

well as that which has been created and invented. In the human world, everything has a history and is part of ongoing changes. (Bang, 2009b, p. 590)

Example 1. Representing women's roles: Between domesticity and power

Women's roles in any society are the primary locus for collective-cultural regulation of social life. Their conduct is often constrained, yet, most interestingly, they often "join in" in constraining it. It is not only external social pressure that makes a person—man or woman—timid to act socially in a particular setting. It is often the personal-cultural self-image that, projected into that setting, leads to self-constraining (see Chapter 4, the experience of a Swedish woman, converted to Islam, wearing a headscarf in public).

That women take the lead in this process of self-constraining is perhaps not surprising. Partly, that depends upon the centrality of women in the reproduction and production systems, and partly in the centrality of establishing communication networks in the female domain. Social embedding both limits and enables. If the limits are external—consensually and socially put in place—the enablement can result in the development of internally transcendent characteristics.

An example of the development of moral superiority through the life focus on domesticity among plantation women in South Carolina in the 19th century can illustrate this claim. Over that century, women's domestic responsibilities remained considerable, yet the main focus in their daily lives moved from production to consumption. Women moved from being active producers to the role of consumers. Goods were brought by men from outside of the home and the woman in the home was expected to create the home atmosphere. That led to the ideology of domesticity:

A cardinal tenet of the ideology of domesticity—and what made it attractive to so many white middle-class women—held that women were morally superior to men. Finding themselves increasingly superfluous in the world of economic production and excluded from a public voice, middle-class women discovered in the notion of moral superiority not only a source of self-esteem but also a means of affecting the world at large, albeit from the sidelines. By setting women up as an example of Christian piety and virtuous conduct, the proponents of the ideology of domesticity offered the nineteenth-century woman the opportunity to believe herself capable of exerting influence over her husband and children. A beacon of morality in a world run amok, her very existence embodied the Christian ideal. And women could at

least hope that their piety and purity would have an elevating effect on male callousness and brutality. (Weiner, 1998, p. 54)

When the public role of these women was curtailed, their actual power in the “externally hidden”—domestic—side grew, and led to an ideology of superiority within that domain. *Domesticity*—a hyper-generalized meaning that operates as a social representation—becomes the sign that organizes women’s actions and feelings about these actions. Thus, a woman could feel morally superior under conditions of her husband’s drunken plundering around. If she herself tried to undertake social adventures visible to others, it would be the others—mostly women—who would implicitly or explicitly remind her of the woman’s value through domesticity. Or the political and legal system may do so by stigmatizing socially active women as breaking the expected code of domesticity. The semiosphere of 19th-century North-American women was saturated with the direction of women towards the ideal goal of “true womanhood”. The social prescription was severe:

If anyone, male or female, dared to tamper with the complex of virtues which made up True Womanhood, he was damned immediately as the enemy of God, of civilization, and of the Republic. It was a fearful obligation, a solemn responsibility, which the nineteenth-century American woman had—to uphold the pillars of the temple with her frail white hand.

The attributes of True Womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by her husband, her neighbors and society could be divided into four cardinal features—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity. Put them all together and they spelled mother, daughter, sister, wife-woman. Without them, no matter whether there was fame, achievement or wealth, all was ashes. With them she was promised happiness and power. (Welter, 1966, p. 152)

Three most interesting features of the “true womanhood” social representation complex need to be highlighted here:

1. The complex was *total*—neither in ideas nor in social practices could a woman escape it;
2. It was deeply *rooted in religious backgrounds—yet secular* in its moral imperative; and
3. It advocated *social power through public display of submissiveness*.

The layer of collective culture is all-powerful because the social negotiation of personal needs and feelings is redundantly over-controlled. And such control would be total in an otherwise pluralistic society, growing out of the pre-Revolutionary times:

The Puritan divines of New England in the eighteenth century were the last persons whom contemporary opinion in the colonies regarded as psychopathic. Few prestige groups in any culture have been allowed such complete intellectual and emotional dictatorship as they were. They were the voice of God. Yet to a modern observer it is they, not the confused and tormented women they put to death as witches, who were the psychoneurotics of Puritan New England. (Benedict, 1959, p. 276)

The personal-cultural freedom—granted by the negotiations in the layer of collective culture—is always limited by external constraints. In the history of Puritanism dominated social settings (*Gemeinschaft*), such control could have been rough and tough, making the borders of the realms of “freedom” rather narrowly. The ideology of domesticity would further sub-specify these constraints.

