

INT. SOCIOLOGIST'S ROOM - DAY

A sociologist is in front of the camera looking at it.

SOCIOLOGIST

Greetings. I'm Dr. Christine Schick.
Today, we are going to examine how
hunger, table manners, scarcity, and
status shape human behavior in shared
eating environments.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

Food is not merely nutrition. Food is
ritual. Food is comfort. Food is
power. And, under the right
conditions, food is a weapon.

The sociologist gives the camera a smile.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

I can't wait.

INT. DINNER TABLE - TEST 1

Two people are sitting at the dinner table, their eyes
drifting around the room.

The sociologist is standing at the edge of the table,
centered. She's looking at the camera.

SOCIOLOGIST

For our first scenario, both subjects
have been given the same meal under
the same conditions. We'll be
observing whether equal access to food
creates comfort, cooperation, or
simply the unbearable awareness of
being watched while eating.

The sociologist looks at the participants and gestures
towards the plates in front of them, each with a single
drumstick.

The participant's eyes flick between the plate, each other,
and the sociologist.

Eventually, both participants awkwardly reach towards the
drum sticks, each taking one.

Participant One brings the drumstick to his mouth but stops. He looks at the sociologist.

PARTICIPANT 1

Do we...do we eat them...or...?

The sociologist slowly turns to the participant, annoyed.

SOCIOLOGIST

...If you would like to, go ahead.

The sociologist looks back at the camera, a forced smile on it.

The two participants begin slowly eating the drumsticks.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

In this first test, equal distribution did appear to prevent conflict. However, both subjects displayed signs of discomfort while eating in a monitored environment.

Participant 2 starts looking awkwardly at the camera, the other participant, and the sociologist

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

This suggests that even a simple meal can become socially stressful when turned into a performance.

The same forced smile appears on the sociologist's face.

PARTICIPANT 2

Is she...

They look at the sociologist.

PARTICIPANT 2 (CONT'D)

Are you talking to us...or-

SOCIOLOGIST

(not looking away from the camera)

No.

The participant awkwardly looks back at the other participant, then down at the table. They all exist in silence for a while.

INT. DINNER TABLE - TEST 2

The sociologist is in the same spot, participants as well.

This time, only one drumstick is on the plate on the center of the table.

SOCIOLOGIST

In this second scenario, only one subject will receive food. We'll be observing how hunger, denial, and proximity to someone else's meal affect fairness, resentment, and the desire to pretend that everything is fine.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

Also for this scenario, both subjects were asked not to eat lunch.

The sociologist gestures towards the plate. They then look at the two participants.

The participants look at each other.

Participant 1 awkwardly reaches out for the drum stick, taking it.

As they pull it back, they glance at the sociologist.

Participant 2 takes a sip from their glass of water.

The sociologist looks in annoyance at Participant 2.

Their eyes dart between both participants, landing on 2 again.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

What're you doing?

Participant 2 looks up at the sociologist.

PARTICIPANT 2

...what?

SOCIOLOGIST

Aren't you mad? Look at him. Eating away. And you're here with nothing. Where's the anger? The resentment?

PARTICIPANT 2
I...I'm not that hungry...so...

The sociologist stares at Participant 2.

SOCIOLOGIST
(quieter, leaning in)
You're not hungry?

PARTICIPANT 2
...no, I'm not.

The sociologist leans back out, still staring at Participant 2.

The sociologist then reluctantly pulls out a small, dipping container and sets it in front of Participant 2.

They continue to stare.

Participant 2 is confused.

PARTICIPANT 2 (CONT'D)
Wha...what is this?

SOCIOLOGIST
...it's sauce.

PARTICIPANT 2
...I...

SOCIOLOGIST
Doesn't it make you want the food more? Makes you more hungry?

PARTICIPANT 2
...no.

The sociologist closes their eyes.

They take a very deep breath.

They then open their eyes and look at the camera, no clear expression.

SOCIOLOGIST
The disadvantaged subject chose not to challenge the imbalance, instead claiming they were "not that hungry."

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
(under their breath)
Fucking liar.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
This may suggest emotional restraint,
social politeness, or a complete
refusal to help the experiment become
interesting.

INT. DINNER TABLE - TEST 3

The sociologist walks in reading from her notebook.

On the table are two drumsticks, two napkins, and two pairs
of gloves.

The participants look at the gloves.

The sociologist looks at the gloves too.

SOCIOLOGIST
For our third scenario, the subjects
will be asked to eat while maintaining
a clean, composed, socially
presentable appearance.

She checks her notes.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
No visible grease. No finger licking.
No excessive chewing. No sauce on the
face, hands, or clothing.

Beat.

She looks at the gloves again.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
And... gloves.

The participants wait for more.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
The gloves are meant to represent...

She checks her notes.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
...something.

She looks to the camera, recovering.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
An artificial barrier between appetite
and public presentation.
Maybe.

