

Children and gender

[Family](#), [Children](#)



They learn to think by association and knowledge acquired from those that are most often around them. This can lead to negative views on non-specific gender roles, allowing only for a more society-based approach.

Sandra BEMA, a psychologist specializing in gender studies, later goes on to define specific features of gender schematics: " 1. Gender schemas develop through an individual's observation of societal classifications of masculinity and femininity, which are evidenced in human anatomy, social roles, and characteristics. 2.

Males and females cognitively process and categorize new information in the environment based on its maleness or femaleness. . Self-authorship is displayed by an individual's categorization of and conformity to the sets of elements that belong to either definition of masculinity and femininity' (Hoist 1). As children develop, they learn to associate things by said " maleness" and " femaleness" based on society. They are taught that as a male and female, they should do things specific to each gender, setting a foundation for later learning and behavior.

According to Deborah Rhode, a Professor of Law at Stanford University, most research shows " Children receive strong cultural messages about sex-appropriate traits, tasks, and behaviors" (21). At such an early age, when cognitive skills are developing and when children are learning by viewing what is around them, children start to figure out how to act based off of their certain gender. Boys are taught that they must be forceful and girls need to be motherly, while seeing advantages and disadvantages to being of a certain sex.

A study In Michigan on elementary students showed that the children were able to acknowledge the fact that there are indeed "gender hierarchies" or better or worse genders (Rhode 22). "When 1, 100 students were asked to describe what life would be like if they were the opposite sex, over 40 percent of the girls saw advantages to being male: they would have better jobs, higher incomes, and more respect. Ninety-five percent of the boys saw no advantage to being female, and a substantial number thought suicide would be preferable" (22).

How is it that at such a young age, the idea of suicide has already been associated with being female? Children are being taught this way, even if indirectly; children learn by seeing and hearing. Rhode even declares that "by age two, toddlers have sex-linked toy preferences; by age three they can identify certain occupations as more appropriate for each sex; and between ages four and six they separate into same-sex groups" (23). Gender Identity comes at such an early age before "escalate[d] with anatomical differences" (23).

When children are learning that gender is related to all of these other things before even learning the physical, 1 OFF makeup of a person that makes them either male or female, which should be the factor for this association. Gender schematics refers to organization based on feminine and masculine disagrees. Most parents allow their children to recognize this (not as the term but as the concept) by "offer[ins] differential opportunities for learning based on their children's sex" (Shoal, Sifter, and Patriots 2).

In practice, children tend to remove themselves from situations where learning becomes "gender-inappropriate" for them (Shoal, Sifter, and Patriots 2). In a study of 178 kindergarten and grade four students and their parents, girls showed signs of being less gender-schematic than boys. "Simple comparisons indicated that boys with gender-typed fathers and non-gender-typed mothers were more schematic than girls with the same parent gender classification, than girls with non-gender-typed mothers and gender-typed fathers, and than boys with two non-gender-typed parents" (Shoal, Sifter, and Patriots 1).

Gender typing is when children acquire masculine or feminine roles and identify with these said roles. When children are heavily influenced by their parents, and one parent is gender typed, then typically this will have an impact on the child. Children should not be taught how to act based upon certain gender-related reminiscences, but instead the more androgynous approach. This approach, or combination of gender-related characteristics, will give them the middle ground to choose for themselves as they further develop.

David Opened, marriage sociologist, insists that when raising a child, parents should overlap parental roles. "Men should become more nurturing and share homemaking activities" as women "in the workplace" (Opened 5 and 6). He suggests that gender roles of parents are learned and can easily be translated into mothers and fathers doing both gender-specific roles. Opened also claims that while parenting should take on a more androgynous approach,

traditional mother-father roles should not be forgotten. " Family organization based on (...) biological differences between men and women" (Opened 6).

This is an appropriate way to combine newer and more traditional parenting styles so that children will be able to grow in an environment not solely based on the roles of any specific gender. There is sure to be opposition to this, with many suggesting that the nuclear family should be kept intact with all the initial principles that go along with it. However, when children are seeing the value in being one gender over another based on society's idea of gender-specifics, then the nuclear family is the last thing that should be worried about.

The gender schema theory allows people to " simplify a large body of knowledge and apply this knowledge easily to themselves and to others" (Attenuate et al. 137). We are able to determine the gender of someone due to " cues (...) culturally created gender cues (...) biological" (Attenuate et al. 137). For obvious reasons, it is more difficult for children to assess the gender of other children based on biological aspects. Therefore, they must use these culturally created gender cues to analyze this (I. E. Hair style, colors, etc. . Studies were done to attest to this notion, trying to reach more unconventional conclusions as to what makes a boy a boy and a girl a girl. Small children were asked to draw a picture of a boy and a girl, and later gender schemas do not develop before their unconventional gender schemas" (Attenuate et al. 137). The younger children in the studies came up with reasons for each being of a certain gender not based on stereotypes,

but more in unconventional, such as " no legs" or " she's a pirate" (Attenuate et al. 142).

The children a few years older came to the conclusion that girl's had long hair and wore pink while boys had short hair and wore boy clothes. This knowledge of what it means to be a boy and a girl has to start from an early age. From the time a child is born, they are subjugated to stereotyping typical boy/ girl behaviors. Parents want to let the world know if they have a son or a daughter, and this is easily done through dressing a child; a girl is given pink things while a boy s given blue. This inserts gender-specific knowledge into their mindset that only develops over time.

This negative approach puts any form of androgyny into the background, thus becoming an outcast to an infant. " Parents encourage sex-typed activities (...) doll-playing and housekeeping for girls and trucks and sports for boys" (Witt 253). This encouragement only gives them further reason to gender-type jobs in society, making women appropriate for keeping up the house and family, while men are out working. Children should be taught that these jobs can be interrelated between both genders and that job qualification does not refer to what sex you are born as.

Witt states that children even as young as two have an " awareness of adult sex role differences" (253). In today's society, it is quite common to see both genders participating in activities that were once considered gender-specific only. Women run for president, are doctors, are top sports players, etc. On the other spectrum, men are engaging in managing the upkeep of homes, salon employees, nurses, etc. The barriers are slowly becoming hazy and the

apprehension of the wrong gender in the workplace is slowly deteriorating. What needs to be considered first and foremost is that this all starts with family.