Gender Development in the 21st Century: Parents, Schools, Technology, and Culture

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WOMEN IN SELECTED STEM OCCUPATIONS, 1960–2013

- Engineers
- Chemists and material scientists
- Computer and mathematical occupations
- Biological scientists

Progress.....
Progress.....
High School Athletics Participation Survey Totals 1971-72 to 2018-19

Source: National Federation of State High School Associations 2018-19 Athletics Participation Summary
Progress.....
Progress.....
Persistent challenges.....

**Gender differences in mathematics self-concept**

OECD average percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comment</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am just not good at mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get good marks in mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn mathematics quickly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have always believed that mathematics is one of my best subjects</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my mathematics class, I understand even the most difficult work</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Confidence Gap

Note: All differences between boys and girls are statistically significant.
Source: OECD, PISA 2012 Database, Table 3.4a.
Persistent challenges.....

**Gender differences in mathematics anxiety**

OECD average percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
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<th>Girls</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I often worry that it will be difficult for me in mathematics classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get very tense when I have to do mathematics homework</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get very nervous doing mathematics problems</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel helpless when doing a mathematics problem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I worry that I will get poor marks in mathematics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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Note: All differences between boys and girls are statistically significant.
Source: OECD, PISA 2012 Database, Table 3.5a.
Persistent challenges.....
Persistent challenges.....

After election, 31% of boys and 30% of girls said Hillary Clinton lost because of gender.
New challenges.....
New challenges.....
New challenges.....
“New” challenges.....
New challenges.....

95% have access to smartphones

45% describe being online

“ALMOST CONSTANTLY”

APA, 2007; Pew Research Center, 2015; 2018
New challenges.....
New challenges.....

‘Gender unicorn’ raises questions, complaints in California school district

The graphic is designed to educate people about gender identity

NC legislators’ wrath prods CMS to pull lesson about a boy in a dress

Virginia Schools’ Bathroom Rule Violates Transgender Rights, U.S. Judge Says

The ruling is an important victory for transgender rights advocates as legal battles over school bathroom policies continue to play out across the country.
Essentialist, binary heteronormative view of gender

Girls should be sexualized; Boys should aggressively and sexually objectify girls

Peer-based policing to reinforce binary, sexualized norms

Social Media

Lack of School Response

Role of Parents?

Academic, Physical, Psychological, Social Consequences
“Good morning, boys and girls!”

Essentialist, binary heteronormative view of gender
Essentialist, binary heteronormative view of gender
Problems for Gender Development:

girls as appearance-focused and boys as assertive agents

sexual objectification of girls

what are the consequences?
Sexualization of girls

• APA Task Force on Sexualization of Girls (2007):
  • ...occurs when women and girls are most valued for their sexual appeal or are sexually objectified...

• Culturally ubiquitous
What do children think about these sexualized images of women and girls?

Do they notice...

and what are the downstream consequences?
Do kids pay attention?

Salient Category: 41%
Not Salient Category: 59%

Gender:
- Boys: 0%
- Girls: 100%
How popular?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stimuli</th>
<th>Non-Sexualized</th>
<th>Sexualized</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Doll</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photo</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Moderated by gender
Average Endorsement

Age

6-8yrs

9-11yrs

Popular

Sexualized

Non-Sexualized
Why are sexualized girls more popular?

• Sexy = Fancy = Popular

• “Popular girls would dress really fancy and they would have their hair done and they would wear really nice clothes”

• “She has a belly shirt and her shoulders are showing and her hair is well-kept and the popular people in my grade have really well-kept hair”
How athletic?

- Doll: Non-Sexualized (3.0) vs. Sexualized (2.2)
- Photo: Non-Sexualized (1.8) vs. Sexualized (1.5)
- Video: Non-Sexualized (1.9) vs. Sexualized (1.6)

* Moderated by gender
Why are sexualized girls not as athletic?

- Sexy clothes are not for athletics
  - “Those are definitely not sport clothes”

- Sexualized girls do not want to be sporty
  - “She’d probably be like one of those girls to say, ‘Oh I got mud on my clothes’”
  - “Divas don’t like to go to gyms and stuff. She hangs out with her friends and go shopping, like she might work out a little to get her shape in”
How smart?

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Why are sexualized girls not as smart?

- Focus on appearance instead of school
  - “since she wears that clothes, she wouldn’t be paying attention, she would only pay attention to the way she dresses perfect”
  - “she like worries on her clothes more”

- Sexualized girls are not smart
  - “Girls that dress like that aren’t very smart”

- Sexualized girls do not want to be smart
  - “Some popular girls would act dumb”
Sexualized Media Consumption

(consistent with Slater & Tiggemann, 2016)
What do children think about these sexualized images of women and girls?

