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Embodying Equality: A Critical Analysis of Gender Socialization in Alice Walker's *'The Color Purple'* through Ann Oakley's Lens

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Abstract:

This abstract explores a feminist analysis of Alice Walker's *The Colour Purple* within the framework of Ann Oakley's theory on gender socialization. The novel, set in the early 20th century, delves into the intersecting oppressions faced by African American women, primarily through the protagonist Celie's narrative. Applying Oakley's gender theory, the analysis examines how societal expectations and norms shape gender roles, focusing on the constraints placed on female characters.

Walker's portrayal of Celie's journey becomes a lens through which to scrutinize the impact of gender socialization on self-perception and empowerment. The narrative unfolds with Celie experiencing early traumas, reflecting the pervasive influence of patriarchal structures on women's lives. As the story progresses, Celie's resilience and self-discovery challenge established gender norms, providing a feminist narrative that echoes Oakley's emphasis on the

dynamic nature of gender roles. The examination extends beyond Celie, encompassing other female characters such as Sofia and Shug Avery, whose lives intersect to form a tapestry of diverse female experiences. The analysis contextualizes their struggles within Oakley's theoretical framework, highlighting the nuanced ways in which societal expectations affect different women.

Moreover, the abstract explores how *The Colour Purple* serves as a critique of patriarchal power dynamics and the intersectionality of oppressions faced by women of colour. Walker's narrative offers a nuanced perspective on feminism, acknowledging the diversity of women's experiences and the necessity of solidarity. In conclusion, this feminist analysis of *The Colour Purple* utilizes Ann Oakley's theory on *Gender Socialization* to unravel the complexities of female characters' lives. The study contributes to the ongoing discourse on intersectional feminism, emphasizing the need to understand and challenge societal norms that perpetuate gender-based inequalities.

Keywords: equality, gender socialization, feminist analysis, patriarchal power.

INTRODUCTION

Gender socialisation is deeply embedded in literature and culture as it is a significant determinant of the individual identity and societal structure. It shapes the internalisation of the roles, expectations, values, and behaviours assigned to men and women that are considered appropriate for their gender within the specific societal norms and culture. Moreover, men and women are taught from a young age what is expected of them and how they should display femininity and masculinity based on their gender. Gender Socialisation perpetuates societal norms through family, media, and cultural practices to reinforce societal structures that maintain power imbalances between men and women. Gender socialisations perpetuate

stereotypes and is often depicted through characters, plots, and themes that challenge or question traditional gender norm, for instance, in several fairy tales, girls are socialised into rigid beauty standards, passivity, and the belief that marrying a prince is the ultimate path to happiness. Additionally, the female characters are often portrayed as “*damsel in distress*”, reliant on man for rescue, reinforcing the notion that women should depend on men for security and fulfilment, such narratives limit the opportunities to reclaim autonomy and empowerment.

Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* (1982), offers a profound exploration of gender roles and socialisation, particularly in relation to the oppression, and subjugation of black women in early 20th-century America. Walker highlights the resistance and resilience against patriarchal dominance and hegemonic structures. Celia, the novel’s protagonist, undergoes a transformative journey, challenging the conventional gender socialisation imposed upon her and ultimately reclaiming her individuality and independence. Similarly, Oakley’s *Sex, Gender, and Society* (1982) differentiates between sex as a biological category and gender as a socially construct behaviour, emphasising how systemic conditioning restricts women’s intelligence, autonomy, and overall potential. Historically, women’s contributions have been undervalued, dismissed, or eliminated in fields like literature, politics, and STEM or their work was attributed to male figures because of the longstanding belief that women are intellectually inferior and suited for domestic roles rather than professional jobs.

