them off. There are two significant parts to these glasses: the frames and the lenses. The frames are the "big picture" (macro) norms—what everyone in that culture is taught from birth. The lenses constitute the individual (micro) perspective.

At the frame (macro) level, for example, in the culture of mainstream United States and Canada, we are all taught that pink is for girls and blue is for boys, that democracy and free market capitalism are the best forms of government and economic policy, and that we should strive to be independent from others. Regardless

of whether or not we personally agree with these teachings, we all receive them through social institutions like schools, government, and the mass media.

For example, even if as parents we want to challenge traditional gender roles and intentionally avoid dressing our daughters in pink or sons in blue, we still receive the message in mainstream culture whenever we watch TV, walk through the toy aisles in stores, or order a Happy Meal at McDonald's and are asked if we want the "girl" or "boy" toy. In fact, many parents who try to avoid traditional gender teachings find it to be a losing battle, given the relentless messages children receive from everything else around them; we are constantly being pressured to follow the norms of society.

The social groups we are born or develop into are part of the frames of our glasses. For example, when we are born we are socialized according to whether we are male or female, rich or poor, able-bodied or with a disability. While group divisions are not in reality this clear-cut, the macro level of society organizes groups into simple either/or groupings (called *binaries*). For every social group, there is an opposite group. One cannot learn what a social group *is*, without also learning what the group *is not*. Thus the frames of our glasses are the big picture ideas about social groups. Although there are many, the primary groups that we name here are: race, class, gender, sexuality, ability status/exceptionality, religion, and nationality.

Figure 3.3 is intended to help readers begin the process of identifying several of their key social group memberships. Despite these limitations, our intention is that readers use this chart for the purpose of beginning to understand the relevance of race/ethnicity in society at large.

We develop our ideas about people in terms of their race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, ability, and citizenship from the culture that surrounds us, and many of these ideas are "below the surface" or below the conscious level. But we all rely on shared understandings about these social groups because we receive messages collectively about them from our culture. The frameworks we use to make sense of race, class, or gender are taken for granted and often invisible to us.

Race and ethnicity are examples of how complex and interrelated these categories can be. While race and ethnicity are related in important ways and often used interchangeably, they



PERSPECTIVE CHECK: We have based the list in Figure 3.3 on categories of identification that are collected by the Canadian and U.S. governments. However, these categorizations do not reflect the complexities of race and ethnicity as experienced in society. For example, in Figure 3.3 we have included Latino/Hispanic under the category of race despite the fact that this is not technically a singular racial group; it includes many racial groups. We have included it because of the very real racialized experiences that occur for people who are identified as Latino/Hispanic.

Figure 3.3. Group Identities

Group identities	
Group	<i>It is unavoidable that some groups have not been listed. If your group has been left out, please write it in.</i>
Race	Perceived as Person of Color
	Perceived as White
Race detailed	Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean ancestry)
	South Asian (e.g., Indian, Sri Lankan, Nepalese ancestry)
	Black (e.g., African, Caribbean ancestry)
	Bi- or multiracial (parents and/or grandparents of mixed racial ancestry)
	Indigenous (e.g., Cherokee, Inuit, Dakota ancestry)
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (e.g., Samoan, Guamanian, Fijian ancestry)
	White (e.g., Irish, French, Ashkenazi Jewish ancestry)
	Hispanic or Latino/a (e.g., Puerto Rican, Cuban, Mexican ancestry)
Class	Poor, Working Poor, Working Class, Lower Middle Class, Middle Class, Professional Class, Upper Class, Owning/Ruling Class
Gender	Cis-Women, Cis-Men, Transgender, Genderqueer
Sexuality	Lesbian, Bisexual, Gay, Two Spirit, Heterosexual
Religion	For example: Hindu, Buddhist, Jew, Christian, Muslim, Atheist
Ability	For example: Able-bodied, people with physical disabilities, people with developmental disabilities, exceptionality
Nationality	Indigenous, Immigrant (perceived non-status), Citizen (perceived)

are not interchangeable. *Race* is a socially constructed system of classifying humans based on particular phenotypical characteristics (skin color, hair texture, and bone structure). *Ethnicity* refers to a group of people bound by a common language, culture, spiritual tradition, and/or ancestry. Ethnic groups can bridge national borders and still be one group (such as the Cree community, which straddles the United States and Canada). At the same time, ethnic groups can live within the same national borders and not share the same ethnic identity. For example, "British" refers to people of English, Scottish, and Welsh ancestry who live in the United Kingdom of Great Britain. However the English, Scottish, and Welsh are distinct ethnic groups. As well, British can refer to citizens of Great Britain who

may have racial and ethnic heritages other than English, Scottish, or Welsh—such as African, Asian, or Arab.

