Social Identity Groups

Social identity groups are based on the physical, social, and mental characteristics of individuals. They are sometimes obvious and clear, sometimes not obvious and unclear, often self claimed and frequently ascribed by others. For example, racial groupings are often ascribed as well as self-claimed. Government, schools, and employers often ask an individual to claim a racial identity group or simply ascribe one to an individual based on visual perception. Other social identities are personally claimed but not often announced or easily visually ascribed such as sexual orientation, religion, or disability status.

For the purpose of this self-examination please identify the memberships you claim or those ascribed to you. Below are examples of social identity groupings.

Examples
(Feel free to use your own language for your identities.)

Gender	Woman, Man, Transgender, Post-Gender
Sex	Intersex, Female, Male
Race	Asian Pacific Islander, Native American, Latin@, Black, White, Bi/Multiracial
Ethnicity	Irish, Chinese, Puerto Rican, Italian, Mohawk, Jewish, Guatemalan, Lebanese, European-American
Sexual Orientation/ Attractionality	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Pan-Attractional, Heterosexual, Queer, Questioning
Religion/Spirituality Faith/Meaning	Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, Jewish, Christian, Pagan, Agnostic, Atheist, Secular Humanist
Social Class	Poor, Working Class, Lower-Middle Class, Upper-Middle Class, Owning Class, Ruling Class
Age	Child, Young Adult, Middle-Age Adult, Elderly
(Dis)Ability	People with disabilities (cognitive, physical, emotional, etc.), Temporarily able-bodied, Temporarily disabled
Nation(s) of Origin and/or Citizenship	United States, Nigeria, Korea, Turkey, Argentina
Tribal or Indigenous Affiliation	Mohawk, Aboriginal, Navajo, Santal
Body Size/ Type	Fat, Person of Size, Thin

Target Group: social identity groups that are disenfranchised and exploited
Agent Group: social identity groups that hold unearned privileged in society

Cycle of Liberation

Intrapersonal
Change within the Core of People about What They Believe about Themselves

Waking Up

Critical
Incident
That
Creates
Cognitive
Dissonance

Reaching Out

Movement Out of Self Toward Others
Seeking Experience and Exposure
Speaking Out and Naming Injustices
Taking Stands,   Using Tools
Exploring and Experimenting

Interpersonal
Change in How
We Value Others
and See the World

Getting Ready

Empowerment of Self
Introspection
Education
Consciousness Raising

Gaining   Dismantling
Inspiration   Collusion
Authenticity   Privilege
                     Internalized
                     Oppression
Developing
Analysis and Tools

Building Community

Working With Others
A. People "Like Us" for Support
B. People "Different from Us"
   for Building Coalitions,
   Questioning Assumptions,
   Rules, Roles, and Structures
   of Systems

Core
Self-Love
Self-Esteem
Balance
Joy
Support
Security
Spiritual Base

Coalescing
Organizing,
Action Planning,
Lobbying,
Fund Raising
Educating,
Renaming Reality
Refusing to Collude
or Take Privilege
Being a Role Model,
an Ally
Transforming Anger
Moving Into Action

Maintaining
Integrating
Spreading Hope
and Inspiration
Living Our Dreams
Modeling Authenticity,
Integrity and Wholeness
Taking Care of Self
and Others

Creating Change
Critically Transforming
Institutions and
Creating New Culture
Influencing: Policy
Assumptions
Structures
Definitions, Rules
Taking Leadership
Risks
Guiding Change
Healing
"Power Shared"

