

The effects of gender socialization essay sample

[Sociology](#)



Gender Socialization is an aspect that enormously affects all individuals. I feel I have been influenced by social and cultural processes and not by genetics. When we are brought into this world, we have no knowledge of how a male or female should act. Rather, it is our surroundings, that construct our thoughts and actions. Genetic identity is lost because of the powerful manipulation of family, friends, school, sports and the media, which are known as agents of socialization. Such agents “ are the persons, groups, or institutions that teach us what we need to know in order to participate in society.”(Kendall, 2000: 117) We easily adopt certain behaviors which lead to character development and outline who we become as individuals. With gender socialization embedded into our cultures it is difficult for a male to display female traits without being ridiculed or out-casted, thereby increasing the degree to which a male is stereotyped.

As a little boy, my parents molded me into the typical boy figure. Gender expectations were quickly encouraged through clothing and activities. For example, my clothing was more masculine and casual rather than dainty and frilly. While growing up, my parents continued to instill masculine traits in me, through my duties around the house. I was taught at an early age how to mow the lawn and also how to be constructive in everyday activities. Being raised in a predominantly gender biased household with four males and one female I have learned gender roles which are appropriate for a European male. A male is traditionally expected to demonstrate aggressive behavior and solely provide for his family. I will never be expected to cook, clean or be submissive towards others, and I accept a lot of these traits because of gender socialization.

“Peers help children learn prevailing gender role stereotypes, as well as gender appropriate and – inappropriate behavior.”(Kendall, 2000: 349) I feel that when exposed to peers of your own age your parents’ influence is not predominate as it once was and your peers may be more influential regarding your actions. I recall when I was in elementary school I was encouraged to play only with boys and to show no interest in girls. Also I had the peer-pressure to be better than the girls in all activities. As an adolescence, there is a constant pressure to be the tough kid, and to bully the other kids around; the tougher you are the more socially accepted you become within your gender. In general, once boys begin their high school years they begin to develop attraction towards the opposite sex. These feelings are influenced by social bias placed on females, such as finding the ideal female accepted in society. As a young adult, I notice that physical appearance is important, however; it is more acceptable for a male to be less concerned with having a perfect physique. In contrast, a female is judged on her appearance throughout her whole life.

School is another agent of socialization that has gender socialized my life. “From Kindergarten through university, schools operate as gendered institutions.”(Kendall, 2000: 351) During my early years of school, the boys were always more dominant than the girls, thereby receiving more attention. The authors of *Sociology In Our Times* refer to the fact that researches consistently find that teachers devote more time, effort, and attention to boys than to girls. (Kendall, 2000: 351) At my elementary school, boys felt like they were in charge of the school. Moreover, teachers and coaches paid more attention to them and much more importance was emphasized for any

type of game or tournament concerning the boys. I found that teachers communicated with boys in a more casual manner, whereas with girls a more professional attitude was expressed. For example, if a little girl were to be walking, the teacher will approach her in a polite manner: “How are you Jessica?” On the contrary, a teacher would be more likely to grab the boy and mess his hair up and saying “How’s it going Bobby?” Sociology In Our Times identifies four types of teacher comments given by teachers: praise, acceptance, remediation, and criticism (Kendall, 2000: 351). All of these comments were more likely to be given to boys than to girls.

I attended a private high school where everything revolved around football. If you were on the football team you were treated like a celebrity, and you were able to get away with everything. For an example, a group of boys decided to break into the equipment room, and steal all the school uniforms. They all got caught however only the boy that was not on the football team was expelled. Starting from elementary school throughout high school, boys are encouraged to play competitive sports such as hockey and football (Kendall, 2000: 352). If a boy was enrolled in a sport such as figure skating, the boy would be subjected to name calling such as wimp or girly! In turn, a boy’s level of athleticism often affects his popularity or social status. (Kendall, 2000: 353) During my school years I participated in many sports at different levels. Thus, my popularity increased due to my athletic ability. I wanted to excel in this area because I believed that my social interaction and peer relations would increase.

Our notion of “ideal” genders is greatly influenced by the media that surrounds us constantly. The movie Tough Guise that was viewed in class <https://assignbuster.com/the-effects-of-gender-socialization-essay-sample/>

suggested that watching violent movies might lead one to conclude that aggressiveness and vulgar language are acceptable in society. For example, when dealing with everyday life I tend to act and speak like characters in certain films because they portray powerful roles in society. It is unlikely for a female to play a role where she is the hero because media has placed a gender bias that heroes are more likely to be males. If the females played the “ action” role, they would be classified as “ tomboys” when they should be playing more lady like roles according to socialization. Being exposed to these types of films has had a great effect on how I perceive males as well as myself. I feel the pressure to be just like these men on television; (built, well dressed and tough,) when in reality the ability to be like them is virtually impossible.

It is common to find that within a larger society people are categorized by their class, and tend to clique with those of their own class. For example, it is not likely to see different classes social (ie: higher and lower) amalgamating together. This has been the case for centuries and unfortunately has caused many people to miss out having a variety of relationships. I have been fortunate enough to be socialized with the upper class within my cultural heritage of Italians. Being Italian I have noticed the stereotype that has been given to us for instance, many assume that all Italians are associated with the mafia, exemplifying once again ethnic socialization. As I have matured I have been able to form my own opinions on my culture and ignore the racism that all cultures endure. Italians are very proud people and I feel honored to be socialized among them. It is part of human nature for culture to be in competition with each other; however I have really noticed the

competition within my own class and race. There exists the pressure to dress and act the part of a wealthy person, even if your not, just to keep up with the “ Jones.”

Ultimately, it is inevitable that people will always be influenced by agents of socialization. For years, it has determined the face of society that depicts males as protective figures and women as nurturing and supportive individuals. Although, we must accept the fact that gender socialization will never disappear, we might be able to manipulate its affects in order to move away from stereotypes and further define individuals in society. I know that when I raise my own children I will try my best to encourage them to become their own characters by reducing the influences of gender socialization.