

# ADULTS PROMOTE SOCIAL ROLES TO CHILDREN THROUGH TOYS

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Every parent wants their kid to grow up to be a happy and successful person. Toys are a great way for youngsters to learn about the world around them, as well as to develop new ideas and abilities. As a result, providing youngsters with a diverse selection of toys is critical. Gender-specific toys have been a problem in the Western world since the 1980s, when they began to appear in abundance. Since such marketing has been so successful and children as young as two begin identifying themselves through certain femininity, its attributes, and behavioral patterns, they demand gifts from their parents that best fit their gender requirements or views about gender prejudice. As a result of this approach, children are forced to grow up in a society that has been socially created to be gender segregated, and they are unable to experiment with various social models. Researchers invited twenty youngsters to choose a present for their male and female friends and inquired about their motivations for doing so. The majority of children select toys based on preconceived notions of what interests and meets the needs of both boys and girls in their social groups of friends. Because they do not allow children to discover their true selves before identifying with a specific gender, gendered toys exploit societal constructions and deny children the opportunity to discover their true selves.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Social Role; Toys; Gender-specific toys;*

## INTRODUCTION

Toys aren't only for children's pleasure; they can also be a way for them to learn about the world around them via games. As a result, children may learn about abstract ideas, conventions, behavioral standards, and the external world in the most natural and approachable way possible. As a result, parents should ensure that children have access to as many toys and activities as possible. Consumer society has created a large variety of gendered toys that make it difficult for grownups to get their hands on any that are gender neutral. These kinds of proposals force parents to purchase gendered toys even if they don't want to and plan on raising their children in non-gender-specific ways. A tiny kid, meanwhile, develops a strong sense of gender identity, absorbing much of the societal assumptions about gender roles and requesting only games that are appropriate for their gender from their parents. As a result, parents are more likely to buy toys that are only for boys or girls, which makes the problem even worse.

Remember that the huge blame for so many gendered toys and aisles of pink and blue in shops rests with the toy business and marketers, before anything else. Following an investigation into the toys of prior periods, it was discovered that the majority of them were designated as gender-neutral. Wrappers, advertisements, and brochures depicting children of both sexes playing with balls, dolls, and aircraft all show this pose [1]. One probable explanation why this shift occurred in the 1980s is that the second wave of feminism was seen more critically by the general public and sparked resistance [2]. Why It Matters: Marketers may have discovered that children are not just a single section of the market, but rather a larger one that may be segmented further into smaller sub-groups (Why It Matters). This makes me think of the Lego commercials with "Zack the LEGO Maniac" (1988), in which a young boy plays with Lego planes, cars, and other things with a lot of passion [3].

After decades, the new range of toys for females, Lego Friends, was released with a strong message that Lego is still a commodity for girls. Around the same time, Lego began adding obvious gender traits to its characters' faces, such as painted lips, beards, and so forth. Marketers needed a way of convincing parents to buy several sets of toys, even those that are gender neutral like Mega Blocks, which means that both boys and girls need two sets of each item made expressly for their gender requirements [5]. It's possible to get crayons and colouring books in a variety of colours, including blue and pink, or marked as suitable for girls or boys.

It's important to note that scientific study has ruled out the possibility that youngsters have a preference for playing with toys that are either male or female (Fisher-Thompson). Researchers are aiming to learn more about young children's gaming preferences since they begin to identify themselves as a certain gender around the age of two (Todd and Brenda). As a result of research like this, experts have been able to determine that youngsters of either gender like the colour blue (Brown). Similar studies have shown that youngsters as young as two years old freely choose and play with their favourite toys (Todd and Brenda). Toys might be gender-neutral or linked with a certain gender in the public's eye. Instead of choosing gender-specific toys, the majority of youngsters selected a ball to play with and kept playing with it until it was time to move on.

After a youngster identifies herself or himself with a gender, she or he actively starts to pick behavioral patterns and belongings that, within her or his thinking, are associated with the gender she or he identifies herself or himself with. Children's representations of the rules of conduct are based on social conceptions rather than their own wishes, since all of these concepts about gender and the qualities a kid acquires via contact with other children and the outside world (Dahl). Shaw referred to the experiment in which groups of boys and girls were asked to play with toys labelled "toys for males" and "toys for girls" by psychologist Marilyn Bradbard in 1986, which also demonstrated Researchers, on the other hand, categorise toys according to whether they should be played by people of the same gender or the opposite gender. Consequently, females were given vehicles and helicopters, while males were given dolls and sparkles. These kids had a great time playing with toys they normally wouldn't since they got them marked for gender strength and gender harmonizing throughout the trial. This brings to mind the research that demonstrated that children's play styles and toy preferences are both influenced by social conceptions. Consequently, a Canadian toy was delivered to the American youngsters, whom they had never met before. Two groups of youngsters were formed. This is a Canadian toy for females, according to the first group, and a Canadian toy for boys, according to the second group (Bradbard, Marilyn, and Endsley). Girls within the first cluster were the most engaged, whereas guys in the second group were more engaged and more successful in this game [4, 7]. As a result, playing with gendered toys has an impact on a child's self-esteem as well as causes them to have doubts about their ability to succeed at a specific game. When a child has gender-neutral items, they might lose confidence in their ability to fit in with their classmates and in their own sense of self-worth. Gendered toys, on the other hand, pose a hazard to young people, not only because they become acclimated to existing in a gender-differentiated commercial culture, but also because they deprive youngsters of the chance to expand their knowledge and encounter new experiences. A child's choice of career and lifestyle is influenced by the belief that they have innate strengths and weaknesses. As a result, youngsters are held hostage by adult-made social conceptions, are afraid to question or challenge established norms, and are unlikely to bring about meaningful change in the system in the future (Shaw). When playing role-playing games, it's important to know that only focusing on one aspect of life at a time, whether it's motherhood and beauty for girls or adventure and research for boys, can limit both their own development and that of their friends.

