

## Title:

The Role Of Gender Based Toys In A Changing Society

## Word Count:

866

## Summary:

Girls have dolls. Boys have figures. Action figures. But guess what? Its still a doll. We just cant quite bring ourselves to tell our sons to go and retrieve their doll from under the sofa. Its been drilled into us since birth. Okay, so what about the boy that wants to play with dolls? Is he destined to grow up to be gay or experience gender confusion? Its possible, but that would happen whether he is permitted to play with dolls or not. You cant create a more manly boy by handing him a toy gun and you cant create a more feminine girl by handing her a Barbie doll. We react to children who wish to experience traditionally opposite gender toys with our own fears and discomfort. Theres shame (although not a necessary one) for the father who tries to admit that his son would rather play with his sister and her girly toys than be outside with his father roughing it around with a football. Theres a sense of disappointment and fear of the future.

## Keywords:

Toy Sellers

## Article Body:

Girls have dolls. Boys have figures. Action figures. But guess what? Its still a doll. We just cant quite bring ourselves to tell our sons to go and retrieve their doll from under the sofa. Its been drilled into us since birth. Okay, so what about the boy that wants to play with dolls? Is he destined to grow up to be gay or experience gender confusion? Its possible, but that would happen whether he is permitted to play with dolls or not. You cant create a more manly boy by handing him a toy gun and you cant create a more feminine girl by handing her a Barbie doll. We react to children who wish to experience traditionally opposite gender toys with our own fears and discomfort. Theres shame (although not a necessary one) for the father who tries to admit that his son would rather play with his sister and her girly toys than be outside with his father roughing it around with a football. Theres a sense of disappointment and fear of the future.

In most cases children who experiment with the opposite gender toys are either simply curious, are weeding out their own feelings about ideas and concepts that

have nothing to do with sexuality, or are just going through a harmless phase. We dont worry too much about a girl who wants to play football but we march the boy who was found playing with his mothers make up off to the nearest psychologist.

When my son was about to turn three, the only thing he wanted for his birthday was an Easy Bake Oven. When he opened it (a gift from a family friend) his eyes little up like he was on fire and he twined the expression, "My Eeeeeeeeasy Bake!" He loved it. He also played soccer the following year. He likes to cook, and thats all it amounts to. Society decided that Easy Bake Ovens should be pink and therefore are for girls. If it was a neutral color, people would have reacted a bit differently. But his Easy Bake Oven made members of my family uncomfortable.

Children are pretty slick creatures, picking up just as much on what adults around them neglect to say as often as what they do say. There is more damage done in making a child feel abnormal for playing with the "wrong toy" than there is his or her experimentation. It can be a little disconcerting for a parent when their child seems drawn to the opposite gender toys, but at the same time it can be very liberating for the child. Theres nothing wrong with a man who can hold his weight in the kitchen and can sew his own buttons back onto his pants and theres nothing wrong with a woman who has learned to use her brains over her good looks to achieve things in life. These traits start out with the toys kids play with when they are young.

We expect girls to start beautifying themselves at a young age. We give them dolls to practice on, play make up, and little dresses to climb into. This is fine for some girls, who enjoy the process. There is nothing wrong with enjoying your own gender. However, for the girl who would rather read a good book than paint her nails, this expectation can be a little overwhelming. The same rings true for boys, as there are those who think gardening and baking are the two best hobbies in the world and just arent interested in tossing around a baseball. Having non-gender related toys in the house, or a mix of gender based toys in the house, is one of the best ways to handle the situation. Normalizing childrens toys makes everyone, especially the child, more comfortable. Perhaps one day Junior feels like whipping up some of those really great chocolate chip cookies that an Easy Bake Oven can turn out and the next day he is finding worms for the garden. Theres not a woman in the world who complains because her husband is too helpful in the kitchen. Allowing boys to access their nurturing side doesnt mean they will turn out to be gay. They just might turn out to be incredibly faithful and involved fathers. Allowing girls to access their intelligence and their own power of perceptive ability doesnt mean they will turn out to be deficient. It means that they will have achieved success in life

by using their faculties, and no one will be able to claim that they slept their way to the top.

Lifes expectations are changing. What is actually acceptable is changing. Our fears are the last on the list to readily change. Its unfortunate, really, how our own fears inhibit our childrens ability to learn about themselves and the world around them in an unstructured and free fashion. We teach them at such a young age that they have a role to fill, and those who deviate are somehow destined for futures of mishaps and shame. Its just a childs toy playing to a childs imagination which, in all reality, is one of the most beautiful graces in the world.