

Hope Myers

Lesson title: Creation of Identity: a Case Study

Subject: Social Identity Theory

Unit 4: Sociocultural Levels of Analysis

Overlapping relevance: gender development and conformity

Estimated time: 80 mins.

Objective: The students will understand the fundamentals Henri Tajfel's Social Identity Theory through an eighteenth century case study on British colonial women in colonial New England.

Social Identity Theory definition: People create their identity by either personal merit or association with a group. Positive associations allow for increased self-esteem. Self-esteem allows people to take calculated risks.

Lesson preparation: students need to read Tajfel's study previous to this group activity. A concise explanation can be found here: <http://www.simplypsychology.org/social-identity-theory.html>

Set up the room into 5 group areas.

Group 1: Material identity

Group 2: The Perfect Wife

Group 3: The Unredeemed Captive

Group 4: The Puritan Marriage

Group 5: Puritan Gender Roles

Classroom activity:

Divide class into 5 groups and give them 12 minutes for each activity.

Introduction script (paraphrase):

Today we are going to apply Tajfel's theory to the construction of female identity in Deerfield, MA, during the early 1700s. Keep in mind that identity according to Tajfel is a combination of personal merit and group affiliation. By the end of this case study, you should be able to explain how a woman in Deerfield, MA, forged her identity and how her upbringing might have affected her behavior.

Group 1: Material Identity

**Open these websites:**

1. Elizabeth Amsden Inventory

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/collection/itempage.jsp?itemid=6039&img=0&level=advanced&transcription=1>

2. Dress Up <http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/activities/dressup/index.html>

Questions to answer as a group:

1. What do you objectively notice about how women are dressed?
2. What purpose do these clothes and things serve?
3. What can you hypothesize about female behavior based on these garments?

## Group 2: The Perfect Wife

Read the following story about Eunice Mather Williams

<http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/popups/people.do?shortName=EuniceMWilliams>

Questions:

1. Why would she be praised as a woman? Why not?
2. Describe what Eunice would be able to do well.
3. Using what you know, how would Eunice M. Williams describe the perfect woman?

### Group 3: The Unredeemed Captive

Read the article of Eunice K. Williams

<http://1704.deerfield.history.museum/popups/people.do?shortName=EuniceKWilliams>

Questions:

1. Why would she be praised as a woman? Why not?
2. Describe what Eunice would be able to do well.
3. Using what you know, why would Eunice K. Williams be reviled as a woman? Why would she be praised?

#### Group 4: The Puritan Marriage

Read pgs. 111-114 in Ralph Houlbrooke's *The English Family 1450-1700* .

Questions:

1. From this selection, what place does the woman occupy in the Puritan family?
2. Why do women accept this position?
3. What role might conformity and obedience play in this community?

## Group 5: Puritan Gender Roles

Click on the following link, "Beliefs and Gender Roles":

<http://www.americancenturies.mass.edu/turns/activity.jsp?itemid=12866>

Roll the mouse over each section of the picture and read the explanations. Then answer the following questions.

1. Why is the story of Adam and Eve so important to the Puritan understanding of the world?
2. Describe the woman's role in the introduction of sin into a sinless paradise.
3. How might this story be used to explain how an orderly marriage was maintained?