Simone De Beauvoir argued that women have been relegated to “*secondary sex*” as women have been socially conditioned to accept their subordinate position, leading to their contributions being overshadowed by the male-dominated institutions: “*One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman*” (part 2). Moreover, Beauvoir critiqued that women have been historically oppressed and marginalised because of the belief perpetuated by men that women are “irrational” or “sensitive” or “hysterical”. This mindset led to the systematic erasure of women’s contributions and render women’s intelligence and accomplishments as either

insignificant or non-existent in the historical narratives or dialogues and prevent women from being recognised as equal to men in professional spaces. Mary Wollstonecraft advocates for women's autonomy and used metaphor: *The bird is not to be trusted in the cage; it is the same with woman in the house*" to describe how women have been confined to domestic roles, limiting to gender socialisation, and denying them access to public life and to exercise their rights as women as women are conditioned to obey without refutation and are being constrained by the male validation and support.

Celia embodies what Ann Oakley describes as a "*secondary sex*" as her life is marked by patriarchal control and is conditioned to accept abuse and silence. Celia, as a secondary sex, is expected to be submissive, passive and reliant on male for approval; enduring systematic oppression through familial, and societal structures that reinforce her inferiority. From childhood, Celia is sexually abused by her stepfather, Alfonso, who treats her as an object or property for his pleasure rather than as a human being with emotions or agency. Celia's submission to Alfonso, reinforces Oakley's assertion that women internalise gender roles through coercion, obedience, and fear: "*You better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy.*" (Walker, 1982, p.1)

However, Celia, undergoes a transformative journey, challenging the rigid gender norms imposed upon her and ultimately reclaiming her autonomy. This paper analyses gender socialisation in *The Color Purple* (1982) through the socialisation framework of Ann Oakley's *Sex, Gender and Society* (1972), delineated the mechanisms through which gender roles are constructed and perpetuated. This study examines how Walker's novel subverts traditional gender norms that are enforced primarily through familial expectations and contributes to feminist discourse on equality and Oakley conceptualises gender socialisation as a structured, yet dynamic process influenced by institutions as Oakley argues, "*Gender roles are not*

biologically determined but socially constructed, learned, and reinforced through interactions”.

Sofia, is the pivotal character in the novel, exemplify non-conforming woman that defies the traditional gender roles and expectations imposed on her by the society. Through her actions, beliefs, and attitude, Sofia challenges the gender socialisation of the 20th century to reclaim her autonomy as a black woman who is highly unconventional. Sofia represents different aspects of non-conformity through her resistance to subjugation and oppression, defiance against male authority, and female submission, demonstrating what Oakley describes as the “*active negotiation*” of gender roles. Through the character of Sophie characters, Walker not only critiques the oppressive nature of gender socialisation but also offers a vision of feminist resistance and empowerment. Thus, through the lens of Ann Oakley’s sociological framework, this paper explores the mechanisms of gender roles, resistance, and empowerment to demonstrate that that gender socialisation is neither absolute nor irreversible. Moreover, this study examines hoe Celia internalises patriarchal norms but Sofia’s resistance to gender norms empowers Celia and their dialogues becomes a catalyst for Celie’s autonomy and leading to self-assertion and economic independence.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research employs a qualitative critical analysis to examine gender socialisation in *The Color Purple*, through the lens of Ann Oakley’s sociological theory. The study involves textual analysis of the novel, investigates how Alice Walker portrays Celia’s transformation from a passive victim of patriarchal abuse and oppression to an empowered individual. This study aims to uncover how gender roles and societal expectations shape individual identities and questions whether it is biological or structured. Moreover, the study will emphasise on how Celia is conditioned into passivity, marginalisation, and oppression, aligning with Oakley’s

theory that gender roles are taught through systematic inequalities. While Oakley's theory explains how Celia is conditioned into a subordinate gender role, patriarchal oppression, and enforced obedience. Furthermore, the study will assess Oakley's four mechanism of gender: 1. Manipulation, 2. Canalization, 3. Verbal Appellations, and 4. Differential Activity Exposure as this study involves textual analysis of the Walker's novel, identifying instances of gender socialisation that aligns with Oakley's framework

COMPARATIVE APPROACH:

The research employs a comparative analysis of Celia and Sofia to examine how gender socialisation shapes female agency and resistance in the novel, *The Color Purple*. Ann Oakley's theory of gender socialisation provides the analytical framework to acknowledge how Celia endures oppression as she is conditioned into suppression or oppression, while Sofia is a bold character that resists patriarchal norms as she is unwilling to shrink herself for men in the society. Through their conversations and discussions on gender socialisation, Sofia empowers Celia in a way that she becomes sceptical and questions the patriarchal norms to unlearn the passive role assigned to her since childhood and gradually she reclaims her autonomy and grace, as Sofia becomes a source of empowerment for Celia.

