

Socialization Paper

Socialization is “the process of learning to behave in a way that is acceptable to society”. Whether you are the most normal and boring or unique and different person, you have been socialized. As a society, we are born to fit expectations and norms based off of our identity categories (race, social status, economic class, age, gender,... etc), ridiculous or not. This is often known as stereotypes.

From having the mothering role to getting different pay to body stereotypes, women are constantly being punished or hated upon for being a different gender. Ridiculous, yes, but what is even more ridiculous is the girl-on-girl hate that happens too often. We as females try to “match” each other, as was found in the article “He Said, She Said” by Deborah Tannen. She explains her research on the ways that men and women communicate. While men “top”, women “match”, which means that it’s a “‘Mine’s Higher’ vs ‘We’re the Same’” situation. For example, Deborah Tannen writes about “trouble’s talk”, which she explains as when someone says, “‘I know how you feel’ or ‘The same thing happens to me.’” I believe this leads people to think that we are meant for the mothering role, or that we aren’t ambitious enough to try to get what we want, or possibly stand up to collect what we’ve earned. It puts on a cover, or mask, that allows people to see us as sympathetic and quiet. As Tannen found, men often misinterpret or misread what women say, so when they think that a woman may lack confidence, really, it’s just that she is trying not to seem better by saying something suggesting she was in the more powerful position.

Although matching between women is often seen “as a sign of goodwill, to reinforce the friendship”, it can sometimes cause problems. A study done in 2014 showed exactly this, focusing mainly on body image issues in women. “5 Reasons Why My Girlfriend Thinks She’s Not Beautiful Enough” by Rafael Casal focuses on models, mannequins and media. The ideal sizes for a model are 5’11 and 117 lbs, and most models’ BMI’s meet the criteria for anorexia. It’s not healthy, yet we as women want and to match them. Since it’s not extremely easy to change our bodies to look like the models we see, or the ideal mannequin, it has a negative effect on our brains. A study done for the article showed that “47% of girls in 5th-12th grade felt magazine pictures influenced them to want to lose weight”, while “only 29% were actually overweight”, and “90% of women overestimate their body size.” I have never been a small person, and throughout my life, I have been socialized to think it’s okay to talk about my body in a negative way, and because of this it’s not crazy to wonder, is the media to blame for this?

The average time spent on social media for teenagers is 9 hours a day. There are around 300-800 million monthly users on Instagram. 67% of those users are females. Selena Gomez, Ariana Grande, Beyonce, Kim Kardashian West, Taylor Swift, Kylie Jenner, Kendall Jenner, Nicki Minaj, Khloe Kardashian, Katy Perry, Jennifer Lopez, Miley Cyrus, Kourtney Kardashian, Demi Lovato, Rihanna, and Victoria’s Secret are the 16 most popular female accounts on Instagram. Although many see these female influences as strong, independent women, they also play a big role when it comes to the “I wish” department. I’ve done it, and I feel many other girls/women have done it too. The “I wish” department is something my family refers to as when you see something you want, and the main reason you want it is because the person with it seems so happy. I think a lot of women do this with other women. They see these female figures who are famous, successful, look happy, and are considered beautiful. It also takes us back to the fact

that women try to “match” which can lead to some pretty harmful thinking, such as wanting to look like someone else.

On top of seeing this in magazines, on Instagram, on Snapchat, and other social media platforms, we also hear it in music. The average American listens to 4 hours of music per day, whether it’s in the car, at work, at home, or even while working out. There have been studies done that show that we can learn in our sleep through audio, so it’s not crazy to believe that subconsciously we pick up messages in the music we listen to. Different genres of music we listen to affect our moods as well. They trigger different parts of our brain and increase or decrease dopamine levels and it makes us feel differently when we listen to different types. It’s the reason we listen to calm music when sleeping or taking a break/rest, or fun, upbeat music when working out.

Everyone at one point or another has a song stuck in their head. Whether we know the lyrics or not, often times we end up looking up the lyrics and/or the meaning. We constantly sing songs and drill the messages of the song into our heads, as well as others’. Unconsciously we are relaying one person’s message(s) to everyone.

Along with music, the average time being spent on the internet at 27 hours a week (not including music and/or social media) has to be taking *some* toll on us. We constantly see commercials and ads advertising change. It’s hard *not* to see them and think about them.

If the media argument isn’t enough, think farther back. Back to when we probably had *some* media around, but when it was much less. Back to our parents and guardians. They were the ones who raised us. For most people, they are the ones in our life we trust the most and know the best. If you trust someone or something, you don’t have to question what is coming from it. In this case, the saying “the apple doesn’t fall far from the tree” appears true. As we grew up with our parents, we saw the adults as models for what we are supposed to be like. They are the teachers for how to act, and be a good human in general. This sums up the idea of Nature vs. Nurture- are we born overestimating our body size, racist, and prejudice, or is it something that comes with experience and years of seeing patterns?

We can’t stop socialization. It is the way we are shaped as humans. Although when you think about it, is socialization something that needs to be stopped? Yes, the stereotypes and negative messages are obviously not good, but what about being shaped to believe in certain religions, or positive socializing messages like positive body messages? I believe we should get rid of the stereotypes we have about identity categories and the judgement that comes with them, but instead use socialization in a positive way.