Systemic
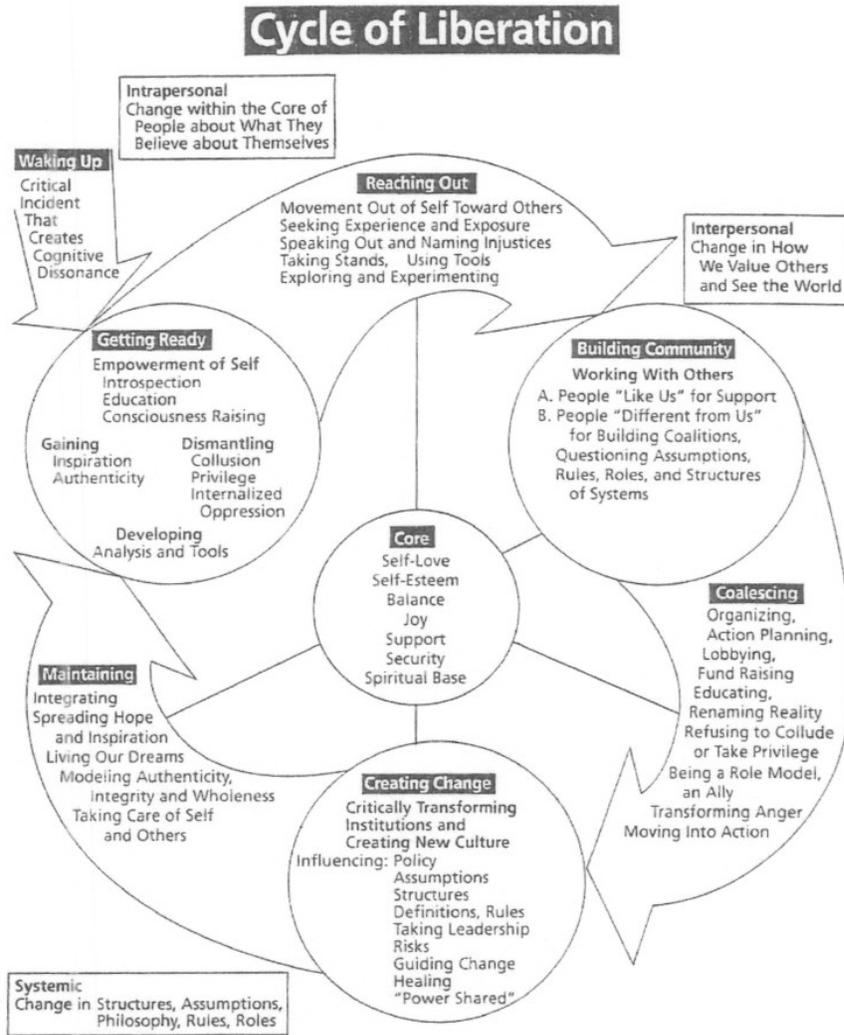Change in Structures, Assumptions,
Philosophy, Rules, Roles