A dramatic contrast to the organizing role of docile domesticity can be found with women in the history of the Indian tradition. Here, based on myth stories, women are powerful, demanding, and seductive—becoming ultimately destructive. Yet, like in the South Carolina example, they are also “domestic”: all home affairs are organized by them, and their kinship network, along the female lines. Yet there is no docile domesticity in sight. Women can be demanding (if they elect to be), or their demands may be implicitly communicated through the collective-cultural network. A woman whose demands are refused can be feared as a witch:

...in Hindu thought, there is a feminine principle of energy and disturbance, and a masculine principle of spirituality and quietude. For real men and women to emulate these philosophical ideals, men should conquer their sexual desires, but women need not do so. Men thus see women as over-sexed, as seductive, demanding, powerful—and dangerous. (Kolenda, 1981, p. 216)

Women have historically been the targets for use by others in their social aspirations. Here, not even their children, husbands, or lovers count.

Social ideologies have used women’s cultural construction powers for their benefit. The Occidental world has mostly been built—since the advent of Christianity—on the efforts to suppress bodily experiences. As a religious cult in the context of the Roman Empire, the emergent Christianity was a contrarian social movement to the hedonistic excesses of the governing social orders. Early Christian apostles—all of them men—were adamant in proselytizing abstinences of various kinds to their willingly listening audiences—oftentimes women. Early Christian advices to women calling them to adopt strictly ascetic ways of being give us much evidence of the psychological internalization goals of the new divinity.

How was that goal of creating “new divinity” achieved over centuries? Psychology could have a very rich data base to understand the laypersons’ realities of being socially guided by religious institutions in the realm of organization of everyday lives of persons who have elected to be deeply involved in some domain of divinity. Yet their devotion is constantly under surveillance for possible deviations, and that surveillance guides the participants in their personal-cultural search within the institutionally set collective-cultural *Umwelts*. Not only are the collective cultures being used through people’s embeddedness in everyday life practices, but such practices can be set up purposefully to trap the persons in the life-course direction they have entered. For example, in the medieval Catholic monastic settings:

The Rule stipulated that nuns and monks divide their time among collective prayer, *lectio*, and work. Collective prayer was the primary means by which monastics could battle to ward off evil forces. The belief in the menacing powers of evil forces had been a prevalent feature of Christianity for some time—a legacy of the successful efforts of Christians more firmly to establish Christianity in late Roman and early medieval society by defining the ubiquitous supernatural agents, sorcerers, as servants of darkness, from which only Christianity could deliver the continuity. (Kaelber, 1998, p. 64)

Organizing the activities of the members of the given social group by modulating collective visibility (joint activity) interspersing it with intra-psychologically-oriented reading and mediation would create arenas for collective culture to orient the personal cultural meaning construction. Yet it can only orient, not determine, it. This leads to the efforts in social institutional contexts—monasteries, schools, armies, etc.—to establish complete yet variable systems of orientation of the persons towards their general objectives. The person embedded in such context cannot “escape” the incoming suggestions that come by pictures, voice, smell, touch, etc.,—through all sensory systems. The person, however, can be resistant, negligent, or outright dismissive of these suggestions. The actual outcome of the person’s life course under such influence is co-constructed in the realm of collective culture.