RESEARCH FINDINGS:

This research reveals that gender roles in Walker's novel *The Color Purple* are learned behaviours and are not biologically determined, however, such gender roles are reinforced through social structures like family, religion, and marriage. Celia's passivity and sense of worth has been defined by the patriarchy and not by her own agency because of her early social conditioning as argued by Ann Oakley in her Gender Socialisation theory. Celia's trauma and struggles exemplifies Oakley's concept of "secondary sex". Celia's conditioning from childhood instilled patterns of submission through manipulation, reproductive control,

emotional repression, and dehumanisation; as a result, she normalises abuse, violence, and verbal degradation. Moreover, this research highlights feminist consciousness and the role of female solidarity to dismantle patriarchy. This paper successfully maps Oakley's framework: **Manipulation, Canalization, Verbal Appellations, and Differential Activity, Exposure** in Walker's *The Color Purple*. The findings emphasise that gender socialisation is not irreversible, even though, it is deeply rooted from a very young age. This study uncovers that it is possible to unlearn, question, and change socially constructed norms through the experiences of Celia where she transforms into a self-aware empowered woman who reclaims her identity and agency.

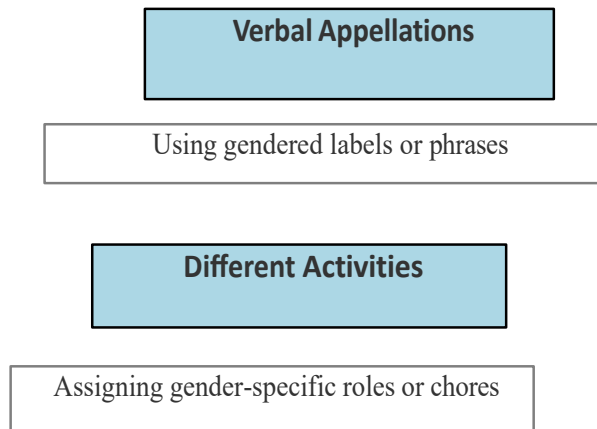
Ann Oakley's Four Mechanisms of Gender Socialization

Manipulation

Encouraging/discouraging gendered behavior

Canalization

Channeling interests through gendered toys/activities



DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Ann Oakley's theory of gender socialisation (1972) argues that women are indoctrinated into subjugated or marginalised roles not because they are naturally subordinate but are socially conditioned through primary socialisation in the family and secondary socialisation through institutions like marriage, religion, and labour. In Walker's novel, *The Color Purple*, Celia exemplifies this theory as the '*secondary sex*' – a woman whose identity is based on subservient roles in society due to gender socialisation. Celia's individuality is defined by men rather than as autonomous being as Celia's journey is shaped by male dominance, abuse, and passivity. From childhood, Celia is socialised to be passive, obedient, and silent, embodying Oakley's argument that gender is not innate but learned through early childhood experiences and societal expectations. Celia's oppression and sexual abuse begins with her Alfonso, who sexually exploited her and coerced her into passivity. Celia's submission and obedience to him encapsulates that she is conditioned to remain silent and that speaking up would bring harm to others: "*you better not never tell nobody but God. It'd kill your mammy*" (Walker, 1982, p.1).

According to Oakley, primary socialisation is an effective way to ingrain gender norms and Celia learns in her younger age that women must endure abuse without resistance. Alfonso exemplifies how patriarchal socialisation reduces women's worth to sexual gratification,

treating Celia as a sexual commodity rather than a human being. Alfonso failed to acknowledge Celia's autonomy instead he exerts complete control over her body, using violence, intimidation, and manipulation to enforce his dominance, reinforcing Oakley's theory that gender socialisation is socially constructed mechanism that reinforces subordination of women through fear and coerced silence. Alfonso's sexual abuse demonstrate that Celia is not perceived as a woman but as an object of male gratification. Celia, in her first letter to God, recounts the horrific experience in a cold tone suggesting that she has been conditioned to believe that resistance is futile.