Figure 88.1   The Cycle of Socialization

The Model

The model described in this chapter combines theory, analysis, and practical experience (see fig. 88.1). It describes a cyclical process that seems to occur in most successful social change efforts, leading to some degree of liberation from oppression for those involved, regardless of their roles. It is important to note that one can enter the cycle at any point, through slow evolution or a critical incident, and will repeat or recycle many times in the process. There is no specific beginning or end point, just as one is never "done" working to end oppression. Although there is not a specific sequence of events in the cycle, it is somewhat predictable that all of the levels (intrapersonal, interpersonal and systemic) will occur at some point.
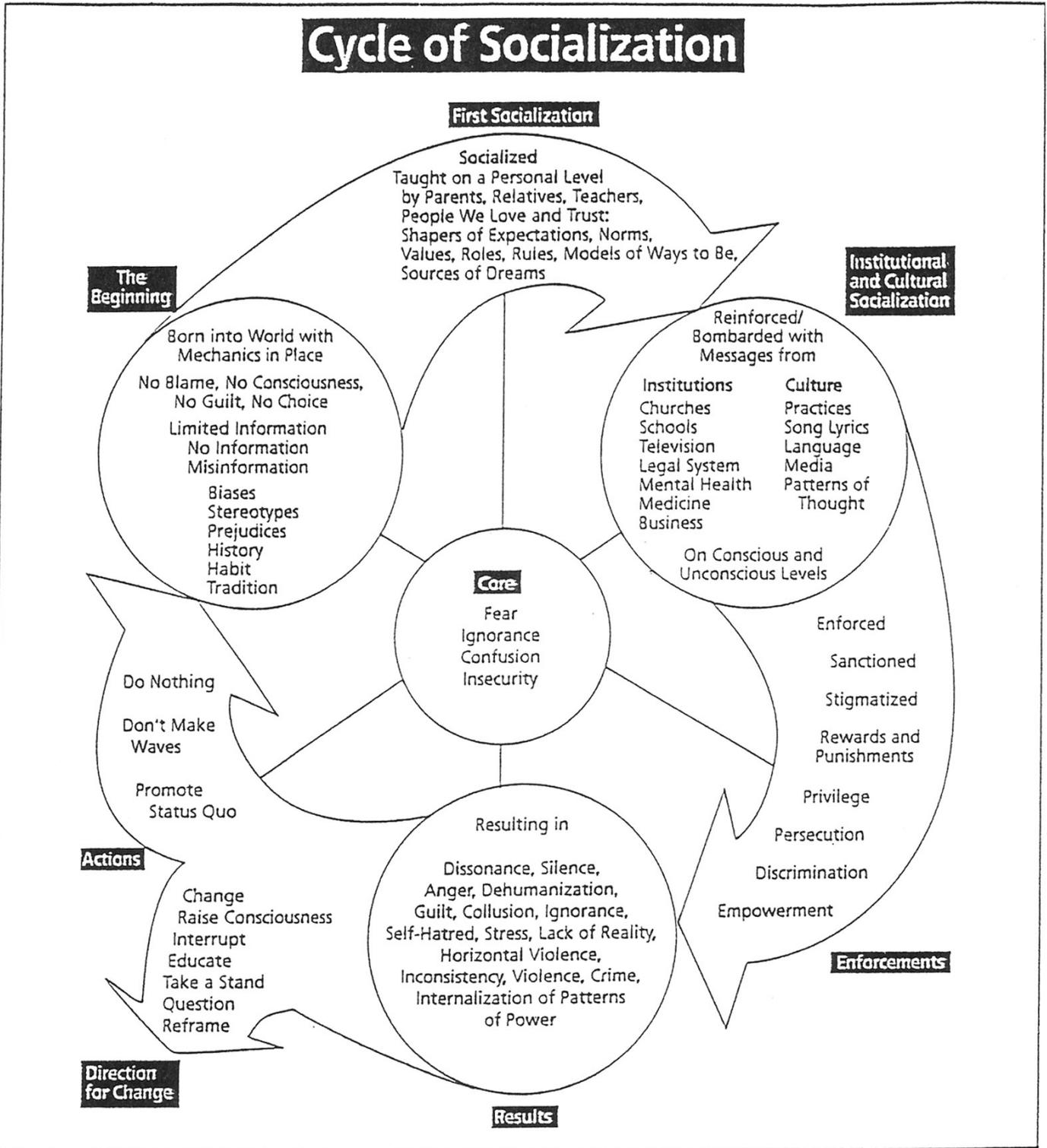
Cycle of Socialization

First Socialization

Socialized
Taught on a Personal Level
by Parents, Relatives, Teachers,
People We Love and Trust:
Shapers of Expectations, Norms,
Values, Roles, Rules, Models of Ways to Be,
Sources of Dreams

The Beginning

Born into World with
Mechanics in Place

No Blame, No Consciousness,
No Guilt, No Choice

Limited Information
No Information
Misinformation

Biases
Stereotypes
Prejudices
History
Habit
Tradition

Institutional and Cultural Socialization

Reinforced/
Bombarded with
Messages from

Institutions	Culture
Churches	Practices
Schools	Song Lyrics
Television	Language
Legal System	Media
Mental Health	Patterns of
Medicine	Thought
Business	

