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Cultural Production and Self-Definition: the Impact on Physical Appearance Relative to the Socialization Process

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Oral Presentation O3.1

**CULTURAL PRODUCTION AND SELF-DEFINITION:
THE IMPACT ON PHYSICAL APPEARANCE RELATIVE
TO THE SOCIALIZATION PROCESS**

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The seemingly innocuous process of choosing how to express oneself through clothing is significantly influenced by the cultural meanings socialized to everyone. This way that meaning in American culture is produced has a tremendous impact on how individuals self-define and express themselves through clothing and physical appearance. Cultural meaning is produced and perpetuated through the repeated use of specific representations of people, things, and ideas. These representations and meanings are socialized to every member of American society and influence individual identity creation through consumerism in the cultural marketplace. The purpose of this study is to ask why individuals self-define the way they do, what they perceive about the self-definitions of others, and to what extent they are critical or conscious of the larger socialization process taking place. Data was collected through an online survey sent to current students enrolled at Illinois Wesleyan University. Findings explore themes of normative whiteness, colorblind ideology, heteronormativity, and hegemonic effects on identity creation.