



VCU

Virginia Commonwealth University
VCU Scholars Compass

Undergraduate Research Posters

Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program

2015

The Subtle Role of Parenting in Gender Role Formation

Naomi S. Eitches

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/uressposters>

© The Author(s)

Downloaded from

Eitches, Naomi S., "The Subtle Role of Parenting in Gender Role Formation" (2015). *Undergraduate Research Posters*. Poster 145.
<https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/uressposters/145>

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program at VCU Scholars Compass. It has been accepted for inclusion in Undergraduate Research Posters by an authorized administrator of VCU Scholars Compass. For more information, please contact libcompass@vcu.edu.



The Subtle Role of Parenting in Gender Role Formation

Naomi Eitches, Professor Boaz

Abstract

Despite the progressively modern trend towards gender equality, gender roles and gender stereotypes are still the underlying causes of numerous social problems. The prevalence of gender roles is evident from birth when the gender of the baby determines the treatment every child henceforth receives. This research analyzes how the parents or parent, unbeknownst to even themselves, subconsciously enforce gender roles on their offspring. By examining the dynamic between the parents and the interactions with their offspring, researchers have found evidence of latent parental behaviors and patterns that affect gender roles and gender stereotypes. The evidence illustrates a cycle of gender schemas that are passed from the parent to the child, this pattern is repeated continuously through the future generations. The research also indicates how this cycle, usually continued by the father, is an albatross to society as it also carries with it destructive behaviors, gender confusion, gender oppression and a gender binary. The cycle can only be stopped if the subliminal pressures attached to gender are eliminated. Until parents understand their involvement in enforcing strict gender binaries, they will continue to not only be a burden on their children, but also contribute to the struggles other children face as a result of gender stereotypes and confusion.

Introduction

As gender stereotypes change over time, gender roles and behaviors follow suit. It is the parent's role to encourage their offspring to find and follow where their interest is instead of following a current model that is "acceptable." The 21st century has allowed minor changes to the traditional gender stereotypes wherein slightly masculine females or slightly feminine males are socially tolerated. These minor changes in gender stereotypes are better acknowledged when present in females rather than males. This often stems from the paternal enforcement of traditional gender roles. Combined with the maternal partner or contrasting with other familial structures, all severe as the initial and most crucial influences on gender development. The actual structure of the family and the dynamic between the parents are integral parts.

Research

In the attempt to uncover the full, unintentional effect of parents on the gender role development of their offspring, over 15 different scholarly journals and reports were analyzed, interpreted and compared. Various combinations of language and databases were utilized. The most supported conclusions were:

- Parental reaction to the offspring's behavior, emotions and interests were perceived as forms of either positive or negative reinforcements.
- Parental expectations of abilities were differentiated by gender and foreshadowed the actual capability of the child falling subject to self-fulfill parental prophecy.
 - Parental reactions to gender of child differed based on gender of parent.
- Fathers most often supported traditional masculine roles for their sons and traditional female role for their daughters.
 - Parental reactions to cross-gender behavior was more severe for males and held predictions of sexual orientation.
- Parental model holds importance, working mothers produced offspring with more malleable views on gender equality while households with male initiated domestic violence produced offspring that emulated that familial structure.

Traditional Gender Stereotypes.

Feminine.

