Who Am I?

*Andrew Munroe*

We are all simply living beings, yet one thing makes us human, socialization. This is how we learn about all our norms and beliefs, and this socialization has chained us to a narrow perspective of things that has been harmful to us as a people, and these ideas were given to us by a cycle that is continuously kept going by us subconsciously. Socialization is taught to us through five important agents, media, family, peers, religion, sports, and these affect us the most. These agents have influenced every part of our daily lives and they have taught us what we believe to be normal. "We are then socialized by powerful sources in our worlds to play the roles prescribed by an inequitable social system." As stated by Hardman and Jackson in the article *Cycle of Socialization*. And then these agents have created our identities that make us consider who we are in today’s society. “They shape our self-concepts and self-perceptions, the norms and the rules we must follow, the roles we are taught to play, our expectations for the future, and our dreams.” Acknowledged severely by the *Cycle of Socialization* article. Through the media and society I have been socialized to think that I must be athletic, strong, and smart to be a so called perfect man, that because of my social class I need to work harder in my academics for opportunities in our world, and because I’m white I can speak to others and not be contradicted because of my skin color.

Men are expected to follow certain rules and conform to the standard views on men and that they need to be smart and athletic to fit the gender of a man. Be tough, be smart, don’t cry, showing emotion is bad, and all of these messages come from a place called the Man Box. The Man Box is a place where there are rules that are held in place by society and that I MUST follow these rules if I want to be a man who is considered normal. As a teenage boy I’ve heard these messages many, many times being thrown at me from media and sports. I have often tried to form these norms around myself and be what I’m told to be. As Tony Porter, states in the video *A Call to Men*, “Growing up as a boy, we were taught that men had to be tough, had to be strong, had to be courageous, dominating -- no pain, no emotions, with the exception of anger -- and definitely no fear; that men are in charge, which means women are not; that men lead, and you should just follow and do what we say; that men are superior; women are inferior; that men are strong; women are weak; that women are of less value, property of men, and objects.” This is the Man Box. After hearing this I was surprised that these messages were about how I, as a man, was supposed to act and that this was how I needed to act in order to fit in. I see in the media the messages of gender and these are having an effect that is harmful to me. As a negative effect of these messages I started to doubt myself, that I was never going to be accepted, and because of these negative ideals the confidence I had in myself started to drop. Is it fair that I must change who I am? Is it fair that I must act like a man to be one? No, but because gender ideals have been so deeply ingrained into society, it has become completely accepted by everyone and that all men and women alike need to flow into the confines of their gender.

The way my gender has been represented in media and sports has allowed me to think of my gender, being a white man, as an acceptable way to fit into society. As the article *Cycle of Socialization* by Bobbie Harro states, “We are all born into a specific set of social identities.” I have often being told I was ‘gay’ and sometimes to ‘man up and stop crying,’ and this has caused me to ask myself why I put on a mask to change my identity, and I can only say is that I change the way I act because I wish to be considered normal by my friends and to be accepted as a man. From the video *My Princess Boy*, Cheryl Kilodavis asserted, “People want to say he’s gay or he’s transgender. And what I’m saying is accept us for who we are.’ This really struck me as true, that I need to be accepted for who I am, and not for who I was told to be. For example, being a man and having gender constrictions has caused me to challenge my self image and retract inside myself to put up an outward facing identity mask that creates an image of what others believe I must be.

 Your economic class, something that, like gender, largely impacts whether you are worth viewing in today's society and how you succeed in the world, which is around us constantly. Coming from a middle class background, I feel very differently about someone else who is not in this category. I know that because I am in this middle class I have opportunities that people of the lower class may not, and can succeed in the choices I make, but I can never reach the social seniority that the rich hold over me and everyone else. To explain how different the the middle and lower class are from the upper class in America, the video *Wealth Inequality In America* claims, “The bottom 80% of America, (poor through middle class) hold only 7% of America's wealth.” It is so shocking to me that I am in the bottom part of the wealth even though I am not poor and that the rich have immense amount of power over others. I have seen that the rich have lots of power and almost all of the richest people in the world are white men. Being above the lower class I have been motivated to work my hardest to succeed in my endeavours. As a teenager I’ve tried to do my best in school, because I know that if I do my best I will be able to achieve a higher level of education in college and in the careers I am interested in. But can I achieve my goals if I am of a lower social class, even though I’m white? I believe I can if I set my mind to it.

