Laying out a script for students' emotions through gender and emotion socialisation

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Abstract

Acknowledging the harmful impact gender stereotypes have on children's social and emotional development and education (Fawcett Society, 2020; King *et al.*, 2021) is essential to fostering a positive developmental process. Utilising a gender and emotion socialisation lens, this preliminary study investigates the expression of gender stereotypes and feeling rules in school interactions. Building from Judith Butler's (2006) theory of gender performativity and Arlie Hochschild's (1979, 2012) concepts of feeling rules and emotion work, an ethnographic study was conducted at a Portuguese primary school in the spring of 2023. The preliminary data observed feeling rules and gender stereotypes in classroom discourse, learning material, and student acts.

Keywords: Emotion socialisation, feeling rules, gender inequalities, gender socialisation; gender stereotypes

Resumo

**Elaborando um guião para as emoções dos estudantes
por meio da socialização de género e das emoções**

Reconhecer o impacto prejudicial que os estereótipos de género têm no desenvolvimento social e emocional e na educação das crianças (Fawcett Society, 2020; King *et al.*, 2021) é essencial para criar um processo de desenvolvimento positivo. Utilizando uma lente de socialização de

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género e emoção, este estudo preliminar investiga a expressão de estereótipos de género e regras de sentimento nas interações escolares. Com base na teoria da performatividade de género de Judith Butler (1979, 2006) e nos conceitos de regras de sentimento e trabalho emocional de Arlie Hochschild (2012), foi realizado um estudo etnográfico numa escola primária portuguesa na primavera de 2023. Os dados preliminares observaram regras de sentimento e estereótipos de género no discurso da sala de aula, no materiais aprendizagem e nas ações dos estudantes.

Palavras-chave: Socialização das emoções, regras de sentimentos, desigualdades de género, socialização de género, estereótipos de género

Résumé

**Élaborer un script pour les émotions des étudiants
à travers la socialisation de genre et des émotions**

Reconnaître l'impact néfaste des stéréotypes de genre sur le développement social et émotionnel des enfants et sur leur éducation (Fawcett Society, 2020; King *et al.*, 2021) est essentiel pour favoriser un processus de développement positif. En utilisant l'optique de la socialisation du genre et des émotions, cette étude préliminaire examine l'expression des stéréotypes de genre et des règles de sentiment dans les interactions à l'école. En s'appuyant sur la théorie de la performativité du genre de Judith Butler (1979, 2006) et sur les concepts de règles de sentiment et de travail émotionnel d'Arlie Hochschild (2012), une étude ethnographique a été menée dans une école primaire portugaise au printemps 2023. Les données préliminaires ont permis d'observer les règles du sentiment et les stéréotypes de genre dans le discours de la classe, le matériel d'apprentissage et les actions des élèves.

Mots-clés: socialisation des émotions, règles de sentiments, inégalités de genre, socialisation de genre, stéréotypes de genre

Introduction

Portuguese students averaged between 162 to 180 days (depending on their educational level), nearly half a year, of instruction time at the end of the 2021/2022 academic school year (European Commission, 2021). A significant portion of the learning day typically involves students engaging with their classmates and/or teachers outside of academic moments, such as recess or morning and end-of-day preparation times. The socialising aspect privileged to schools should be recognised, as outside of the students' families schools are one of the most socialising contexts encountered (Horner and Wallace, 2013). Identities are developing and social and emotional competencies are also evolving as most school-aged children are confronted with numerous social interactions each day. Although there is a significant level of socialisation occurring in students' homes, attention directed towards secondary socialisation, through a gender and emotion socialisation lens, will

be addressed in this article.

As part of an ongoing research investigation, this preliminary study intended to identify how feeling rules and gender stereotypes were expressed and manifested in an academic setting. This step in the research investigation serves as the basis for the study's principal hypothesis: *The expression, understanding, and management of emotions can be learned and acquired through the introduction and reproduction of gender stereotypes expressed through feeling rules as one does gender.* This initial step was required in order to document feeling rules and gender stereotypes at schools. The study that supports this article was conducted in the spring of 2023, utilising the concepts of feeling rules and emotion work (Hochschild, 1979, 2012) and *doing* gender, stemming from Butler's (2006) theory of gender performativity. Work from Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (2006) and Arlie Hochschild's *Managed Heart* (2012) will function as literary links between emotion and gender socialisation.[1]

1. Gender Socialisation at School

Schools serve as a main source for gender socialisation (Adler *et al.,* 1992; Bigler *et al.,* 2013; Molla, 2016) through the reinforcement and acquisition of gendered social norms, roles, and expectations. Children entering school will have learned and acquired gendered behaviours and attitudes associated with their identified genders as early as birth; then introducing those ideas to their classroom peers. Students adopt and acquire traditional gender roles (Nadler, 1985) and learn and create a gendered space, where cultural norms and beliefs are practiced (Adler *et al.*, 1992); a set of invisible rules and guidelines functioning as the parameters for this new *gendered* educational world. This notion of a gendered space where students exercise cultural norms is consistent with Bem's work (1983) as she writes how kids establish their own set of gender rules. While learning out-of-textbook content, students observe and interpret new or reinforced cultural and gendered norms and ideas that aid in the construction of their identities (Adler *et al.,* 1992; Brito *et al.*, 2021). Social interactions between class peers have a significant influence on the socialisation of children (Bigler et al., 2013); it is within the aforementioned "gendered space" that socialisation is happening.

