

Psychology of gender essay

[Life](#), [Emotions](#)



A child's earliest exposure of what it means to be male or female comes from parents.

Parental influence and the environment the child grows up in, will justify the type of gender role they will enter into as an adult. Gender Identity refers to identifying and accepting ones' self as male or female, it is essential for children to get a sense of their gender identity at a very early age. Once a child has developed an identity of their own gender they need to accept that it is permanent trait, known as gender constancy. Gender constancy requires two components: Gender stability – the knowledge that their gender is a stable, and personal characteristic, and Gender consistency – the belief that people retain their gender even when they dress as the opposite sex, or adopt gender peculiar behavior. Children develop their gender identity through parental influence, cultural influence, and social influence by the child's peers.

Parental influence in the family setting is divided into separate roles for the parents. The father tends to be more involved when the child gets older, but fills a role to be more of a helper, while the mother is the primary caregiver. Parents encourage their sons and daughters to engage in sex-typed activities such as sports for boys, and house type activities for girls. Early in development, children segregate themselves according to gender. Before the age of 3 they do not play together, yet participate in a sort of parallel play – where the kids play adjacent to one another, and do not influence each other's behavior. As children enter elementary school, they begin to develop many friendships, which also serve as an influence in the development of the child's adult gender role. To boys, a friendship is merely

someone who shares their interests, and someone they are able to “ play’ with. Parents encourage boys’ play and leave fewer restrictions on them so they are able to use these gender-related activities for their gender development.

Girls are socialized to be closer to the house, and receive more parental restriction as children. Friendships for girls are more intimate, and they rely on them for their emotional support. Gender role development is very important, and there are many different outcomes due to different factors influencing development. In “ The Dallas Buyers Club” we see two different outcomes of gender role development. Matthew Micromanager plays “ Ron Woodruff,” a rodeo cowboy who develops AIDS due to numerous sexual encounters with multiple women. Growing up, Ron was neglected from his parents, all he had was the rodeo, and this became his life. The environment of the rodeo leads him to develop a hyper masculine personality, an exaggerated masculinity about himself. Men who over-conform to their gender role are at risk for more accidents, because they tend to engage in perilous activities.

Ron is a rodeo bull rider; his days consist of heavy smoking, drinking, drug use (mostly cocaine), and unprotected group sex. Men tend to internalize their emotions, and struggle with the ability to “ vent” to others, which girls are raised with the ability to do. Drug use is a factor some men consider to escape their problems. When Ron learns that he is diagnosed with HIV+, he immediately denies the diagnosis, and uses an extensive amount of drugs to numb the feeling that he may have developed AIDS. In childhood there is

more pressure on boys to adopt the socially approved gender role. In my opinion, feminine boys experience more serious problems when growing into their specific gender role; a girl being a “ tomboy’ is more acceptable than a boy being a “ sissy’ in modern day society.

As a rodeo bull rider, Ron develops a personality that is both racist and homophobic. His hyper masculinity leads him to hold a hatred for homosexuals of all types. In Iron’s’ adventures he meets an HIV+, transgender woman named Rayon, who is a major figure of the AIDS community. Rayon eventually helps him distribute different vitamins to treat patients struggling with the HIV virus. Rayon’s character as a transgender homosexual helps convey Iron’s gradual acceptance of a subculture he had always dismissed. In his childhood, Rayon failed to identify with his father. Due to this, he developed a feminine gender identity for himself. Rayon dresses himself as a woman because although he may be physically male, he has convinced himself that he possesses a female gender identity.

His failure to develop a male gender role, leads him to live a life filled with social agony. He has already identified with the female gender role, yet he now seeks to make his appearance more congruent with he female identity. Throughout this story, Ron begins to gradually change his view of homosexuals. He is put in a similar situation as Rayon, and the harsh realities that they are both struggling with changes their views completely about the homosexual community.

Hyper masculinity leads to dangerous activities for males and when done wrong, males tend to quickly learn from their mistakes and quickly shift their

viewing on that activity. Ron Woodruff was a character full of condescending attributes. He holds an ego which entails very high self-esteem, as well as engendering himself invincible. In the “ Dallas Buyers Club” he states, “ Anti nobody can kill Ron Woodruff. ” When he is diagnosed with HIV he really thinks twice about his “ bulletproof” lifestyle, and loses a great deal of his hyper masculinity.

His situation that he has been put in gives him a feeling of remorse for the gay community, and understands the struggles they are dealing with. At the end of the movie, the audience is able to identify a change in Iron’s character, as he loses interest in this hyper-masculine personality, and learns to accept multiple diverse realities. Child Development is essential for the development of an adult gender role because the child’s environment has a large effect on their gender identity. Their environment is a combination of the influence of their parents, media (television), and the behavior of their peers (in school). Not all cultures, however, hold the same view of what traits and patterns of behavior men and women should express. There are also four different theories to explain development: Freud and his Psychoanalytic theory, the Social-learning theory, Cognitive-development theory, and the Gender- Schema Theory.

These theories work together in explaining many aspects of childhood development, and look to answer and explain different aspects affecting gender development. Most children develop their gender identity at the age of 3, while gender development begins at birth. As children move from middle childhood into adolescence, they become more capable of placing

men and women into separate categories. Girls are more flexible in their vision of gender throughout adolescence, where boys develop an inflexible understanding of gender before girls do due to a particular family setting. The family setting is crucially important for gender development. Susan Witt explains, “ The attitudes and behaviors are generally learned first in the home, and then reinforced by the child’s peers, school experience, and television viewing”.

Children differ in the age they experience puberty. For girls who hit puberty at a young age, and mature at a faster rate, have a disadvantage. It creates problem with their peer relations, as they hang out with older girls, and start to date older men. The parents hold more of a restriction on their daughters, while boys who hit puberty at an earlier age have an advantage.