

Influences of society on gender in the color purple and to kill a mockingbird



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Gender roles are learned mainly through social interaction rather than biologically. When people are born, they are supplied with very little knowledge of gender. Certain behavior is taught by means of social interactions and through relationships with others. Additionally, the way that children are raised in society reflects on how they act as they mature. The idea that society transforms the beliefs and views on life from communication experienced through parents, peers, and work, much more than biological factors can be seen in the movie *The Color Purple* and the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Naturally, females are overlooked as being less athletic than males because of gender. As a result of this, parents often do not treat girls and boys in the same way when it comes to sports. Boys are taught to be more aggressive since it is expected that boys should be more athletic than girls. In *The Color Purple*, Albert's expectations of stereotypical male dominance convince Harpo that he needs to beat Sofia (Spielberg). Furthermore, girls are encouraged to express their feelings and to cry freely. Boys generally have feelings such as excitement and anger; they are socialized to replace feminine ones including depression and fear. Males are restrained from crying and expressing emotions (Jackson). Instead, they are expected to man up and act like nothing bothers them.

Starting at a young age, children are also influenced to act in specific ways by their peers. Throughout the movie, Harpo is the only man within his group who doesn't find pleasure in beating his wife. He is often shamed for this and pushed to the point where he feels as though he needs to strike Sofia to please his friends and family (Spielberg). In reality, a child can be made fun
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of when doing things considered not typical of their gender. For instance, a boy can be teased by his peers if he likes to cook in the kitchen or play with dolls (Skorek). Advertisements on commercials present specific toys for each gender and show just one playing with them; society influences children to play only with certain toys that are meant for their gender.

Men are still very dominant in high position jobs because our culture indicates that men can handle tough jobs better than women can. Since society values competition and individuals becoming successful on their own, women's orientation towards caring for others or acting cooperatively to build the community can be considered (in a male dominated society) to be of lesser importance (Russ). For example, it is not considered socially acceptable for a female to coach a men's sports team. This is a disadvantage, because some women might be great coaches, so the players miss out on great experience, and female coaches miss out on the opportunity to coach. It is unfair for society to judge one's capabilities on gender. During the beginning of *The Color Purple*, women were forced to stay home and be housewives (Spielberg). Albert wanted to get married just so that he had someone to do clean and cook for him. Eventually, Celie shows her independence by leaving Albert and opening up her own shop; she sold jeans for both men and women.

Scout is a tomboy with feminine expectations pressured upon her. She often rejects and rebels against the proper teachings taught by her Aunt Alexandra, Mrs. Dubose, and the other white, upper-class, southern ladies of Maycomb County. During the 1930s, the ideal little girl was an image of pure femininity; females never wore slacks or jeans, only skirts and dresses with <https://assignbuster.com/influences-of-society-on-gender-in-the-color-purple-and-to-kill-a-mockingbird/>

appropriate hats and gloves. Scout was very foreign to this type of attire since she grew up without a feminine influence. Typically, little girls played with dolls, played house, and had tea and dress-up parties. A proper young lady learned to dance properly in white gloves and a long dress and was part of the several socialite clubs of society (Lee 170). Women were not expected to use coarse language or improper grammar; Scout often did. Scout is commonly mocked by her peers because she loves to play with the boys, fight like them, and dress like them.

No biological endowments exist that hold men and women to these assumed roles in society. People are born knowing which gender they are, but through further interaction learn how society expects them to act. There is no way that anyone could learn attitudes and behaviors through biological influences; society has a much stronger impact on the way people act according to gender. Everyone is born with some instinct on how to act relative to gender, but the way they are raised, how they interact with their peers, and the effects that society has, is what influences gender identity.