

# Emotional development critique and gender stereotypes

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## Introduction

Being able to identify and express one's own feelings is known as emotional development (Picture Perfect Playgrounds, n. d.) Society influences the notion of gender stereotypes in large volumes during day to day occurrences at school, home or the workplace. For a child, gender stereotypes are introduced from a young age which can have a large impact in their emotional development. In Alyson Schafer's (2018) article "How To Ask Grandpa Not To Tell Your Son 'Boys Don't Cry'", advises methods in regards to minimizing the exposure to gender stereotypes for young children as they grow up and face cultural and societal notions of gender biases. Two pieces of advice from this article that will be critiqued is, building "courage with small social experiments" and knowing that "you're only responsible for your actions" (Schaefer, 2018). The purpose of this paper is to acknowledge that although the method of breaking down gender stereotypes for children and the younger generation has good intentions it is ultimately ineffective.

Journal Article In Mulvey and Killen's (2015) study, Challenging Gender Stereotypes: Resistance and Exclusions, looks into the likelihood of children from the ages of 9 to 14 years old "resisting gender-stereotypic peer group norms". It is hypothesized that children and adolescents would be aware of the asymmetry in regards to gender stereotype (Mulvey & Kellen, 2015, p. 686). The study was constructed between two different groups, one being among those who held gender stereotype consistent group norms for example for boys that like to play football - the "conformity group" where the group complies to the gender bias (Mulvey & Kellen, 2015, p. 683-684).

The second group being those who held gender stereotype inconsistent norms, for emotional development critique 3 example a boys' group that enjoy doing dance such as ballet (Mulvey & Kellen, 2015, p. 683). The results were tested by putting into comparison of those who would react and deviate when the group norm is inconsistent. Those who would deviate when the group norm stereotype was consistent - the "resistance group norms", where the group would challenge the status quo in regards to gender biases (Mulvey & Kellen, 2015, p. 683-684). This study initially hypothesized that children and teens predicted their peers to challenge gender biases and oppose gender-stereotypic norms themselves (Mulvey & Kellen, 2015, p. 686). The results did not go as expected, instead the study concluded that children highly comply to gender stereotypical attitudes that often viewed being "socially desirable" as norm generally are (Mulvey & Kellen, 2015, p. 691).

## **Discussion**

Complying to gender stereotypes is a big factor in the development of children and teens (Mulvey and Kelly, 2015, p. 691). Schaefer (2018) encourages guardians to speak up about stereotypes and gender normative language with others to create conversation and to counteract gender bias (Schaefer, 2018). Another piece of advice was in regards to being responsible for one's own actions in pushing against the norm and speaking up rather than conforming to stereotypes in a respectable manner (Schaefer, 2018). Although, the aforementioned pieces of advice is a commendable beginning to breaking down gender stereotypes among children and creating conversations between guardians it is ultimately ineffective. With the results

found in Mulvey and Kellin's (2015) study, it displays that at a young age, a majority of children and teens are all exposed to gender stereotypes and are likely to abide by them. This can be due to environmental and societal influences which take a large toll on the view points that children obtain as they grow into adulthood with gender biases.

## **Conclusion**

Critiquing the emotional development advice outlined by Schaefer's (2015) brings up the notion of creating a change in the environment that the child is brought up in. This begins within household and creating conversation among other adults. It is discussed that exposure of gender biases of what a girl and boy should conform to is imprinted on their perception of what they are supposed to behave like. This can have a significant negative impact on the emotional development on boys and girls. This initial step to ignite the spark for a larger impact to breakdown the narrow gender biases present is seen to be overall ineffective. Society, culture, and the media is all infiltrated with gender stereotypes which people from children to adults often encounter at work, school or even at home. In order to have a bigger impact for more of an effective call for change within breaking down gender stereotype also begins with breaking down gender stereotypes for adults as well. Mass media and society dominates by influencing people's' perception, old and young. The first step for change would be educating young children at school and their guardians. Educating them on ways to practice and shift their perception in regards to gender biases. Even in the study conducted by Mulvey and Kellin, it was seen that other children often conform to these

gender biases (Mulvey & Killen, 2015, p. 691). Educating them on it would teach them to oppose and be more open minded about gender stereotypes.

## References:

1. Mulvey, K. L., & Killen, M. (2014). Challenging Gender Stereotypes: Resistance and Exclusion. *Child Development*, 86(3), 681-694. doi: 10.1111/cdev.12317 Picture Perfect Playgrounds, Inc. (n. d.). Retrieved from [https://www. pgpedia. com/e/emotional-development](https://www.pgpedia.com/e/emotional-development)
2. Schafer, A. (2018, July 19). How To Ask Grandpa Not To Tell Your Son ‘Boys Don’t Cry’. Retrieved from [https://www. huffingtonpost. ca/2018/07/19/gender-language-advice\\_a\\_23485435/?utm\\_hp\\_ref= ca-parents](https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/07/19/gender-language-advice_a_23485435/?utm_hp_ref=ca-parents)