"First, he put his thing up against my hip and sort of wiggle it around. Then he grab hold my titties. Then he push his thing inside my pussy. When that hurt, I cry. He start to choke me, saying you better shut up and get used to it" (Walker, 1982, p.1-2). This passage reflects Celia's pain, suffering, and her cries for help are dismissed, reinforcing the idea that suffering does not matter in a patriarchal society as women should learn to endure the pain without resistance. Oakley asserts that male control is socially constructed and maintained through violence and suppression. Moreover, Celia becomes pregnant twice due to Alfonso's repeated rapes, yet Celia has no knowledge, no control, or no choice over her reproductive autonomy. Celia is never educated about her maternal rights or to make decisions about motherhood. Alfonso denies her any connection to her children, demonstrating reproductive control, aligning with Oakley's argument that patriarchy enforces gender roles by denying women control over their bodies, sexuality, and reproductive choices. Alfonso strip away her mother's bond with her offspring as Alfonso takes her child away after each pregnancy without her consent and knowledge: *"He took it while I was sleeping. Kilt it out there in the woods. He say it too soon to tell whether it was a boy or girl. He say it mine"* (Walker, 1982, p.3). The phrase *"He say it mine"* highlights how he views Celia as a vessel for producing children but is never told where her children go and is left with utter confusion and voidness as Alfonso refuses to give her any

information about her children, reinforcing his authority over her reproductive autonomy. This aligns with Oakley's assertion that patriarchy often dictates not just when women reproduce but whether they have any role in acknowledging or raising their children. Oakley outlines *mechanisms like manipulation and activity exposure that socialise women into submissiveness*" (Oakley, 1972)

On the contrary, Sofia is the radical female character in Walker's novel *The Color Purple* (1982), embodying feminist resistance against male dominance and gender socialisation. Unlike Celia, who is socialised into submission and silence, limiting her autonomy and resistance. Sofia is an outspoken, assertive, and physically strong woman who rejects to conform to societal expectations of women as passive and obedient and refuses to accept male dominance. Sofia is a representative for black women showing that women must fight for their dignity and autonomy. Sofia's husband Harpo believes that a wife should be submissive and obedient like Celia. However, Sofia refuses to submit her authority to Harpo, asserting her autonomy and rejecting the patriarchal norms that expect her be a subservient wife. Sofia's resistance frustrates Harpo as he cannot dominate her, and this mindset leads to an attempt to 'teach' her lesson and show her place as a woman. Celia provoked him beat Sofia because her own experiences of abuse was a normal part of male-female relationships. Celia's traumatic experiences prevent her from acknowledging that male-female relationship is not based on female submission rather it is dependent on love, equality, and mutual respect.

"You got to let them know who got the upper hand. Nothing can do that better than a good sounding beating" (Walker, 1982, p.37). Although Sofia's response to Harpo's attempt at violence and subjugation is a direct rejection of patriarchal oppression: *"He try to slap me, I block it. He punch me, I jab him back. I am not going to let no man beat me"* (Walker, 1982, p.42). Sofia rejects the normalisation of the domestic abuse and disrupts the cycle of patriarchal abuse, proving that she will not tolerate male violence, unlike Celia's passivity, that has been

conditioned into submission through abuse and violence. Celia is in a state of self-doubt and emotional numbness as she was repeatedly labelled with negative connotations, reinforcing the idea that her purpose is to serve without expecting respect, kindness, and love. However, Celia's identity is limited to a homely, submissive wife, and can be labelled as good wife, a good cook, and a hard worker not because of mutual respect or admiration but because her value is tied to her ability to perform domestic with obedience, silence, and endurance. Albert's father discourages Albert to marry Shug as she was unwilling to compromise her liberation under the shadow of male control and instead suggests Albert to marry Celia: "*She ugly. Don't even look like she kin to Nettie. But she'll make the better wife. She ain't smart either and she will do what you say*" (Walker, 1982, p.11). This dialogue displays the deeply rooted belief that manhood is co-related to authority and suppression of women and how men like Harpo, Albert, and Albert's father subjugate women by devaluing their individuality to mere labour within the household where her life is marked by invisibility and utility.