Consequently, parents frequently restrict their children's potential to realise themselves, find jobs they like, and be an active part of society due to marketers' and society's ideas of gender roles (Wood). These gender stereotypes were decried by feminists of the past century, but unfortunately, toys enforce them. In this way, girls learn from an early age that they must live up to societal expectations of what constitutes attractiveness and appropriate conduct in both their families and the larger community. Those who have little faith in their abilities in math and physics instead opt for fields in which they can interact with others, provide assistance to those in need, and yet have time to devote to their families and children. Like the heroes in cartoons and movies, boys are encouraged to be fearless by the toys they play with. If you don't care about your children's upbringing, there is no need to assist the wife in running the home. This condition not only restricts and diminishes opportunities for children to attain

their full potential, but it also ignores recent strides made by feminism in the workforce, household chores and responsibilities.

## **METHOD**

A study with a group of four-year-old youngsters was selected as the basis for this investigation. All of these children took part with the permission of their parents and were given money as a reward. Twenty youngsters, 10 boys and ten girls, were invited. They were all interviewed on their own[8]. Toys such as cubes, colouring books, giant blocks, pencils, plasticine, and plastic animal toys were provided to the children. There were three variants of each of the toys: gender-neutral, male-oriented, and female-oriented. Each toy was unique, from its colour to its labelling to its insignia. A toy for a male or female companion was required, as was a toy for the youngster participating in the research. Because of the kid's selection of this specific item, the youngster was questioned about why she or he made that decision. Observing the child's reasoning behind such notions as "This is a ball for females, therefore I'll give it to a girl" was significant. Children are asked what they thought of the orange ball in comparison to the blue and pink ones. When asked why guys like plasticine depicting tractors more than animals, the youngsters were invited to explain. In addition, youngsters discuss what a boy's response will be if he receives a set of pencils with an illustration of and vice versa. On a scale of one to ten, the responses were rated. When we said we were selecting based on the princess of social conceptions, we meant that we were doing so because of the assessment of zero signified replies that included exclusively personal views of children and no allusions to societal structures.

## **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

When it comes to picking out presents for friends of various genders, youngsters are influenced by traditional views. Most replies featured socially constructed claims, despite the existence of children who rationalised their decision by citing personal preferences, such as wanting to donate plasticine because their kid loves giraffes more than anything else. "Girls don't play with toys for males," the kids reasoned, "since they'll be angry if they get one, because it's bad," but her pals had "proper" toys, while they were certain that girls couldn't have boys' toys ("for both boys and girls, the same reasons should be supplied"). Even though all the children were aware that neutral toys are appropriate for everyone, they only picked them based on their own preferences for color, pictures, and other visual cues, which was fascinating to see [9]. To understand the difference between gendered toys and neutral toys and that "girls enjoy frilly toys and boys like boy's toys," The kids have shown that they are unable to grasp the concept that every toy is really a variation on a single item. As a result, children don't have to learn any new abilities to play the game or use the toys in all three scenarios.

They picked gender-specific toys because of cultural norms rather than because they were really beneficial to them. Due to their inability to see the negative effects of their own stance, children cannot see how it affects their desire and courage to play with objects that are less neutral. Because it's not a groundbreaking study, this experiment shows that four-year-olds

are well aware of the social norms that define roles for men and women, and they quickly duplicate them without questioning their veracity or truth [10].

In the future, researchers may conduct studies with a variety of age groups, gender-separated children, toys that explicitly label children as male or female, and questionnaires that are both more precise and thorough. Research into children's perspectives on dreams and gender-neutral gaming would be beneficial, as would examining how social constructions influence not only children's gaming experiences but also their conception of gender-neutral gaming. When they learn that society does not cleanse and promote such conduct among females, girls frequently attempt to proclaim themselves bold and powerful and consider it a right until they understand that society does not. Children's understanding of gender norms and how they relate to the opposing sex may help us better understand how societal structures and parents impact the development of children's self-awareness. You can learn from this study that current methods of teaching kids that there are no gender differences don't work, and they should be replaced with more creative and aggressive ways, like a more aggressive campaign against gendered toys [9, 10].

## CONCLUSION

There are a few primary themes that can be drawn from the existing research on gendered toys and the damage they may inflict. The first is that girls do not come into the world with an insatiable yearning for pink and dolls; rather, this desire develops through time as a result of coming to terms with one's own gender. A two-year-old recognizes his or her gender identity, and he or she starts to mimic behaviors, habits, and rituals associated with that gender as a result of interactions with other children and adults. In other words, it's the child's socialization that prompts him or her to choose gendered toys and play activities that reflect his or her gender identity.

Marketing and market representatives are also to blame for creating a distinct divide in toys by femininity and a decrease in the quantity of neutral toys, which is detrimental to a child's well-being and education. As a result of being compelled to acquire gendered toys for their children, parents would be more likely to take up this offer. When parents use this method, even if they don't desire or don't seem to believe that the allocation of gender roles in the household and civilization is proper, their offspring are exposed to the ideas of the adult world. As a result, youngsters are unable to fully achieve their potential because they are terrified of seeing themselves working in a wide range of professions and hobbies. Gender prejudice and discrimination will only become worse in the future since no one will be there to undo the damage done by the outmoded notions of patriarchal society. While the Third Wave of Feminism fights for the full freedom of men and women from prejudicial and societal structures like not having children, being a careerist, etc., the toys continue to build a society where women must be beautiful. The guys' faith in their own power may develop as they amass clothing while being jobless.

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