

# Understanding The Cycle of Socialization

**The Cycle of Socialization helps us understand the way in which we are socialized to play certain roles, how we are affected by issues of oppression, and how we help maintain an oppressive system based upon power. The Cycle is comprised of 3 arrows, 3 circles, and a core center. Each of these components represents the following:**

1. The beginning of the cycle, depicted by the 1<sup>st</sup> circle, represents the situation into which we were born. We have no control over this. We are also born without bias, assumptions, or questions. We are either “lucky” to be born into a privileged situation or “unlucky” to be born into an underprivileged situation.
2. The 1<sup>st</sup> arrow represents that fact that our socialization process begins immediately. We are given a pink blanket if we are a girl or a blue one if we are boy. The rules and norms are already in place and we subtly (and in many cases not so subtly) are made aware of the rewards of conforming and the consequences of rebelling.
3. The second circle represents the institutions that help shape our views and beliefs, and help instill within us prejudice or acceptance.
4. The second arrow represents the way in which the instilling of ideas, beliefs, and behaviors reinforce the cycle of oppression. Behaving differently is not as simply as most of us think. We are rewarded for good behavior – conforming to the norms and standards. By the same token, we are punished for bad behavior – questioning or rebelling against oppressive societal norms.
5. The third circle represents the devastating result upon all of us that this self-perpetuated cycle of oppression produces.
6. The final arrow represents a point at which we all arrive – the results of the cycle. We are forced to make a decision, even if that decision is to do nothing. Doing nothing is the easier choice, especially for those who benefit from the perpetuation of the cycle: we are all victims of the cycle and we are all hurt by it. Oppression hurts the oppressed and the oppressor.
7. And finally, it is the wheel that turns or enables any cycle. At the center or core of the cycle of socialization are fear, misunderstanding, insecurity, confusion, etc.

**Source:** Source: Adams, M., Bell, L. A., Griffin, P. (1997) Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice, New York: Routledge.

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