As this example shows, race and ethnicity interact in complex ways with language and citizenship. For those new to the study of critical social justice, mastering these complexities is of secondary importance. Of primary importance is the ability to understand these categories as *socially constructed* and reflective of a particular political and cultural context. This does not mean that we dismiss categories of race and ethnicity because they are unstable; rather we must understand the larger dynamics that their instability is related to and the impact of those larger dynamics on our lives (this will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 7).

There are also important interactions between race and ethnicity, and internal and external dynamics of identity; how one personally *identifies* versus how one is *identified* by others. In other words, how I see myself versus how others perceive me. While how we see ourselves and how others see us may not be the same, they are in fact, inseparable, because how our identities develop is shaped by how others see and respond to us. Sociologist Charles Cooley (1922) called this interconnection the “looking glass self” to capture the idea that we come to know who we are in large part through the process of what others reflect back to us. The looking glass self includes the concept that the process of learning to know who we *are* is shaped by learning who we are *not*.

We now return to the analogy of the “frame of reference” glasses. As we said previously, the lenses constitute the individual (micro) perspective. These are our unique experiences that make us “one of a kind”—our birth order, our family, our personality—the “prescription” lens that fits in the frame. Yet no one is *simply* an individual. We are all members of multiple social groupings and widely circulating social messages about those groupings. To understand your personal cultural glasses, you have to explore the interplay or relationship between your frames and your lenses. A primary challenge in developing critical social justice literacy is to understand the relationship between you as an individual and the social groups you belong to; the interplay of positionality. From a critical social justice framework, when we say the words “men,” “women,” “heterosexuals,” “middle class,” and so on, we are speaking about specific social group positions and histories.

If we are resisting the very notion of having to identify ourselves in terms of social groups, such as our race or gender, this too provides insight into our collective socialization. In Western society we are socialized to prioritize our individuality. Yet, although we *are* individuals, we *are also*—and perhaps fundamentally—members of social groups. These group memberships shape us as profoundly, if not more so, than any unique characteristic we may claim to possess.

Consider how one of the key aspects of individuality is one's preference for certain food, music, and dress styles. However, these preferences **are never** simply one's internally-driven likes or dislikes. It is no coincidence that popular shows of the

day (whether it be the *Twilight* movie franchise or the Netflix series *Stranger Things*) influence which names rise to the top of “most popular name” lists. Think back to when other iconic figures from popular culture influenced hairstyles of the time (Pam Grier, Farrah Fawcett, Jennifer Aniston, Justin Bieber). Conversely, seeking names that are “different” is also a function of culture—you are still reacting to the culture at large. Without the popular names, your different name (different from what?) would not have the same meaning.

The point is, while parents may have preferences for particular names, and any individual may have a preference for a particular hairstyle, it is not simply a matter of preference. There are predictable patterns of group behavior we can observe and study. And we can make predictions about your preferences based on your class, race, gender, and so on.

Returning to our opening vignette, hopefully you now have a better idea of what was meant by the instructor's statements when she said for example that, “Members of the middle and upper classes have an easier time getting into universities and getting jobs.” The instructor was not making claims about each *individual person* in these groups, but about *patterns among social groups*. These patterns are longstanding, measurable, and well documented. The fact that these kinds of statements often cause defensiveness speaks to the way they challenge Western elevation of the individual over the group. We have been taught that social group memberships such as race, class, and gender do not and should not matter, and thus must be minimized and denied.

Specifically, the instructor is challenging a societal norm by moving past individual difference and instead focusing on shared dynamics between members of social groups. She is also challenging a norm connected to our elevation of the individual—the idea that people should be seen as unique, and thus it is inappropriate to generalize. And finally, she is naming the dominant group in each of these examples, which violates assumptions that dominant groups are neutral and that difference lies with the “other.”



