

How Children Learn Gender

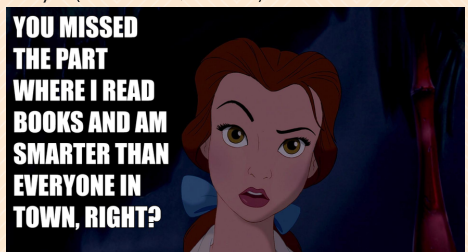
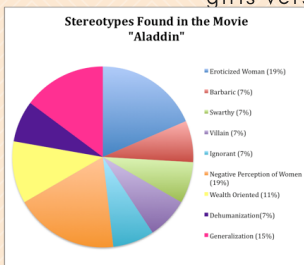


**A BEGINNERS' GUIDE ON
HOW CHILDREN LEARN
GENDER ROLES**

BUT HAS A HARMFUL EFFECT

Learning gender

Children's perspective begins to form through experiences or behavior they are exposed to. Bandura states that children learn through observations and then begin to imitate behavior that is displayed. The social learning theory explains to children learn through observation, imitation, and modeling. As children develop, they are exposed to learning gender through experiences and will begin to influence their perceptions. Children begin to internalize gender stereotypes. Learning may be through commercials, movies, parents, teachers, toys, or through books. Children spend countless of hours watching TV, research indicates that children "spend an average of nearly 30 hours a week watching television" (Smith, 2015, p.1004). Male and females are portrayed to be aggressive and powerful while the other is portrayed to be caring and be involved housework. As children see these roles, they begin to "believe this is the appropriate way for females to behave" (Smith, 2000). The issue with the countless number of hours of TV watching is that children are not often monitored of what is being watched, leading children to hold stereotypical views and begin to implement gender-appropriate behavior. Children also learn gender to toys; a study conducted by Kahlenberg and Hein (2009) found that toys were gender-typed and were targeted toward a specific gender; findings also show that "females [were] portrayed in lightly more limited settings, interactions, and color palettes" (845) compared to boys. Stereotypes are learned just by walking down the toy aisle where there is a clear divide of girls versus boys (Williams, 2005).



Myth: Girls on screen compare favorably to their male counterparts.
Fact: Messages that devalue and diminish female characters are still rampant in family films.

(Smith 2018)

THE HISTORY OF PINK AND BLUE

Today it is known that girls wear pink and boys wear blue according to the norm but the question is has it always been this way? The answer is no; shockingly this norm has been recent and not innate. According to Jo Paolett (2012), before the 1900 “toddlers and preschooler clothing was more colorful, but hues were assigned according to complexion, season, or fashion, not sex” (87). The shift of color defining gender was gradual and recent.



Table 5.1. Color Preferences for Infants' Clothing in Major U.S. Cities, 1927

STORE	BOYS	GIRLS
Filene's (Boston)	Pink	Blue
Best's (Manhattan)	Pink	Blue
Macy's (Manhattan)	Blue	Pink
Franklin Simon (Manhattan)	Blue	Pink
Wanamaker's (Philadelphia)	Blue	Pink
Halle's (Cleveland)	Pink	Pink
Marshall Field's (Chicago)	Pink	Blue
Maison Blanche (New Orleans)	Pink	Blue
The White House (San Francisco)	Pink	Blue
Bullock's (Los Angeles)	Blue	Pink

Source: "Fashions: Baby's Clothes," *Time*, November 14, 1927.



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Gender-specific colors came about in the 1940s by manufacturers and consumers would begin to buy more gender-specific colors when expecting a girl or a boy. There was a loss of neutral colors for gender and colors began to become gender specific.

Fun Fact 2735: In the 1900s, pink was for boys because it was a stronger color, while blue was for girls because it was delicate.

(Paolett 2012)

DID YOU KNOW THAT
STARTING AT THE AGE
OF 6, GIRLS START
BELIEVING GENDER
STEREOTYPES.

(Bian, Leslie, and
Cimpian, 2017)

Negative Effect on Children

STEREOTYPES HAVE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON CHILDREN. BELIEVING IN A STEREOTYPE CAUSES AN INFLUENCE OF INTERESTS AND OPPORTUNITIES. A STUDY FOUND THAT STEREOTYPES ABOUT INTELLECTUAL ABILITY HAD AN IMPACT TO PURSUE CAREERS AND CERTAIN INTERESTS (BIAN, LESLIE, AND CIMPIAN, 2017). THIS STUDY FOUND THAT "GIRLS AGED 6 AND 7 WERE SIGNIFICANTLY LESS LIKELY THAN BOYS TO ASSOCIATE BRILLIANCE WITH THEIR OWN GENDER". THESE STEREOTYPES LEAD TO FEELINGS OF SETBACK AND INCOMPETENCE WHICH LEADS TO THE DISCOURAGEMENT OF PURSUING A GOAL OR CAREER DUE TO GENDER. WHAT IS STEREOTYPE THREAT? IT IS WHEN AN INDIVIDUAL BECOMES AWARE OF THE STEREOTYPE OF THEIR ABILITY, WHICH CREATES ANXIETY AND IMPAIRED PERFORMANCE. SHENOUDA AND DANOVITCH (2014) ALSO FOUND THAT "GENDER STEREOTYPES AFFECT CHILDRENS PERFORMANCE ON A GENDERED ACTIVITY AS EARLY AS AGE FOUR" (54).

The dangers of gender stereotypes:

Children are exposed → Learn Roles →
Begin To Act → Affects Goals and Ambitions

Who am I?

Pink is for me and blue is for you. You are playing in the tree while I am cleaning up your shoe. It is like I am in a box of glue unable to get through. I am told just what to do while you broke through. I guarantee I am worth it but you just use me like fondue. I am tired and weak but one day I will cut through.