Sofia rejects gender socialisation unlike, Celia who has internalised subjugation. Sofia rejects domestic abuse, and it reflects her resistance to systems of control where men dictate that women must be soft, submissive, and dependent on men, particularly financially. Sofia defies the traditional gender roles by asserting her autonomy and equality by working alongside with Harpo, unlike other women who are confined to domestic labour. Sofia perceives herself as Harpo's equal, not his subordinate and demands respect in her marriage, asserting that she will not sacrifice her autonomy for a man's ego. However, Harpo feels emasculated and tries to change her: "*I want her to do what I say, like my daddy do my mamma*" (Walker, 1982, p.38). This vividly portrays that Harpo's concern or frustration is not about love, but it is about power and dominance in marriage that should be maintained to control Sofia.

Sofia's decision to leave Harpo demonstrates feminist resistance in the novel as she refused to be treated as "secondary sex" in the marriage where she is expected to be controlled, dominate

and physically abused, unlike, Celia who decided to placate as she was expected like other women to endure the male abuse, servitude, and agony. Sofia is a strong-willed, independent, and unwilling to compromise her dignity, rejecting to be socialised into passivity and submission, illustrates her belief in her right to autonomy. Sofia challenges the gender dynamics by showing resistance and believes that marriage should be based on mutual respect and equality, not oppression. Sofia chooses her autonomy and self-worth over Harpo's attempt to dominate him through violence and fear: *"All my life I had to fight. I had to fight my daddy. I had to fight my brothers. I had to fight my cousins and my uncles. A girl child ain't safe in a family of men. But I never thought I'd have to fight in my own house"* (Walker, 1982, p. 42)

Sofia's refusal to be dominated by Harpo is a rebel against the gender socialisation where Harpo expects her to behave like a traditional woman and act docile, passive and obedient and Celia lacks agency and is seen as invisible and undeserving as her worth is defined by her relationship with Harpo. However, Sofia, as a black woman, asserts her own voice and identity as she acknowledges that without resistance and asserting her right to autonomy, she cannot undermine the societal expectations and violence. Through resilience, Sophia demonstrates a feminist resistance to oppression, retaliation to abuse and power politics in gender socialisation, and act of profound empowerment. Moreover, Sofia empowers Celia through her refusal to submit to Harpo's control and resistance to patriarchal dynamics. Sofia influences Celia towards self-realisation and feminist consciousness.

Through Ann Oakley's theory on gender roles, Sofia's defiance of traditional gender norms transforms the perception of Celia and enables her to exercise her right to autonomy and fight back to become break free from the oppressive structure of patriarchy. This transformation of Celia aligns with Oakley's narrative which suggests that *"Gender is a matter of culture; it refers to the social classification of men and women into "masculine" and "feminine"* (Oakley, 1972)

Simone De Beauvoir's theory on the masculine and feminine argues that *"Femininity is not a*

natural essence” but a role that society constructs through socialisation and conditioning where the masculine is perceived as rational, active, and independent and feminine is associated with emotion, passivity, and dependence because of gender socialisation. Moreover, Bell Hooks in her work, *Feminism Is For Everyone: Passionate Politics* argues that feminism should be accessible to marginalised women and women can empower themselves through education and financial independence to resist oppressive patriarchal structures. She writes, “*Without the ability to support themselves economically, women are often trapped in abusive or repressive relationships*” (Hooks, p.41).