On Conscious and
Unconscious Levels

Core

Fear
Ignorance
Confusion
Insecurity

Do Nothing

Don't Make
Waves

Promote
Status Quo

Actions

Change
Raise Consciousness
Interrupt
Educate
Take a Stand
Question
Reframe

Direction for Change

Enforced

Sanctioned

Stigmatized

Rewards and
Punishments

Privilege

Persecution

Discrimination

Empowerment

Enforcements

Results

Resulting in

Dissonance, Silence,
Anger, Dehumanization,
Guilt, Collusion, Ignorance,
Self-Hatred, Stress, Lack of Reality,
Horizontal Violence,
Inconsistency, Violence, Crime,
Internalization of Patterns
of Power

Fig. 2.1. The Cycle of Socialization.

Harro, B. (2000). The Cycle of Socialization. In M. Adams, W. Blumenfeld, R. Castaneda, H. Hackman, M. Peters, & X. Zúñiga (Eds.), Readings for diversity and social justice, pp. 16-21. New York: Routledge

RESPONDING TO TRIGGERS

A trigger is something that an individual says or does or an organizational policy or practice that makes us, as members of social groups feel diminished, offended, threatened, stereotyped, discounted, or attacked. Triggers do not necessarily threaten our physical safety. We often feel psychologically threatened. We can also be triggered on behalf of another social group. Though we do not feel personally threatened, our sense of social justice feels violated.

Triggers cause an emotional response. These emotions include hurt, confusion, anger, fear, surprise, or embarrassment. We respond to triggers in a variety of ways, some helpful and others not. Our guide in developing a full repertoire of responses to triggers is to take care of ourselves and then decide how to respond most effectively. Some of these responses are effective and some are not. What responses we choose depend on our own inner resources and the dynamics of the situation. This list is not intended to be all-inclusive and is in no order of preference.

Leave: We physically remove ourselves from the triggering situation.

Avoidance: We avoid future encounters with and withdraw emotionally from people or situations that trigger us.

Silence: We do not respond to the triggering situation though we feel upset by it. We endure without saying or doing anything.

Release: We notice the trigger, but do not take it in. We choose to let it go. We do not feel the need to respond.

Attack: We respond with an intention to hurt whoever has triggered us.

Internalization: We take in the content of the trigger. We believe it to be true.

Rationalization: We convince ourselves that we misinterpreted the trigger, that the intention was not to hurt us, or that we are overreacting so that we can avoid saying anything about the trigger

Confusion: We feel upset but are not clear about why we feel that way. We know we feel angry, hurt, or offended. We just don't know what to say or do about it.

Shock: We are caught off guard, unprepared to be triggered by this person or situation and have a difficult time responding.

Name: We identify what is upsetting us to the triggering person or organization.

Discuss: We name the trigger and invite discussion about it with the triggering person or organization.

Confront: We name the trigger and demand that the offending behavior or policy be changed.

Surprise: We respond to the trigger in an unexpected way. For example, we react with constructive humor that names the trigger and makes people laugh.

Strategize: We work with others to develop a programmatic or political intervention to address the trigger in a larger context.

Misinterpretation: We are feeling on guard and expect to be triggered, so that we misinterpret something someone says and are triggered by our misinterpretation, rather than by what was actually said.

Discretion: Because of dynamic in the situation (power differences, risk of physical violence or retribution, for example), we decide that it is not in our best interests to respond to the trigger at that time, but choose to address the trigger in some other way at another time.

Identity: _____

- Choose an identity to focus on for this exercise. Write it in the top left corner of the sheet.
- The four columns are intended to demarcate four time periods in your life. Label them accordingly, on the short lines at the top of each column.
- The bold center line is a timeline. Draw lines off of this central line that describe memories you have of messages you received about your identity, and also messages you received about other people's identities in this category (people of a different identity than your own)
- Note any emotional responses you had at the time of these instances, too.

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