

Lord of the flies - role of ge

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What was it that caused the aggression and dominance exhibited by the boys of Lord of the Flies? Was it some metaphysical, spiritual force, or perhaps their genetic makeup? Could it have been the influence of their peers or families, or was it the media that inspired this dangerous pattern? Conceivably, their gender had something to do with this appalling trait. It all begs the question, would the same experiences have occurred had females been stranded on the island instead of males? Had females been in a similar situation as the boys in Lord of the Flies, they would have fared abundantly better. Initially, this paper will address society's role in encouraging males' violent behavior, as well as females' politeness and passivity. Secondly, it will be discussed how family socialization influences females' gentle natures and males' aggressive temperaments. Finally, this research will explore both gender's leadership styles, and scientific perception behind these differences. Much of what society dictates can affect children's perceptions of the ideal gender standards, and can lead to abuse and violence. Media has a huge role in perpetuating these dangerous gender stereotypes. Numerous male images are used in advertising and television, representing themes such as "heroic masculinity" and "might is right". These portrayals of violent behavior associated with masculinity target young men and convince them that in order to live up to society's standards, they must resort to aggressive and dominant behavior, the use of assertion, and physical violence. Males are saturated with images of glorified aggression through movies such as Lethal Weapon, sports programs, and "macho" celebrities, like Bruce Willis and Arnold Shwartznager. Female stereotypes span the opposite extreme. Innumerable young women perceive "ladylike"

expectations to be neatness, passivity, politeness, and struggle to meet them, hence they appear nurturing and feminine. Women in the media who challenge these stereotypical behaviors and display assertiveness tend to be slotted into the role of "tomboy" or "dyke". These impositions contribute to the breeding of young men who act in an abusive manner, and are terribly restricting towards boys who covet deep emotion. The antagonist of Lord of the Flies, Jack Merridew, perceives himself to be higher than the others, on the basis of being the choral leader. Jack's hierarchical views cause him to verbally abuse, psychologically torture, and eventually wound and kill other children. With the influences of society's stereotyping, girls would generally more nurturing and caring towards group members. A lot of males' violent behavior and females' complaisance can be accredited to family and institutional socialization. Parents usually raise boys on aggressive sports, such as hockey and football, which encourage violence. Girls, however, are generally brought up on "feminine" activities, dance and figure skating to name a few, which promote a gentle, polite nature. It is the rare parent that heeds their four-year-old son's aspiration to be a ballet dancer by purchasing the child a pair of tights and a leotard. When a boy shows more interest in dolls than in trucks, his family may be distressed, and provoke him to reveal his "masculine" side. After striving for egalitarianism between the sexes for so many years, families still deter young girls from pursuits of hockey stardom, hoping to interest them in Pointe shoes. Displays of emotion by boys are often criticized for being "unmasculine", whereas emotional behavior in girls tends to be expected and accepted. As a result, boys tend to not only hide their feelings, but criticize friends for showing their

emotions. Girls, on the other hand, encourage one another to express feelings and console one another naturally. Research shows that boys and girls have different means of reaching decisions and achieving organization. Males, on whole, like to dominate a situation, whereas females would rather resort to consensus and unanimity. Collegiality and cooperation are fundamental female traits, while the need for dominance and individual power goes hand in hand with masculinity. This male yearning is rooted before birth, when the developing nervous system is immersed in testosterone (the predominant male hormone). This pre-natal process is responsible for the maturation of the areas of the brain that arbitrate between the male hormones and their dominant behavior. Steven Goldberg, the chairman of the Department of Sociology at New York's City College, explains that " men are more willing to endure pain and frustration to learn what they must do...for dominance." He writes that women, when enduring these severe emotions, do not do it for dominance, but for reasons such as love, children, or family. Carol Shakeshaft, a writer specializing in gender differences in educational administration, describes the female mentality as: " emphasizing power with, rather than power over, others." She theorizes that women, in general, perform better in leadership positions, because they are more person oriented, and adopt a more democratic leadership style. To settle arguments, women rely more on negotiation than competition or physical violence. Had females been on the island, they would have practised more community involvement, equality, and inclusiveness. In conclusion, this report has explored several rationales behind the boys' behavior in Lord of the Flies, and suggested how girls in the same position

would have behaved in a more accepting, nurturing, polite manner. Media stereotypes on ideal gender conduct, family socialization, and fundamental differences in leadership approach are all factors that contribute to boys' and girls' very contrasted behaviors. Clearly, had females been in the same situation as the boys in Lord of the Flies, they would have fared considerably better.