

Gender Glorious: exploring and supporting children's agency in their gender

Gender Glorious: exploring and supporting children's  
agency in their gender identity and expression

# Body Safety Australia

*promoting childhoods free from violence where children  
enjoy equitable and respectful relationships*

**Presented by: Deanne Carson**

**@bodysafetyau**

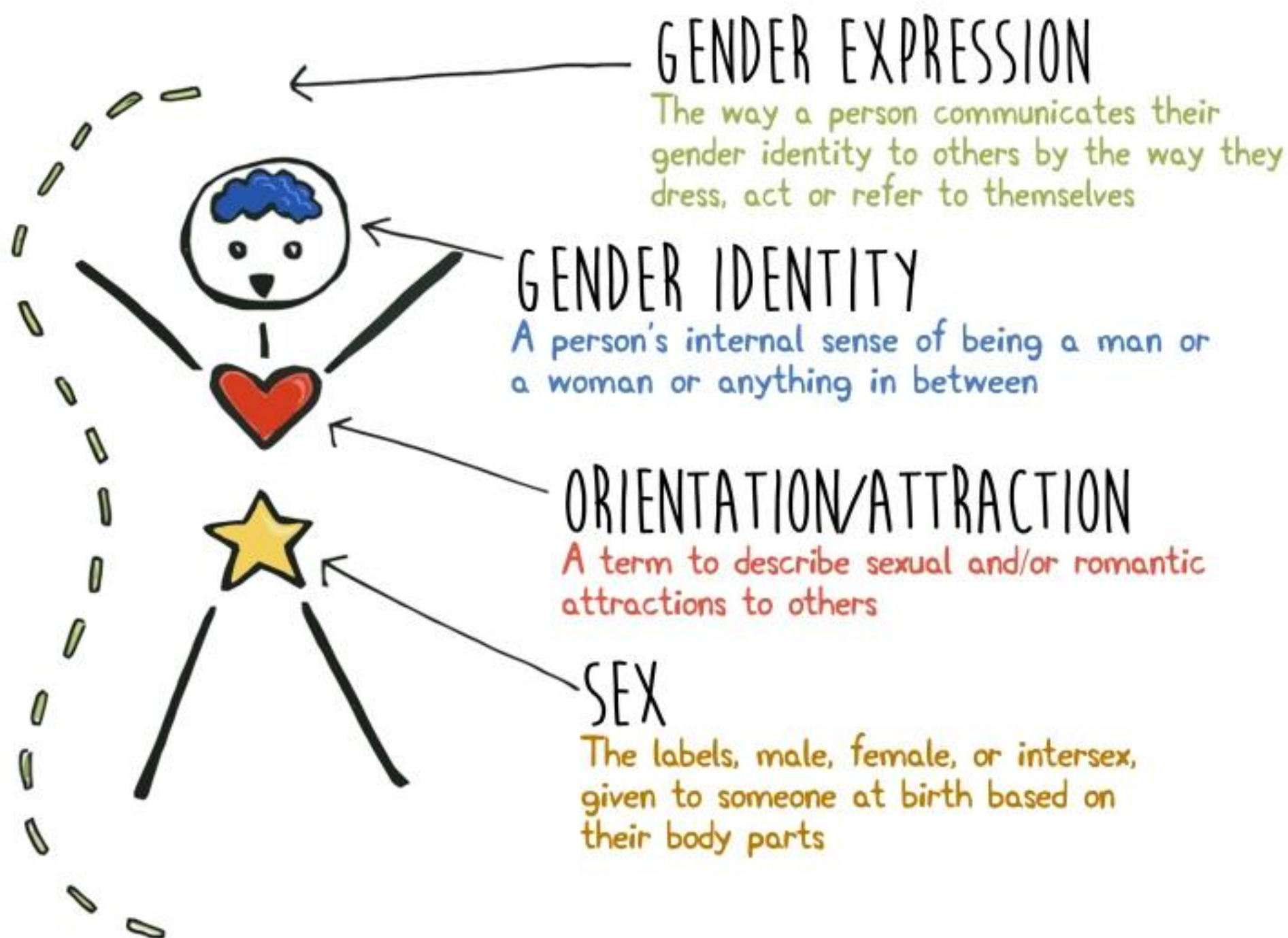
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BBC



she  
beautiful  
delicate  
tough  
her  
him  
bossy  
girl  
pretty  
he  
handsome