Dominant Group(s): The group(s) at the top of the social hierarchy. In any relationship between groups that define one another (men/women, able-bodied/disabled, young/old, White/Black), the dominant group is the group that is valued more highly. Dominant groups set the norms by which the minoritized group is judged. Dominant groups have greater access to the resources of society and benefit from the existence of the inequality.

Discussion Questions

1. Key careers tend to be organized in ways that are gendered (police and firefighters tend to be men, while teachers and nurses tend to be women). How would the authors explain this pattern?

2. According to the authors, why do so many people feel immune to the forces of socialization?
3. How does the concept of *socialization* challenge the idea of *individualism*?
4. Many sociologists say that in part how we come to know ourselves is by knowing who we are not. Sociologist Charles Cooley described this process as the “looking glass self” to capture the idea that it is what others reflect back to us that teaches us who we are—that is, our ideas about ourselves are based on how we see ourselves (people like us) in relation to others (people not like us). What kind of people did you learn were different from you? In which ways were they different? How were you taught about this difference? If you were told that everyone was the same, did the implicit messages of your environment match this explicit message? For example, what key groups (such as the elderly, people with disabilities, people of different social classes than your own, people from different religious groups, people from different racial groups) were you segregated from? As you reflect on this question, consider implicit (unspoken) messages as well as explicit (direct) messages.

Extension Activities

1. “Act like a boy or girl.” This is a popular diversity exercise intended to draw out the forces of gender socialization.

Divide the group into men and women (if someone doesn’t identify with either category, ask the person to choose a group depending on either how mainstream society would categorize him or her or which group he or she most identifies with or has the most insight into).

Now, imagine that an alien has landed in your group. This alien comes from a planet where gender is organized very differently. The job of this alien is to “get by,” “blend in,” and learn about human society. The alien has already received treatments to “look” human, but has no idea how to “act like a boy” or “act like a girl” in order to pass. As a group, generate a list of instructions for your alien about how to “act like a boy” (if you are the men’s group) and how to “act like a girl” (if you are the women’s group).

Your list should include verbs. Consider settings like school, work, family gatherings. Remember, the goal of your alien friend is to blend into mainstream society and understand its basic customs, not to challenge them.

Ask the groups to write their lists on the board or chart paper, then draw a box around each list. As the groups share their lists of instructions, ask the following questions:

- » How do we “know” these rules? (Even if we personally reject them or think they are silly, notice that we must still know what they are in order to refuse them.)

- » Since these are learned behaviors, what would it mean to “unlearn” them? Is this possible? How would we do this?
- » What are the costs of stepping outside of your gender script? That is, what happens when you don’t “act like a boy”? Are there some areas (settings? places? with certain company?) where there is more permission to act in ways outside the script? In what settings is it less ok?
- » It should be obvious that many of the things on the list are rather absurd and limiting to our lives. What keeps us in line? In other words, what are the penalties for stepping too far out of these boxes? What do we get called or seen as?

Return to your groups to discuss this question: What doors would be open to you that are not open to you now, if we were truly free of gender roles? Bring the groups back together to share the results of their discussion of this last question. Notice if there is a difference in enthusiasm between the men and the women in terms of eliminating gender roles. Why are men usually less interested in eliminating gender roles?

2.
 - a. Read Simon Weisenthal’s *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limitations of Forgiveness* (New York: Schocken, 1976).
 - b. Watch the film *The Question of God: Sigmund Freud & C. S. Lewis* (C. Tatge & D. Lasseur, Producers; C. Tatge, Director; Alexandria, VA: Tatge-Lasseur Productions, 2004).
 - c. Using the text and the film as a window into socialization, reflect upon the following questions:
 - » How would you answer Wiesenthal’s question on forgiveness?
 - » What framework are you using to address the question?
 - » How did you acquire this framework?
 - » Why might so many others answer such a question very differently?
 - » How can religious debates help us identify our cultural frameworks?

Patterns to Practice Seeing

1. Practice identifying patterns at the *group* (rather than individual) level. For example, in workplace meetings or other public spaces, practice seeing which groups are included and which are not.
2. Practice naming people by their key social groups. For example, “Tina, a white able-bodied cis-woman, went to the store.” Notice your own as well as others’ levels of comfort.