The participants put on the gloves and begin eating.
Because of the gloves, their hands stay completely clean.
They eat awkwardly, but technically remain presentable.
The sociologist watches, slowly realizing the problem.
They sigh and purse their lips.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
In this test, both subjects were asked
to preserve a socially acceptable
appearance while consuming a messy
food item.

She looks at their gloved hands.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
However, the gloves appear to have
prevented the exact visible mess the
test was designed to observe.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
...So.

She checks her notebook.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
That was... not useful.

The participants stare at her.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
Still, the subjects did comply with an
unnecessary rule, which suggests
people may accept pointless social
restrictions when presented with
institutional authority.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

But mostly the glove thing ruined it.

The sociologist's arms drop, joined by a look of defeat on their face.

INT. DINNER TABLE - TEST 4

The sociologist is in their spot, staring at the camera.

The participants are seated.

Two drumsticks are on a plate on the center of the table.

SOCIOLOGIST

Alright. For this one, we're introducing status. One of you is the boss, and one of you is...beneath that. The boss will control access to the food. We'll be looking for dominance, obedience, resentment, or, ideally, anything at all.

The sociologist looks at Participant 2.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

How bout you be the "boss."

They then look at Participant 1.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

And you just...figure it out.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

Alright.

The sociologist claps her hands.

They look at two participants, waiting for something to happen.

The participants look at the sociologist and each other, also waiting for something to happen.

PARTICIPANT 2

So...what do we do?

SOCIOLOGIST

You're the boss. You tell them when to eat.

PARTICIPANT 2

...that feels wierd.

The sociologist nods.

SOCIOLOGIST

Yeah, power often does.

Participant 2 looks at Participant 1.

Then they look at the drumsticks.

PARTICIPANT 2

Uh-I...I guess you can...take a bite now.

Participant 1 slowly reaches out for one of the drumsticks, the other two watching intently.

Beat.

They then grab one and bring it back towards them, the others still staring.

Participant 1 takes a bite.

PARTICIPANT 2 (CONT'D)

...smaller.

PARTICIPANT 1

What?

Participant 2 rushes his hands to his forehead.

PARTICIPANT 2

I panicked. I'm sorry.

The sociologist nods, somewhat satisfied and looks at the camera.

SOCIOLOGIST

In this test, the assigned "boss" was given control over the employee's access to food.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
 This produced one clear act of
 dominance: a correction of *bite size*.

Participant 2 closes their eyes.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
 The boss then immediately apologized,
 indicating that power can create
 discomfort not only for the person
 being controlled, but also for the
 person expected to do the controlling.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
 ...but that's almost sociology.

INT. DINNER TABLE - TEST 5

The sociologist enters with renewed confidence.

Too much confidence.

The participants are still seated, unsettled from the last
 test.

On the table: one drumstick on a plate.

The sociologist takes her place, smiling at the camera.

SOCIOLOGIST
 Following the relative success of the
 previous scenario, we will now be
 escalating from food control to food
 dependency.

The participants look at the single drumstick.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
 In this test, one subject will chew
 the drumstick and then transfer it
 directly into the other subject's
 mouth.

Beat.

PARTICIPANT 1
 I'm sorry, what?

The sociologist looks annoyed at being interrupted.

SOCIOLOGIST

One subject will chew the drumstick, partially break it down, and then spit it into the other subject's mouth.

PARTICIPANT 1

No, I heard you. I just wanted you to hear you.

SOCIOLOGIST

This is designed to examine intimacy, disgust, caregiving, and the social boundaries around shared consumption.

PARTICIPANT 2

I'm not doing that.

SOCIOLOGIST

You haven't been assigned roles yet.

PARTICIPANT 2

I don't need a role.

PARTICIPANT 1

Yeah, no, I'm also not doing that.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST

The purpose is not to be comfortable. The purpose is to observe the discomfort.

PARTICIPANT 1

You know what? I actually have something else to be doing right now.

Participant 1 stands up.

PARTICIPANT 2

Yeah, I do too.

Participant 2 stands too.

SOCIOLOGIST

No, you can't leave. We're not done.

The participants start walking away.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
This might be a voluntary study, but
there is still a structure.

They keep walking.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
You're disrupting the data!

The participants exit.

The sociologist stands there, furious and embarrassed.

INT. SOCIOLOGIST'S ROOM - DAY

The sociologist sits in front of the camera again.

She is composed.

Almost too composed.

SOCIOLOGIST
Overall, I would consider the study a
resounding success.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
While the participants demonstrated a
disappointing lack of commitment to
the research process, their refusal to
complete the final scenario was, in
itself, highly valuable data.

She gives a small, controlled smile.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
Across the study, we observed
discomfort around public eating,
avoidance in response to food
inequality, obedience to unnecessary
dining rules, brief but meaningful
abuse of food-based authority, and a
strong cultural resistance to
cooperative mastication.

Beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)
So, in many ways, everything went
exactly as expected.

Another beat.

SOCIOLOGIST (CONT'D)

I can't wait to do another one.