The moment Celia meets, she experiences a radical shift in her understanding of womanhood as she is inspired by Sofia, who refuses to subvert to traditional gender norms and speaks her mind fearlessly and stands firmly against patriarchy. This encounter aligns with Hook’s feminist theory which emphasise on the significance of consciousness-raising. Sofia becomes the catalyst for Celia as she disrupts Celia’s internalised belief that women are born to endure suppression in silence. Since childhood, Celia has been told she is ugly, unworthy of love, and this internalised inferiority, however, Sofia’s influence on Celia’s growth is profound in the novel as Celia begins to question her own learned gender socialisation: *You a lowdown dog is what you is. It’s time somebody told you. You let yourself be misused, Celia. Why you want to go and do the same for me?*” (Walker, 1982, p.42). This confrontation from Sofia is a pivotal moment for Celia as she realises that she has internalised the oppression for years and passively accepts abuse from Harpo and Albert because since childhood, she is conditioned to believe that woman is subjected to endure whatever men inflict upon women.

However, when Celia witnesses Sofia’s unwavering confidence and the way Sofia resists male control and dominance, she begins to question the patriarchal structures that has silenced and suppressed her for years and contemplates that suffering is not a woman’s destiny after all. Through the lens of Hooks’s feminist theory, this moment where she compels her to question

the male dominance, signifies the beginning of Celia consciousness-raising as begins to see that there is strength in resisting oppression rather than surviving it as a victim. Celia learns through Sofia's autonomy that women are not subservient instead they can fight back and mark a turning point to change the narrative of womanhood in a patriarchal society if women refuse to surrender to gender socialisation.

Sofia's influence on Celia is transformative and life- changing as Celia absorbs Sofia's values and ideas through their interactions and becomes from a passive observer to an active advocate for equality: *"You know Celia, there's a whole world outside of this small town. And it's a world that's been waiting for us to shake it up. We can either let it define us, or we can define it"* Celia said, *"But...I have always been told to stay in my lane. That I should not speak too much, that it will make me seem.... assertive. Like I am going against the grain"*. Sofia responded, *"That's exactly why we need to speak up, Celia. You see, the world tells us that there are certain rules we need to follow. But those rules are based on old ideas that were made to keep us in our place. The truth is equality isn't something that just given to us. We must fight for it. We must demand it"* (Walker, 1982. P.43)

Sofia becomes a source of strength and wisdom to her and empowered her to voice her opinions and fight against injustices irrespective of gender, race, and class; Celia realises that she has been conditioned by years of trauma and subjugation, shaping her passive self-perception and conditioning her to accept restrictive gender norms imposed by a patriarchal society and as a result, her self-worth has been dictated by the patriarchal society, not by her own sense of identity. This transformation illustrates Oakley's theory, which focus on the narrative that gender roles are learnt through socialisation and cultural norms. Sofia's dialogues resonated with Celia and Oakley's theory as society defines the meaning of femininity and masculinity and is learned not inherently but over time. Thus, women like Celia instils such submissive demeanour through family, education, media, and other societal institutions like marriage or

religion. Moreover, Celia, who was portrayed as a “subaltern” woman and deprived of her sense of autonomy in the beginning of the novel, now stands up for herself with strong conviction and feminist resistance to redefine her individuality as a black woman.

Albert’s verbal appellations exemplify his derogatory language to dehumanise Celia and to assert control and dominance. Albert is a sexist who perceives women as inferior, and voiceless. Hence, Albert’s insulting remarks, and emotional belittlement vividly demonstrates his reinforcement of patriarchal structures and his internalisation of manhood where he can exercise his right to degrade women verbally, particularly, his wife, Celia as he views Celia as a labourer rather than an individual. However, Albert’s use of derogatory language reflects his own insecurity, trauma, and socialisation as Shug refused to be dominated by him and it triggered his fragile masculinity. Eventually, he projects his frustration, anger, and hurt towards Celia through insults, neglect, and cruelty. Albert insults Celia based on her appearance and when Celia decides to take a stand for her, he further makes attempts to demean and belittle her. Albert states, “ *You ugly. You skinny. You shape funny. You too scared to open your mouth to people. All you fit to do is Memphis is be Shug’s maid. Take out her slop-jar and maybe cook her food*” (Walker, p. 213). Additionally, when Celia gains economic independence and develops emotional detachment to Albert, Albert feels emasculated and insecure and masks his emotional wounds to appear authoritative toward Celia by ridiculing labelling her as “*poor, black, ugly, and nothing at all*” (Walker, p. 213) as an act of desperation to suppress her and reassert dominance. Ironically, Celia reclaims her voice, agency, and power when Albert tries to break her confidence and spirit when he realises that Celia is willing to divorce him and leave with Shug Avery. In response, Celia states, “I’m pore, I’m black, I may be ugly and can’t cook...But I am here” (Walker, 1982, p.187)