Example 2. Hair: Coordinating personal and collective culture

Hair is remarkably powerful in the symbolic universe. Being a natural part of the body—located in select places (scalp, underarms, pubic area, chest, legs)—it becomes socially meaningful in multiple ways. It can be viewed as an expression of sensuality if worn long and curvy (and censored by puritan social demands), or it can be immediately classified as

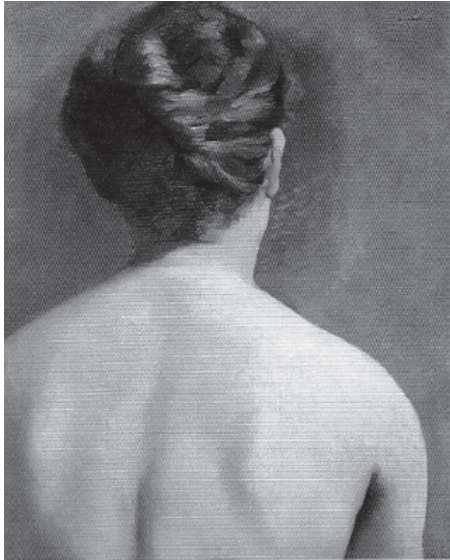


Figure 9.3 Eva Gonzalez, *La Chignon* (1865–1870)

Source: The Athenaeum

“dirt” (if it appears in a restaurant on one’s plate) or a relic (if it is from a revered or loved person and set up as *memorabilia* in a medallion on a chain to be worn on the body). The issue of hairdressing (see Chapters 4 and 7) is constantly a question in human lives. Anthropologists have collected extensive evidence about hair presentation rules all over the world.

How does hair enter into the coordination of personal and collective cultures? Obviously, the first question is that of the social display of it: hiding pubic hair from the public is widespread, while doing that to body, armpit, or scalp hair is widely variable around the world. Social norms clearly regulate how hair can enter the dialogue between personal and collective culture. Loose female hair becomes universally interpreted in ways that lead to a cultural limiting of its public display.

Braiding or knotting (see Figure 9.3) has often been prescribed.⁶ Likewise, the wearing of wigs provides further evidence for the presentational role of the hair—one’s actual hair under the wig is covered (similarly to the headscarf), but the artificial hair is visible.

Personal-cultural aspects of the hair constitute the arena for the handling of one’s hair. Scalp hair—the object for hairdos (or at least cuttings)—is the primary area of externalization of internalized meanings into the public domain. Women in the Roman world were expected to wear their hair in knots (Figure 9.3) to avoid “undue sensual impact”—a favorite phrase of social moralists also in our days upon the people around them.

Modifying one’s hair is a personal-cultural act that constitutes a message of constructive externalization. People are non-neutral about their hair—often following fashions in various hairdos, or protesting different social issues through the arrangement of their hair. Hair that is changed in appearance becomes an externalized message (e.g. “my hair makes me feel powerful”), and enters into the negotiation of collective culture. For example, a young woman reports:

⁶Karen Horney, at age 13, confesses to her diary: “I feel very dignified today, since I had my hair pinned up for the first time even though I am only 13 years old. In spiritual matters I still feel very unworthy, for although I am steadily growing up, I do not yet feel the true need for religion.” (Horney, 1980, p. 4).

...I was dating this guy, and I was away at school when I was dating him, and I went home for the weekend, and he was going to come down that weekend... So I went home and I got my hair cut off. I cut off about seven or eight inches [20 cm] and it was a kind of radical haircut, you know shaved, kind of asymmetrical again, and I put a red tint on it... And when he saw me, when he walked into my house, it was like, "Whoa!" You know? And he said, "Oh my God, look at it!" And he just couldn't stop talking about it. He made a comment saying that he felt different about me... (Waitz, 2001, p. 673)

Changing the hairdo is obviously one of the main vehicles of dramatization of the public appearance. The crucial focus here would be on the *power of change*—alteration of a body-related presentation of the hair brings with it a social "meaning explosion" that leads to new state of relationships. If the exposure of some hair is socially ruled out, the same function is taken over by different hair (in Figure 9.4—that of eyebrows and eyelashes). The exposure of the hair is linked with direct non-exposure of other hair. What is at stake here is the whole contrast between what is publicly displayed as *related to that what is not*. The opposites create tensions that are maintained, denied, or overcome (see Chapter 10).