The economic class system, the way society has categorized people by how much money and social power they have, I believe was simply created so that I cannot challenge who I am and break the negative confines of the cycle that is continuing even though we don’t notice it. I have often changed my self image many times, but only because I wished to be accepted by who I considered my friends. But I see now that they weren't truly accepting me, they were accepting the person who had put on the mask that changed my identity. I know that by changing my identities I am opening myself up for more choices, but I do not wish to take choices that I need to change myself in order to do so. I have always had a great chance at having opportunities presented to me in my life, that many people of the lower class may not. For instance I know that because I can afford to ride bicycles, to buy the jerseys, and go to the races, that I will be able to reach the places in life I wish to go, but not without working for it. I have tried to extend the knowledge that I have because I wish to achieve a higher level of importance among the people, and so I will not be considered among the people of a lower class. As the video *Precious Knowledge* notices, “When you grow up in a poor area you don’t get the same opportunities as other people.” Everyone's driven by wealth including myself, and this is one of the negative influences from the ‘*Cycle of Socialization*’ that drives our society. This is creating a greater gap in communication between the economic classes.

In present day I am often told to be more of a man then I am now, and to stop wishing for things I cannot buy. These have been told to almost all of us at one point in our lives and made us think of how we cannot be and that we can never be as good as someone else. Can people change? Yes, of course, we can all change, but why don’t we? As the article *Cycle of Socialization* acknowledges, “We are innocents, falling into an already established system.” and, “These messages are an automatic part of our early socialization, we don’t initially question them.” We are told that we cannot change because this is who we are, and if we do change then we are not considered human. If we want to change, everyone must sacrifice part of who they were to find our new true selves that involve our inner beings. The reason we have not changed is because we are afraid that the people who already have fallen so deeply into their own prescribed identities will think of us as outcasts and devalue us, just like if we ignore the Man Box and its rules. How can I as an individual break the harmful cycles of socialization? I think that I can break the cycle by doing what I choose to do and not what others tell me. I can believe that if we empower each other, and the already existing society that is forming our world, we can help each other to break the self perpetuating cycle, the negative confines and the harmful rules that are causing us to change who we are in order to be accepted.

MASK paragraph.

Everyone has a mask, whether it’s for hiding something or telling other people something we want them to believe, and we all put them up subconsciously. For me, my mask represents how I’ve been socialized mostly by gender. So my main focus was how I have been told about gender through messages from the 5 agents of socialization. I decided to show how the agents of socialization have given me ideas about how I’m supposed to be, and how I inevitably pieced them together to form an identity of what others think I am on one side of my mask. I will write messages about who I am on the other side such as, creative, thinker, quiet, and other messages to show how I am inside myself, and how I wish to be without being told otherwise. I decided I would paint flowing shapes on the forehead of my mask to show how I have ideas that I wish to share. I also drew music notes to symbolize how my brain, my consciousness, is constantly in an imaginary place. I realized I was hiding quite a lot as a man and that I was influenced by messages more than I realized.

***Evidence and Quotes.***

As Tony Porter, from the video “A Call to Men” says,“See this man box has in it all the ingredients of how we define what it means to be a man”

*and*

Growing up as a boy, we were taught that men had to be tough, had to be strong, had to be courageous, dominating -- no pain, no emotions, with the exception of anger -- and definitely no fear; that men are in charge, which means women are not; that men lead, and you should just follow and do what we say; that men are superior; women are inferior; that men are strong; women are weak; that women are of less value, property of men, and objects.

Cheryl Kilodavis admits from the *My Princess Boy* video that” People want to say he’s gay or he’s transgender. And what I’m saying is accept us for who we are.’

As in the video *Wealth* *Inequality in America* claims,’ The bottom 80% of america (poor through middle class) hold only 7% of all of America's wealth.’

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“They shape our self-concepts and self-perceptions, the norms and the rules we must follow, the roles we are taught to play, our expectations for the future, and our dreams.” As acknowledged by the *Cycle of Socialization* article.

“I have seen messages from the rich people on the media, telling everyone, that if you're rich you can do anything if you have lots of money, and if you are of a lower class you are unimportant and can’t do anything, even if you’re white.” *Quoted by myself*