Do they notice...

and what are the downstream consequences?
If sexy is valued, but incompatible with smart,

what are the consequences for academics?
Sexualized Gender Stereotypes

Girls should prioritize sexual attractiveness.

“The best way for a girl to attract a guy is to use her body and looks.”

“Pretty girls should expect to be flirted with and should learn how to handle it.”

Boys are sex-driven.

“It’s natural for a man to want to admire women and to comment on their bodies.”

(Ward, 2002)

- Low Typicality (-1 SD)
- Medium Typicality (Mean)
- High Typicality (+1 SD)

Skepticism toward School

SGS Endorsement (mean centered)

- $b = .64$, $p = .002$
- $b = .29$, $p = .11$
- $b = -.05$, $p = .86$
Sexualized Gender Stereotypes and Academic Self-Efficacy from 7th to 8th Grade

χ² (5) = 4.53, p = .48, χ²/df = .91, CFI = 1.0, NFI= .96, RMSEA = .00

Academic performance and age as covariates
Academic performance, MGO at T1, and age as covariates

Brown, 2019
Implications

Stereotypes don’t have to include academic messages to have academic consequences.

Reducing the persistent confidence gap will involve more than a focus on STEM.
Mothers stereotype sexualized daughters, and their own sexualization trickles down.

Starr & Ferguson, 2012; Starr & Zurbriggen, 2019
What do children think about these sexualized images of women and girls?

Do they notice...

and what are the downstream consequences?
If girls *should* be valued as sexual objects and boys *should* objectify them,

what are the consequences for social interactions?
"And when you're a star they let you do it. You can do anything. Whatever you want. Grab them by the p***y. You can do anything."
96% of middle school students reported witnessing sexual harassment happening at school

(Lichty & Campbell, 2012)
What do girls experience?

- 66% Unwanted sexual-romantic attention
- 62% Called sexist (nasty/demeaning) name
- 58% Teased about appearance
- 51% Unwanted physical contact
- 37% Told sexist (embarrassing/mean) joke
- 28% Teased, bullied, or threatened by male

90% Experienced at least once instance of SH

(Leaper & Brown, 2008)
% who perpetrate other-gender SH

Comments
Body comments
Grab
Pull
Sext
Posts

Males
Females
Academic Outcomes
- Lower grades
- Lower academic motivation
- More school absences

Psychological Health
- Lowered self-esteem
- Depression
- Anxiety
- Feeling sad, afraid, scared, Embarrassed
- Low body image

Physical Health
- Loss of appetite
- Nightmares
- Disturbed sleep
- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Disordered eating

(see Brown, 2017 for review)
Across adolescence, sexualized gender stereotypes predict boys’ sexual harassment of girls

18-19 yr olds: verbal/physical SH of boys toward girls

14-15 yr olds: verbal/physical/digital SH of boys toward girls

12-14 yr olds: acceptance of SH of boys toward girls

Problems for Gender Development:

girls as appearance-focused and boys as assertive agents

sexual objectification of girls

girls: more sexual harassment and worse academic attitudes
Problems for Gender Development:

objectification of girls amplified by social media
Taking a selfie enhances self-objectification

State Self-Objectification

- Not Posted
- Posted

* *

Control
Selfie

Salomon & Brown, in revision
Objectifying Social Media Use

Body Surveillance

Body Shame

For girls only

Index of moderated mediation: SM 95% CI = [.0002, .0718]; Gender 95% CI = [-.0763, -.0010]

Salomon & Brown, 2019
What happens after sexual harassment?

- Majority (60%) try to ignore it or forget it

- Only 31% of girls and 13% of boys told their harassers to stop

(Hill & Kearl, 2011; Leaper, Brown, & Ayres, 2013; Tam & Brown, in press)
Only 12% of students thought their schools addressed sexual harassment
Problems for Gender Development:

**This Doesn’t Add Up:**

79% of public schools reported zero incidents of sexual harassment or bullying.

AAUW research has shown that nearly half of students in grades 7-12 reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment, yet more than three-fourths of schools reported zero incidents for the 2015-16 school year.

Source: AAUW analysis of Civil Rights Data Collection for 2015-16
Who confronts sexual harassment?

• More likely to self-report confronting if:
  • perceived support from their peers and mothers
  • feminist identity

Covariates: Age, SES, learned about sexism thru media
Who confronts sexual harassment?

Covariates: Age, SES, learned about sexism thru media
How to Raise a Feminist Son

We raise our girls to fight stereotypes and pursue their dreams, but we don’t do the same for our boys.
Problems for Gender Development:

girls as appearance-focused and boys as assertive agents

rigid, heteronormative norms for boys

what are the consequences?
That’s so...

...and you choose gay?
Buy a dictionary.

I don’t say that’s so gay because the words gay and stupid are not interchangeable.

