

Our socialized selves

[Family](#), [Marriage](#)



Our Socialized Selves Socialization can be described as the process in which an individual who is a part of a certain society learns to interact with others. A dynamic part of socialization would be social forces that help shape one's way of interacting with others. These social forces are class, culture and institution. Socialization and social forces impact one's decision of education, life style, friends and even the most personal choice of a marriage partner. In the majority of societies, parents do not regulate marriage. However, it still holds true that marriage is not entirely " personal" even without any parental intervention. Culture is a social force; it contains values and morals we are taught in the process of socialization. These values and morals are also usually accompanied with certain norms that are attached to culture. Values and morals include things like respecting the elderly, having certain principles and are usually accompanied with norms like dress codes and manners of speaking to adults. For example in Egypt, where I was born, women are often expected to dress modestly with skirts and dresses under the knee and young children cannot talk back to their parents. In fact, my 36 years old uncle doesn't smoke in front of my dad up until this day as a sign of respect to his older brother. Also, it is largely assumed that marrying within the same culture will facilitate the communication process between spouses and therefore construct a happier marriage. Culture also defines social and gender roles and can affect the careers an individual pursues. For example, women are more likely to go into nursing as opposed to engineering while men are more likely to go into construction as opposed to social work. Class is another social force; we are often born into a specific class and usually strive to move up to a higher class. However, most people

remain in the same social class. The class we are born into often determines opportunities that are available to us through our life style and surroundings. Middle class individuals are more likely to buy inexpensive food as opposed to expensive organic products, which would be consumed by high-class individuals. Certain universities are very costly and usually attended by the higher class thus limiting accessibility of an elite education to the lower class. Middle class people will eat at fast food restaurants while higher-class people are more likely to dine at expensive diners. Individuals for certain classes are more likely to interact and form friendships with each other. And accordingly, middle class citizens are more likely to marry from each other and studies show that 95% of marriages are within either the same class or at most one class difference. Institutions are the third social force.

Institutions create the environment we are born and most of the times live within. While arranged marriages are near extinct, present only in minor rural parts of the world. One would think our choice of our marriage partner is personal and completely ours. We often don't realize the role socialization and the social forces (class, institutions and society) play in our choice. If we deeply analyze the majority of marriages, we will find that most humans seem to pick a significant other that they share some sort of similarities with. Similarities can be in the form of race, background, language, class, religious beliefs, norms, morals and values. People's choice of whom to marry is often socially constructed on similarities. Each class society has an opportunity, education and life style range. Therefore, people of middle class are often associated and mostly interact with fellow middle class citizens. They usually share the same level of education, same life style range and same limited

opportunities. They usually have a similar potential household income and thus people find their spouses typically in societies that are similar and secure a similar lifestyle as they were born into. Religion also sometimes play a role in socially constructing a marriage, a lot of religions prohibit marrying from other religions. As for the faith I was born into, Coptic Orthodox Christian, we are only allowed to marry from an Orthodox church not even any Christian. Imposing constraints like this usually affects what we thought was "personal" choice of our partner. Social habits and lifestyles can sometimes affect our choices as well. A wealthy individual that runs track at a sporting club on the weekend is more likely to meet and marry another individual that perhaps plays a different sport at the same or a different club more than marrying someone that works at a food cart in the city for example. Celebrities tend to marry celebrities and pastors are also often married to wives that carry extra religious mentality. Socialization puts all of this together, the manner we were brought up in determines how we interact with others and the class, culture and institutions we are associated with and accordingly these social forces and socialized versions of us usually, if not highly, impact our point of view on who to marry to certain traits that we want in our partners. Our choice of whom to marry is often impacted with certain criterion that varies from an individual to another. However, what is common would be the fact that we all base our selection criteria according to our standards of socialization. In other words, if we are socialized to meet certain morals and values and we always look in a spouse to also meet the same standards we were raised on. And for that to happen we accordingly often choose a partner that is of a similarly socialized mentality. It is widely

believed that marrying from the same social class, culture or religion is the ideal process of mate-selection. However, while it's the norm, there have been successful marriages with huge differences in class, culture and institutions therefore. Another reason for people to pick a partner of a similar culture would be social acceptance. We often strive to feel socially accepted and in some cultures marrying a native of a different language or culture wouldn't be socially acceptable. For instance, Egyptians always marry Egyptians and if one of my friends married a Hispanic I will not be as socially interactive with her as I would if he married an Egyptian girl. Guilty to socialization, I realize I have been socialized this way throughout the years and I'm sure a lot of other Egyptians have been socialized the same way. In conclusion, the -what we thought was- "personal" process of spouse selection have turned out not entirely personal. Our socialized lives, mainly by culture, class and institutions often impact our decision making process and limit our choices to people that have lived similarly socialized lives. Whether cultural, religious, or class habits and lifestyles, Our choices are still not entirely personal even if we have never realized it due to the fact that we're often too socialized to look out of the box and consider alternatives. But we rather take the easier path to pick a partner of similar socialization thinking it would facilitate the communication process.