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The Matrix of Domination and Our Sense of Self

People all over America are experiencing discrimination for a number of things relating to race, gender, or sexual orientation. This type of discrimination and oppression can be described by Patricia Hill Collins and her theory “The Matrix of Domination.” This theory outlines the way that our society becomes indoctrinated with ideas that present white, male people as the superior. Collins believes that the way people become indoctrinated is also linked to a person’s sense of self and may begin in the early stages of adolescence.

As we discovered in Module 2, our sense of self has little to do with ourselves at all. William James in his article “The Self and Its Selves” describes a Social Self, which comes from our interactions with other people and our analysis of their reactions to social stimulus. This has a certain amount of subconsciousness to it, where we are just trained to react to the way that other people react to things. This idea is contrasted by Charles Horton Cooley’s “Looking Glass Self” which likens people to actors on a stage. The looking glass self has a consciousness to it, that you are aware that you are slipping into a role like you would doing a customer service job, where a certain personality is expected of you. Both of these descriptions of our sense of self may correlate to the Matrix of Domination.

uphold a society that is preferred by people who have assigned themself the superior demographic. Whether this be white people, men, or heterosexual people, the idea here is that you are either a part of the superior crowd, or you are not. You are white or black, man or woman, straight or gay. This allows the self-proclaimed superior demographic to reign over the others. This idea goes deep into the identity of those in the society and may only begin to be healed by acknowledging that it is there and needs to be dealt with.

The knowledge of such oppression in this society is not something that a child is born with, but something that grows and festers around the child as they are coming to face the world and the injustices that plague it. They are then subconsciously assigned descriptors based on their peers, as they may determine they are different. The child will determine that they are not white, not male, and maybe not straight, and then learn that those sorts of identifiers come with added challenges. The sense of self that the child develops, as a response to their social stimulus, will then play into the Matrix of Domination as they learn that they are either the superior, or meant to be dominated.