The example of the *niqab* tells us a general story—all social negotiations using the body involve its covering and uncovering under different circumstances. Body hair in different places of the body can be accentuated—by special grooming or, equally, by the imperative of hiding the particular hair from public. Under the conditions of hiding, the need for its special presentation remains completely the person's personal-cultural issue: while knowing that I am supposed to wear a headscarf I either decide not to bother about a special hairdo (with others as reference) or just the opposite—I will take care of my hair precisely as I feel I need it for myself. This explains the development of grooming techniques and demands for places⁷ where the



Figure 9.4 When some hair is hidden, other hair acquires communicative relevance

⁷A similar issue is replicated in the location of tattoos—visibility to oneself (front), visibility to others (front and back), non-visibility by expected usual body coverage. The negotiation of public display of a private body modification indicates the role of these modifications in differentiating the expected audience of the person's body display.

hair is rarely made visible (armpit hair) or most likely kept completely invisible (e.g. various modifications of women's pubic hair, as well as the wearing of genital jewelry). The private body is already an arena for a social display, albeit for the inhabitant of the body being simultaneously the Self and the Social Other.

The primary meeting zone of the personal and collective cultures becomes traceable when the person crosses the boundary of his/her (or family's) private space into the public arena. The grooming of the body, based on the personal-cultural act (in front of a mirror), turns into an everyday outdoor performance. By going into the social realm the person becomes—wanting it or not, knowing it or not—an actor in a large social performance. The personal culture goes public, and enters into direct negotiation with the collective culture. “Where is your hat?” one woman may ask of another whose head is uncovered, not because she is interested in the whereabouts of that item of clothing (of the other), but as a reminder that hats are to be worn in this place. It is through seemingly inconspicuous interactions that the negotiation of the feelings about myself-in-social world takes place.

Historically, in the urban areas, it was the street that played the central role in human socialization:

The living quarters of the small townspeople were too cramped to allow children to remain in them the whole day; the architecture of the houses did not afford every family a separate living space isolated from the neighbours; the walls were not built to afford acoustic insulation for family life; not infrequently houses in the town were open to the street and work was carried on outside the front door. Thus here the family was not an island of private intimacy, insulated from the environment.

It was only natural under these social and spatial conditions that in every free moment the children should run out into the street. Even the household duties they had to perform quite often offered them the chance to escape out into the open air. Carrying messages, running errands and buying and selling small things were often entrusted to children. In the street they would meet other children, and here they were not under direct parental control as the man and the woman of the “working classes” were so involved in labour that they had no time to accompany, guide and supervise the children. (Schlumbohm, 1980, p. 84)

The perceived *need* for special guidance of children in public is a historical invention of the middle class, creating the strict PUBLIC || PRIVATE separation without a focus on the boundary zone. This dichotomy dominates psychologists' gaze. Comparisons are made between the “home”

and “school” context of children, but only rarely do we get a glimpse what happens in-between (Katriel, 1987; Komatsu, 2010). Historically, bands of children fighting with one another or being involved in adventures of other kinds are widely reported in history.⁸

Negotiation processes between collective and personal cultures are often visible in public places in nuances of public conduct (Figure 9.5).

In Figure 9.5 we get a glimpse of a young woman in the street who is holding down the lower edge of her mini-dress against becoming displaced upwards and creating a display of the beauty of the legs. For the creation of such a display, she obviously negotiates within her personal culture of how “mini” her mini-dress would have to be before going to the street. While on the street that negotiation takes the form of constant adjustment, which only accentuates the nature of the beauty display against the self-perceived barriers of “collective decency”. Participation in the social world is always ambiguous.



Figure 9.5 A usual event in the street: A woman pulling down her dress

SOCIAL PARTICIPATION AND PERSONAL CULTURE

Personal cultures are brought out into the public domain through the myriad of public events. Public life in any society is filled with ceremonial occasions, ranging from carrying religious relics around in the city and speeches of *urbi et orbi* to wedding ceremonies and children’s birthday parties. It is through such ceremonies—theatrical enactments of values—that social institutions link together their social goals with the personal and collective cultures of the participants. Society, as well as its sub-parts (*Gemeinschaft* or community), entail myriads of such occasions—military parades and love parades,

⁸Such as stealing fruits from orchards in the country, and fighting with street gangs from other neighborhoods in towns. The war and peace observed in the public domain of adults would be a model for children.