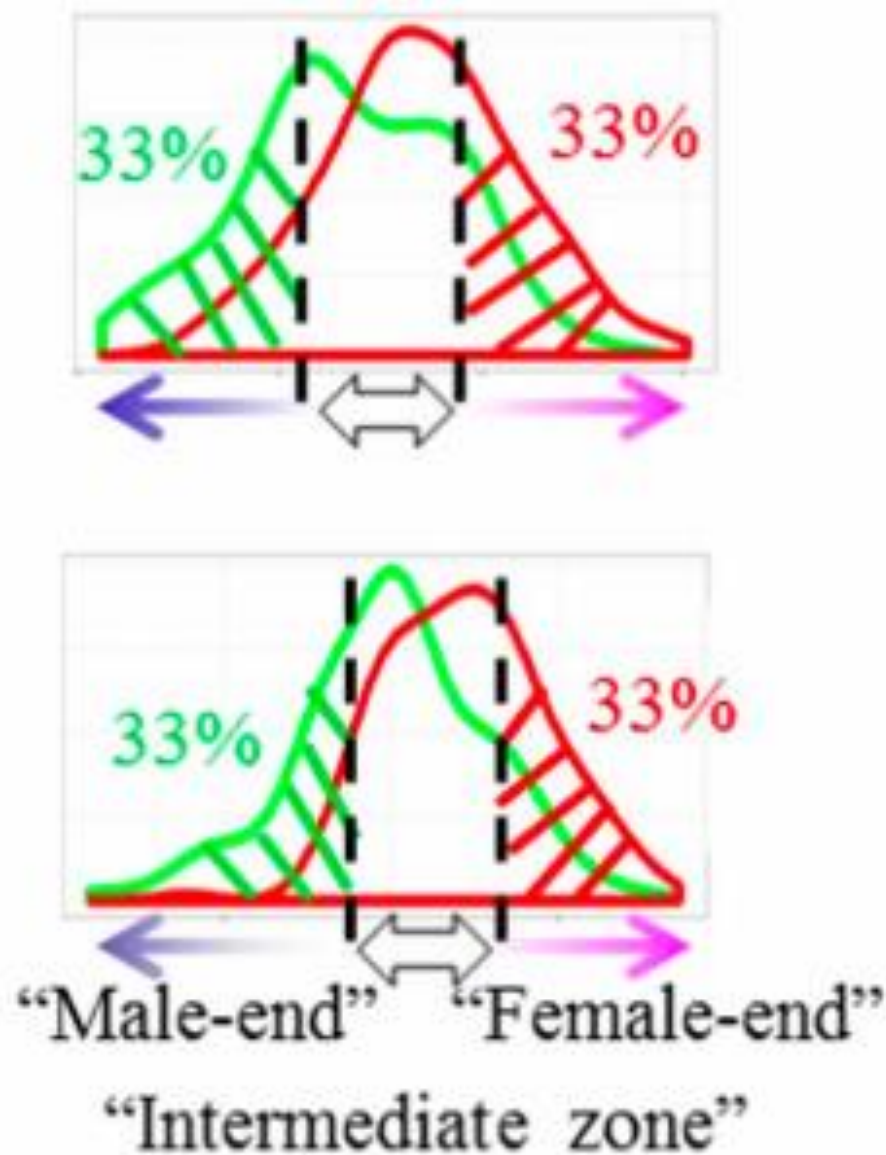
# Differential Teacher Attention

- Overall boys receive more attention than girls
- 60% of student directed gaze was towards boys
- Girls received less criticism and less instruction
- Boys received more academic and behavioural criticisms
- Boys received more negative feedback
- Educators are more likely to interact with children in indoor play than outdoor play and more likely to offer cohorts with a larger number of boys increased outdoor play time

There is a large body of research that demonstrates that by three and four years of age children develop stereotypical understandings of identity norms about gender and sexuality. These intersect with other norms and stereotypes of identity including those associated with ethnicity, class, and ability amongst others.

source: (Blaise, 2005; Lane, 2008; MacNaughton, 2000, 2005; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Taylor, 2015; Srinivasan, 2014)





Professor Daphna Joel has mapped the differences between male brains and female brains and has found that while there are some male and female characteristics, each person's brain is a mosaic of masculine and feminine and that there are more similarities than differences. And that something as simple as stress; in utero or after birth, can change the 'maleness' or 'femaleness' of a person's brain.





# The Ugly Truth



# of Children's Books







GIRLS ONLY ♡

NO BOYS ALLOWED



# Let children be children ...

Yearning to ***belong...***

Wanting to just ***be...***

Waiting to ***become.***



Sorry, Teacher, but where do the kids whose most salient identity isn't gender and instead self-identify as "awesome" line up?





Respecting family values  
or creating  
equitable environments

As a parent entered my service today, they noticed that another child (who is a boy) dressed up in a dress. She pulled her child aside (who is also a boy) and told him not to wear the dress like that boy (she also named the child). She then approached me and told me to make sure that her son does not dress up in a dress. I then replied with much confusion and said no problem.

She then came to pick her child up and pulled aside another educator and made the same comment as she did to me in the morning though added that she does not want her child dressing up in dresses because as she is a psychologist she believes that it will mess with his head.

She continued on and said that we should not be allowing other boys to dress up in dresses as it will too mess with their heads.

My question is, how would you deal with this?