Sean Davis, Men's Soccer

f youdon'tsaycampaign
Homophobic harassment

Brazil (16 state capitals):
63% observed episodes of homophobic harassment

(Abramovay et al., 2004; Greytak et al., 2009; Mason & Palmer, 1996; Norman et al., 2006; Ullman, 2015)
Homophobic harassment

Australia (nationwide):
94% heard homophobic language at school (58% daily)
45% witnessed peer harassment (12% weekly)

(Abramovay et al., 2004; Greytak et al., 2009; Mason & Palmer, 1996; Norman et al., 2006; Ullman, 2015)
Homophobic harassment

Ireland:
Across 700 schools, homophobic bullying occurred in 79% of Irish second-level schools

(Abramovay et al., 2004; Greytak et al., 2009; Mason & Palmer, 1996; Norman et al., 2006; Ullman, 2015)
Homophobic harassment

UK:
79% of LGB adolescents been the target of verbal bullying, 24% the target of physical bullying, and 19% the target of severe physical bullying

(Abramovay et al., 2004; Greytak et al., 2009; Mason & Palmer, 1996; Norman et al., 2006; Ullman, 2015)
Homophobic harassment

US:
38% physically harassed (e.g., pushed or shoved)
18% physically assaulted (e.g., punched, kicked, injured with a weapon).

(Abramovay et al., 2004; Greytak et al., 2009; Mason & Palmer, 1996; Norman et al., 2006; Ullman, 2015)
Homophobic harassment

50% of transgender youth physically harassed
25% physically assaulted because of their gender identity

(Abramovay et al., 2004; Greytak et al., 2009; Mason & Palmer, 1996; Norman et al., 2006; Ullman, 2015)
What gendered pressures do boys experience?

What are the consequences?
Homophobic Harassment of Girls and Boys

(Jewell, Brown, & Perry, 2015)
Gender Conformity $\rightarrow$ Popularity

Peer Rating of Popularity (Centered)

Peer Rating of Gender Typicality (SD)

Boys: ($\beta = .78$, $R^2 = .61$, $p < .001$)
Girls: ($\beta = .58$, $R^2 = .34$, $p < .001$)

Jewell & Brown (2014)
Gender Conformity → Popularity

Popular kids are described using gender typical traits more often than rejected kids.

- Girls are “pretty,” “nice,” and “stylish/wears nice clothes” (60% of traits used to describe popular girls found on gender stereotype measure vs. 4% of rejected girls)

- Boys are “athletic,” “tall/strong,” and “popular with girls.” (51% of traits used to describe popular boys are stereotypical vs. 2% of rejected boys)

(Jewell & Brown, 2014)
Harassment for gender non-conformity

• 70% of early adolescents have been teased for being low in typicality.

(Toomey et al., 2014; Jewell & Brown, 2014)
• 33.3% of participants reported experiencing gender-atypicality victimization at school during the two weeks (from daily diaries)

  • 23.7% reported experiencing teasing

  • 20.2% reported being intentionally rejected

  • 3.9% reported experiencing bullying

(Jewell & Brown, 2016; Tam & Brown, 2018)
Self-esteem

Girls

Boys
Body esteem

Girls

Boys

Typicality

Lo Typ
Hi Typ

Estimated Marginal Means

Lo GBH | Mid GBH | Hi GBH

1.00 | 2.00 | 3.00 | 4.00
Depressive symptoms

Girls

Boys
Problems for Gender Development:

girls as appearance-focused and boys as assertive agents

rigid, heteronormative norms for boys

boys: negative psychological outcomes if outside the norm
Problems for Gender Development:

Teachers typically don’t intervene in homophobic language. Considered “normal.”
Little self-efficacy or perceived support to intervene

(Poteat, 2019; van Leent, 2016)

Even when recognize bullying of LGBTQ students wrong, perceive homophobic language to be normal or joking

(e.g., Bailey et al., 2018)
Role of Parents

Parental acceptance of sexual orientation/gender identity is positive & protective (see Russell, 2019)

Yet, only 20% of 3-year-old and 9% of 5-year-old boys think father would approve of cross-gender play (Freeman, 2007)

Essentialist, binary heteronormative view of gender
Conclusions

- Sexualized gender stereotypes are salient by elementary school. Contributes to negative consequences for the girls being sexualized and the boys expected to sexualize them.

- Schools ignore and normalize. Traditional media and social media exacerbates (and schools ignore that too).
Implications for Raising Children in 21st Century

• Parents can contribute to problem:
  • own internalized sexualized gender stereotypes
  • stereotypes about their own sexualized daughters
  • enforcement of rigid norms for boys

• Parents can be protective:
  • explicit acceptance of sexual orientation, gender identity and expression
  • discussions about feminism with girls and boys

• Early steps:
  • avoid rigid binary distinctions, which are inherently heteronormative, from infancy
  • be diligent about early sexualized gender stereotypes
  • have action plans for gender-based harassment, given lack of school support