

SOCIALIZATION THROUGH SHAME: HOW IT HAS SHAPED ME.

Socialization is what makes us who we are both as a person and a species. Fun fact: we are not born with an innate spoken language, that is a result of socialization.

I remember when I was young the concept of gender was a lot simpler: there were girls and boys, no in between, no alternatives. Gender is much more complicated of an issue nowadays than it was when I was younger. I don't know if that was because I was little and therefore oblivious to the world around me. That being said, in my early childhood, as in "before school", I was never told that "that's for girls" or "be a man." I always gravitated toward what is stereotypically considered "guy stuff" like video games, cars, guns, etc. anyways, so nonconformity at least interests-wise wasn't a "problem." I always got in trouble for playing with tools. I was especially fond of drills and reciprocating saws because drills resemble handguns in their general shape and reciprocating saws look kind of like rifles. When I wasn't playing around in the toolshed, I was playing video games or building stuff with legos, which I still enjoy doing.

When I started elementary school, however, the messages I received from my peers contradicted the messages my family had given me in every way. Depending on which group that you fit into, guys liked these particular things, fit this particular body type, and acted in that particular manner, and if you didn't conform, you were ostracized. If I didn't hide my emotions, the one exception being anger, I would run the risk of being called names like "gay" or "momma's boy." Since I am skinny, and not muscular like society dictates that I should be, I have had epithets like toothpick, twig, etc. thrown my way in the past. These events molded me to fit, as Tony Porter said in his TEDtalk "A call to men", "the collective socialization of men, better known as The Man Box," which has "all the ingredients of how we define what it means to be a man." I wouldn't say these incidents happened a whole ton and weren't of gargantuan magnitude, but they happened enough to make me try to change.

In addition, during these years, I really realized how amazingly effective of a chisel shame was when my peers used it to engrave in me these impressions of how I should be and began employing it to try and carve out some of those same "flaws" that I failed to eliminate in me that I also saw in my younger brother, which I feared would get

him the same treatment as me. I was too blinded by my will to try and make him fit the same mold I was forced by my peers to fit that I couldn't see that this was the wrong way to go about it, that the best way to do it was to do nothing and let him come into his own and be himself. I now realize that to break this cycle of socialization, we have to unlearn those stereotypes that were forced upon us at our birth. We need to accept that some people may never fit those molds perfectly, or not at all for that matter, so why bother trying to make them?