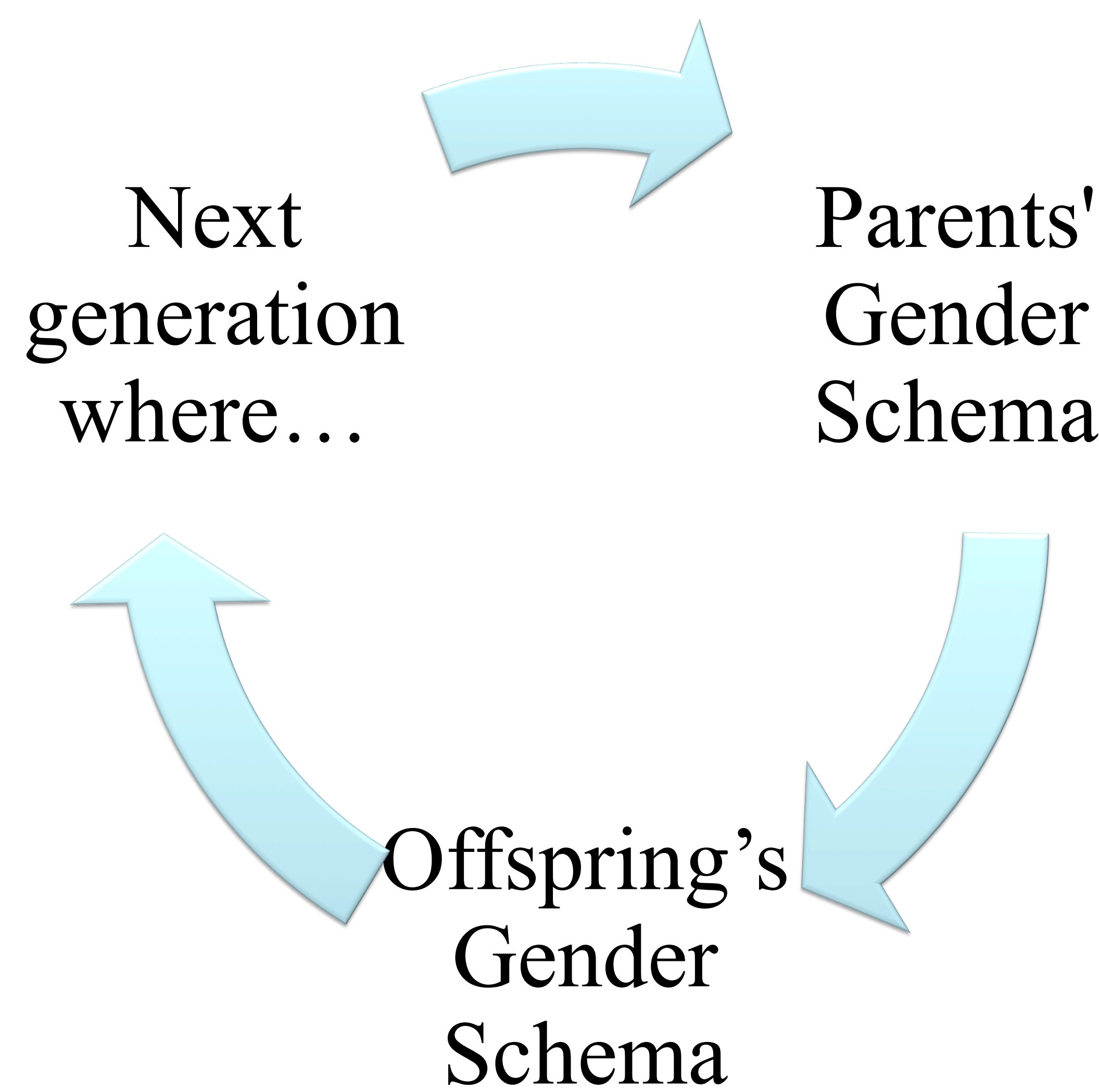
*Not aggressive.
Dependent.
Easily influenced.
Submissive.
Passive.
Home-oriented.
Easily hurt emotionally.
Indecisive.
Talkative.
Gentle.
Sensitive to other's feelings.
Very desirous of security.
Cries a lot.
Emotional.
Verbal.
Kind.
Tactful.
Nurturing.*

Masculine.

*Aggressive.
Independent.
Not easily influenced.
Dominant.
Active.
Worldly.
Not easily hurt emotionally.
Decisive.
Not at all talkative.
Tough.
Less sensitive to other's feelings.
Not very desirous of security.
Rarely cries.
Logical.
Analytical.
Cruel.
Blunt.
Not nurturing.*

Conclusion

The underexposed parental influence on gender role development is a critical challenge in eliminating gender binaries. Parental enforcements of behavior result in adverse expressions for males and females. Males typically learn to externalize their emotions through actions while females typically learn to internalize their emotions through private self-evaluations. Parental misconceptions of abilities cause doubt and overconfidence in their children as well as limiting their perceived capabilities and illustrating contrasting gender standards. The dynamic between the parents revealed patterns of domestic violence derived from observations of physical altercations initiated by the paternal partner. Other models revealed single mothers contributing positive opinions of gender equality and the fathers notably strong resistance to atypical gender roles.

