

Gender in the Classroom

Early Childhood Education: Students & Teachers

Presentation Outline

1. Foundations
 - Terminology & Definitions
2. Gender Socialization
3. Doing Gender in the Classroom
4. Recommendations

Foundations



Gender Socialization



Doing Gender in the Classroom



Recommendations & Considerations



Recommended Reading

- Gender Equity
 - Sparks, Thomas (1998)
- Playing & Learning: Uncovering Gender Differences in the Early Childhood Classroom
 - Hirsch, Walter (2015)

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Foundations

Sex & Gender

Sex: biologically named characteristics

- Reproductive organs (gonads & genitalia)
- Chromosomes
- Female/Male/Intersex

Gender: representations of gender through symbols and behaviors

- Clothing, occupation, emotion
- Girl/Boy/Transgender



Intersex & Transgender

Intersex: 35+ variations in bodies include a blend of chromosomes, gonads, genitalia, hormones

- 1-4 per 1000 births
- For male-identified, more obvious at birth
- For female-identified, concealed until puberty or adulthood

Transgender: someone whose gender identity does not match their sex assignment

- 3-5%
- Not a medical or psychological pathology



Children & Gender Identity

- Children are gendered before they are born
- 6 months: differentiate women/men's voices
- 9 months: differentiate women/men in photographs
- 2 years: most children know what gender they are
 - Learning gender norms of behavior
- 3 years: prefer friends of same gender
 - Think more positively of their own group
- 5 years: stereotypes firmly ingrained



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Gender Socialization

Socialization

Children learn about the world around them through primary and secondary agents of socialization

- Primary: parents
- Secondary: school, peers, teachers, media

Early gender bias experiences affect children's attitudes and beliefs, education outcomes and future prospects in work.



Girls & Boys

Girls' Socialization

- Beauty & Appearance
- Caring, Nurturing
- Reading and Language



Boys' Socialization

- Strength & Aggression
- Independence
- Power & Control, Dominance
- Math and Science



Heterosexuality

Rewards & Punishment

Children are rewarded implicitly or explicitly for sex-appropriate behaviors aligned with gender

- Ryan is punished or mocked for crying and clinging to mom, but rewarded for working on his own
- Adults praise girls for sitting quietly and looking pretty
- Boys are allowed to be noisy active and curious

When we interact with children, we model and teach gender rules

Children create, police and enforce gender amongst themselves



You Tube



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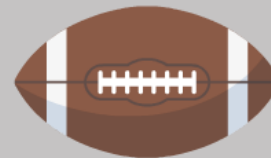
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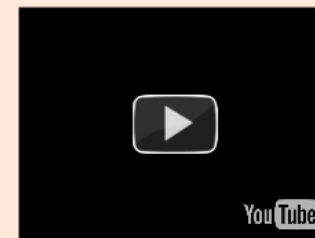


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Doing Gender in the Classroom



Teachers & Socialization

Hidden Curriculum

- Informal interactions teach children about gender, race and class

Separating activities or groups by girls/boys

Boys v. girls in competitions

Teachers regularly give more time and attention to boys than to girls

- Calling on boys
- Hushing girls



Classrooms

Media & Literature

- Books
- Films
- Posters



Location & Space

- Fire trucks v. Dress up
- Art supplies v. Blocks

Outdoor Space & Playgrounds

Teacher Biases

Boys: active, capable of anger, quarrelsome

- Math and science
- Ask boys more challenging questions
- Pushing boys harder

Girls: affectionate, obedient, responsive, sweet

- Reading
- Dislike math and science
- Give girls less time to answer a question



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Recommendations & Considerations

Classrooms & Materials

Assess your classrooms and make change

- Books featuring strong girls
- Girls in careers
- Boys who are nurturing
- Emphasize fatherhood
- Posters, pictures and activities
- Mix stereotypically gendered toys together



Assess Your Bias

Confront your own gender stereotypes

Your own thinking about women and men influences the way you interact with children

Presumed heterosexuality

Reflection:

- Do you talk to girls about their appearance?
- Do you talk to boys about their strength and power?
- Do you often divide boys v. girls?



Active Involvement

1. Intervene in cases of teasing about gender/sexuality
2. Avoid gender segregation in classroom
 - Activities
 - Lines & Groups
3. Refer to class as "class" or "students" or "children" rather than "boys and girls"
4. Affirm mixed-gender interactions
5. Do activities about gender stereotypes that are age-appropriate and dispel them
6. Demonstrate a variety of masculinities and femininities



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Recommended Reading

Gender Play

- Barrie Thorne (2006)

Playing It Straight: Uncovering Gender Discourses in the Early Childhood Classroom

- Mindy Blaise (2005)

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