This moment marked Celia’s ultimate transformation from submissive to assertive, obedient to confident woman who exercises her autonomy without fear and self-doubt. Even Albert, who

perceived Celia as insignificant and subordinate woman, acknowledges the change in her and how Celia evolves from a victim mindset to autonomous being through the journey of self-discovery, emotional independence, and economic independence. However, Albert acknowledges that Celia is no more a subjugated or oppressive woman who was once controlled and dehumanised rather she is thriving and living under no societal obligations. Albert said, “*Now she got her own house, her own business, her own money. I never thought nothing like this would happen. She ain’t even thinking about me*” (Walker, 1982, p.214). Albert profoundly realises Celia’s self-worth as she can now survive and thrive without seeking male validation or male control. Celia undergoes a journey of self-assertion and self-realisation, breaking the shackles of societal expectations and personal insecurities to lead an empowered and dignified life, reinforcing her self-awareness and proving that she can define her worth through her resilience, ambition, and choices in life. Celia says, “*I’m content. This the first time I ever lived on my own, made decisions myself, felt I got anything that’s mine*” (Walker, 1982, p.205).

CONCLUSION

Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple* illustrates how gender roles are constructed through socialisation where women are expected to accept the subordinate roles as their innate state. Through the lens of Ann Oakley’s theory, gender socialisation explains how women like Celia who are considered as ‘secondary sex’ are taught from a young age to be submissive, to accept violence and abuse, and to believe the notion that suffering is a woman’s destiny, and no women can escape it. Celia is a dutiful daughter, an obedient wife, and an unresisting woman who internalises patriarchal expectations. Although Celia’s silence and subservience are not inherent traits but learned behaviours as she is expected to never question the domestic servitude, abuse, and emotional suppression. Oakley’s concept of Manipulation is evident in how Celia’s stepfather and husband Albert socialised her into suppression through control and

fear. Celia is never encouraged to educate herself or express herself or exercise her free will as a woman because she is socialised into silence, convinced that endurance is her exclusive option to survive. Similarly, canalization is present how Celia is forced into the subordinate roles where she is expected to serve to men as she is responsible for household chores, perform the role of a domestic caretaker and nurture the kids who are not biologically her, and prioritizing the needs of others while being silencing her own desires and denied opportunities for self-growth, resistance, and the reclaiming of autonomy in the face of deep-seated gender oppression, aligning with Oakley's argument that women are shaped into these roles rather than born into them.

Moreover, the language used around Celia to reinforce gender expectations by assigning labels reflects verbal appellations, where she is treated as an inferior being-called weak, ugly, unintelligent, and unworthy as Celia's identity is entirely shaped by the word's others use to define her as she never realises her self-worth which contributes to her sense of inferiority. However, Celia's interactions with Sofia challenge this deeply ingrained belief system that women can refuse to surrender to patriarchal control and oppression. Unlike Celia, Sofia does not tolerate mistreatment; she fights back for her rights, demands equality and respect, and refuses to be silenced or dominated by men. Sofia's outspoken nature introduces Celia to a new perspective where women can assert themselves, set boundaries, and understands that submission is something that has been forced upon her the society so that she can never live for herself as a liberated woman. Celia evolves throughout the novel and reclaims her identity, her agency, and her right to make decisions. Thus, she chooses to leave Albert, not out of fear, but to reclaim her individuality who can prioritise her self-respect, and the desire for autonomy and independence from an imprisoned life where men dictated her existence. Celia embodies Oakley's idea that gender roles can be unlearned when women challenge the patriarchal system and reclaim their power and agency. Celia's transformation reflects women's resistance to

gender socialisation where woman can break free from the constraints imposed on them and unlearn, redefine, and reclaim her autonomy beyond oppressive beliefs and societal expectations.

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