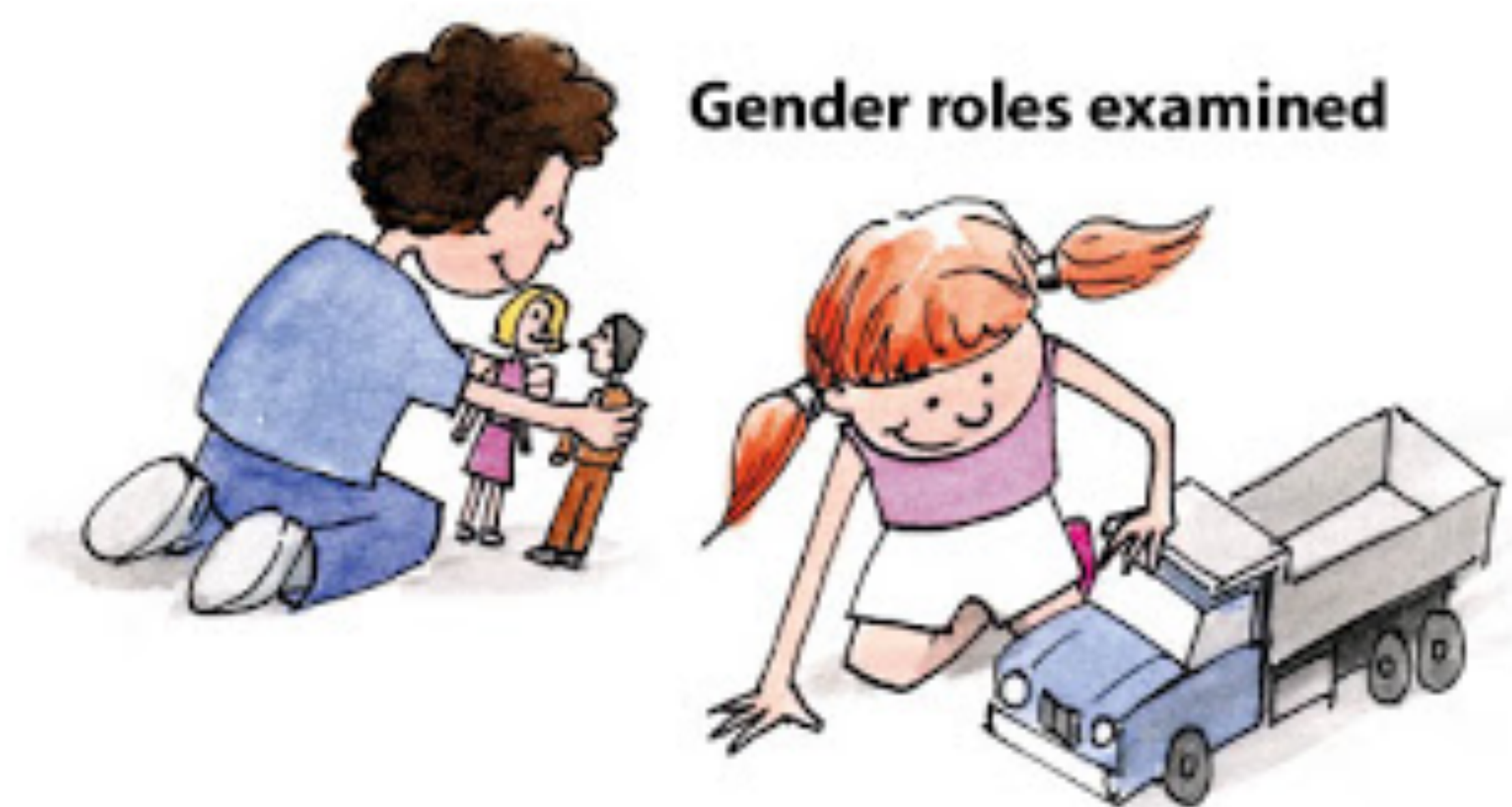


Gender Schema

Networks of gendered information used for the regulation of behaviors that conform to cultural definitions of gender. (Sandra Behm, 1981)

Works Cited

Scholarly Sources:
 Chaplin, T. M., Cole, P. M., & Zahn-Waxler, C. (2005). Parental Socialization of Emotion Expression: Gender Differences and Relations to Child Adjustment. *Emotion*, 5(1), 80-88. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1528-3542.5.1.80>
 Eriksson, L., & Mazerolle, P. (2014). A Cycle of Violence? Examining Family-of-Origin Violence, Attitudes, and Intimate Partner Violence Perpetration. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 30(6), 945-964. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0886260513532759>
 American Academy of Pediatrics. (2013, May 11). Gender Identity and Gender Confusion In Children. Retrieved March 4, 2015, from HealthyChildren.org website: <http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/gradeschool/Pages/Gender-Identity-and-Gender-Confusion-In-Children.aspx>
 Photos:
 Week 6 Learning Journal. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://learningjournal790.blogspot.com/2012/11/week-6-learning-journal.html>



Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my mentor, Professor Boaz for encouraging the submission, completion and initiation of this research. I would also like to thank Taryn from the Writing Center for all her help and those in charge of the VCU Poster Symposium for Undergraduate Research and Creativity for giving me this opportunity to share my research. Thank you all so much!