

Academic Reading Skills

First Grade Students

International Relations Department

Seventh Lecture

Lecturer: Sara H Ali

Think about the following questions.

1. Do we (males & females) grow up equal?
2. Do we raise our children equally?
3. What gender stereotypes are you familiar with?
4. Do teachers/parents tend to treat boys and girls differently?

GROWING UP EQUAL

When we treat a boy as if he is stronger, smarter, and more capable than a girl, both children may end up believing us. Most parents want their sons and daughters to have equal chances at success as they venture into the world. Today, equality of the sexes is largely mandated by public policy and law. However, outmoded ideas about gender are still deeply rooted in our culture. Biased attitudes about sex differences pose challenging questions for parents.

Gender stereotypes are rigid ideas about the capabilities, behavior, and inherent qualities that are considered normal for each sex. We all know what these stereotypes are: A "feminine" girl should be nonassertive, accommodating, and somewhat illogical in her thinking. A "masculine" boy should be strong, unemotional, aggressive, and competitive.

How are children exposed to these stereotypes? According to researchers David and Myra Sadker of The American University in Washington, D.C., boys and girls are often treated differently in the classroom. They found that when boys call out answers, teachers usually listen and offer constructive comments. When girls call out answers, teachers tend to focus on the behavior rather than the content of the response and are likely to say something like, "Please raise your hand to speak."

Pink and Blue

Underlying gender stereotypes is the belief that differences between the sexes are not only innate and natural, but also somehow necessary. The emphasis on differences begins at birth and progresses through childhood. For example, few people would give pink booties to a boy or a blue blanket to a girl. Later, many of us give girls dolls and miniature kitchenware, while boys receive action figures and construction sets. There is nothing inherently wrong with girls playing house or boys building things. The problem arises when certain activities are deemed appropriate for one sex, but not the other.

"Female stereotypes discourage girls from acquiring many skills that will allow them to become economically independent," says

Heather Johnson Nicholson, Ph.D., director of the National Resource Center for Girls Inc. "Similarly, male stereotypes discourage boys from developing skills that will help them be loving partners and parents".

. "Gender stereotypes inevitably get through to our children, no matter how we try to filter them out. Nevertheless, by becoming aware of the messages our children receive, we can help them develop beyond restrictive barriers. "I'm concerned about the way self-worth is tied to beauty for girls," says Brenda Schonhaut, a New York City mother. "When my eight-year-old daughter watches TV, she sees that the prettiest woman gets the most attention, and that's the one she wants to be." "Stereotypes tell girls that how they look is very important," comments Nicholson. "To counteract that idea, parents can look for ways to challenge and support their daughters, and to encourage confidence in ways that have nothing to do with physical appearance

Text Analysis Questions

1. What is the general attitude towards equal opportunity of the sexes?
2. What does the writer claim about our society's attitude to gender?
3. How does the writer define "gender stereotypes"?
4. What do the examples of "feminine" and "masculine" in paragraph 2 demonstrate?
5. List the solutions that the writer suggests for overcoming female stereotypes.