We are upholding her request and not allowing her child to dress up in dresses by offering other options.

# Who benefits from gender glorious environments?

Transgender & non-binary children

Gender non-conforming children

all cisgender girls and boys

trans, non-binary & gender non-conforming staff

trans, non-binary & gender non-conforming family members

“In 2015 15.7 % of girls as compared to 28.2% of boys were found to be developmentally vulnerable at school entry. The primary gender differences, which were found across all socio-economic groups, were in the areas of ‘Social competence’ and ‘Emotional maturity’ as well as language abilities (AEDC, 2015; Lamb et al., 2015). Social and emotional measures of vulnerability explained a significant portion of this gender variation (Doyle, 2015; Lamb et al., 2015).”

What does a gender glorious  
childhood look like?









My First Kwanzaa Book  
Illustrated by: [illegible]  
[illegible]

LATKE, THE LUCKY DOG  
Illustrated by: [illegible]  
[illegible]

How The GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS!  
by Dr. Seuss





# who is in your family?



## our families come in all different shapes and sizes.

These are just some of the family formations in our community. Australian children are being raised by mum and dad, by two mums or two dads, by one parent, step-parents, co-parents and grandparents, by aunts, uncles, brothers and sisters, and in blended, extended, intergenerational, kinship, adoptive and foster families. Some children have a sperm or egg donor or a surrogate who helped to make them. Sometimes that person is known to the child, and might be part of their family.

In rainbow families, one or more of the parents or carers identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex or queer. Australian and international research shows that it is the quality of parenting relationships that determines children's wellbeing, not their family structure or the gender identity of their parents or carers.\* It's love that makes a family.

\*Dempsey, B. (2012) Same-Sex Parented Families in Australia, Child Family Community Australia Research Paper No. 70, Australian Institute of Family Studies.

People use different words to describe their family. At childcare, in kindergarten or at school, this poster can help start discussions about different families. Children can be asked, 'Who is in your family?' They can draw pictures of families, read books about different kinds of families and bring family photos to share. Maternal and Child Health and other community services can put up the poster to show support for diverse families. Service providers should ask, 'Who is in your family?' They should explain why this information is important to providing their service, and what they will do with it.

Proudly produced by Rainbow Families Council and supported by the City of Darlington.  
For information and more resources visit [www.rainbowfamilies.org.au](http://www.rainbowfamilies.org.au).

rainbow families council  
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# Sweden's gender-neutral preschools produce kids who are more likely to succeed

By [Lila MacLellan](#) • June 18, 2017



Such efforts are probably paying off. In a small study published in *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, researchers at Uppsala University in Sweden report that children who attended one gender-neutral preschool were more likely to play with unfamiliar children of the opposite gender, and less likely to be influenced by culturally enforced gender stereotypes, compared to children enrolled at other pre-schools. Tests showed that the kids from the gender-neutral school were as likely as other children to group people by gender, but didn't attach traditional associations to the concepts of "male" or "female" children to the same degree. During a matching task, for instance, they were less likely to make choices in line with cultural norms when shown images of boys or girls and jeans or dresses.

Following completion of Women-Work-City, city officials turned their attention to Vienna's network of public parks and commissioned a study to see how men and women use park space. What they found was surprising.

The study, which took place from 1996 to 1997, showed that **after the age of nine, the number of girls in public parks dropped off dramatically**, while the number of boys held steady. Researchers found that girls were less assertive than boys. If boys and girls would up in competition for park space, the boys were more likely to win out.

City planners wanted to see if they could reverse this trend by changing the parks themselves. In 1999, the city began a redesign of two parks in Vienna's fifth district. Footpaths were added to make the parks more accessible and volleyball and badminton courts were installed to allow for a wider variety of activities. Landscaping was also used to subdivide large, open areas into semi-enclosed pockets of park space. **Almost immediately, city officials noticed a change.** Different groups of people -- girls and boys -- began to use the parks without any one group overrunning the other.

When children co-design spaces...  
inviting the participation and  
empowerment of children

# Whole of centre approach

- **Policies**
- **Peer learning**
- **Resources for parents/carers**
- **Practice with children**
  - **offer a gender rich environment**
  - **discuss gender rather than ignore**
  - **challenge children's assumptions**
  - **offer a range of adult role models**



# Resources

## Books

***The Anti-bias Approach in Early Childhood*, Ed: Red Ruby Scarlet**

***Delusions of Gender*, Cordelia Fine**

***Pink Brain, Blue Brain*, Lise Eliot**

***Rethinking Gender in Early Childhood*, Glenda McNaughton**

**Growing up Free: raising your child in the 80s, Pogrebin**

**Kerry Robinson**

**Blaise**

## Organisations

**Body Safety Australia**

**The Gender Centre**

**Parents of Gender Diverse Children**

**Rainbow families**

**Social Justice in Early Childhood - facebook page**