Recent Portuguese ethnographic studies (Perreira, 2012; Brito *et al.,* 2021) have been carried out and identified this gendered educational world

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1 This article has adopted binary language: boy/girl or man/woman to align supporting literature with specific examples and descriptions from the class observations conducted.

through the documentation of gender stereotypes and gendered cultures and/or learning material at schools. Each study investigated a different age group while conducting a gender performative analysis, citing Judith Butler's (2006) theory of gender performativity. Perreira (2012) investigated gender being performed on the playground with young adolescents and Brito et al. (2021) studied how gender identity was re/constructed in a preschool-aged classroom through social interactions or reinforcement of gendered material. Both studies present the socialisation aspect granted to schools and highlight the necessity to continue studying gender in the classroom.

Utilising Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity (2006), this research takes the position that gender is a social construction, through the reproduction and continuation of performative gendered expressions. Gender roles, behaviour, and stereotypes all lead to what Butler refers to as performative acts in which gender is being created or done (Morgenroth and Ryan, 2018). Butler describes gender as a performative act that individuals [society] are *doing* as an external expression. As young boys play football during recess and young girls bring pink bookbags to school, gender is being done and reinforced. Butler asserts that when individuals are doing gender, they are performing what has been observed and culturally acquired through social interactions that have been introduced and reinforced by society (Morgenroth and Ryan, 2018). By performing a set of gender acts, students are creating and reinforcing gender through acts of gender expressions.

Risman (2018, p. 23) argues that adhering to gender stereotypes is an act of socialisation, and the collective gendered views and beliefs expressed through societal pressures are social inequalities in the making. If society, or young students specifically, are to adhere to preassigned gender roles, then boys would be socially guided by a behavioural compass that *should* direct them toward aggression or toughness, while girls should adhere to the submissive and deferential narratives that society has sketched out for them. The social behavioural ideals assigned to genders construct an unequal and imbalanced level of power, as well as a sense of gender accountability which results in social consequences should one behave outside of these gendered social norms (West and Zimmerman, 1987; Butler, 2006; Morgenroth and Ryan, 2018; Perreira, 2012).

2. Emotion Socialisation at School

As students acquire and adopt gendered norms, they also learn to express, manage, and identify emotions based on their "emotion culture" through

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emotion socialisation (Peterson *et al.,* 2006, p.122). Through experienced social contexts, students reinforce, learn, and acquire information to express, manage, and understand their emotions. Classroom instructors are also involved in similar interactions of emotion socialisation as parents (Morris *et al.,* 2013), with classroom instructors being critical instruments in the facilitation of emotion socialisation in the classroom (Valiente *et al.,* 2020; Bølstad *et al.*, 2023). Teachers are, after all, role models, and their emotional management and comprehension competencies, backgrounds, including morals and values, and teaching styles will have an influence on emotions expressed in the classroom (Hargreaves, 1998; Valiente *et al.*, 2020).

Students and instructors exchange numerous social interactions throughout the school day, with the inclusion of a myriad of emotions and feeling expressions. Internalising the emotions of others occurs within our students' social interactions as Cerejo and Lisboa (2018, p. 159) write "… recognition of the emotional states of others is one of the foundations of social interaction processes…". While engaging in social interactions, individuals must have the capability to understand and identify the emotions of others. Students are tasked with understanding and processing their emotions and those of others, as well as effectively and emotionally interacting in diverse environments, such as schools, through the process of emotion socialisation.

3. Social Process of Managing, Understanding, and Identifying Emotions

Arlie Hochschild's work in *Managed Heart* (2012) introduces feeling rules, social norms and expectations that guide emotional behaviour; and emotion work, the efforts made to shift one's emotions externally. Hochschild writes that individuals manage and express their emotions based on societal expectations that have been prescribed to certain social groups and roles, i.e. gendered groups and roles (Hochschild, 2012). The social roles that could be adopted in a school setting (i.e., intelligent student (nerd), class clown, and athlete) are attached to a set of feeling rules that students presume must be expressed or that are expected from society (other students, parents, or instructors). Feeling rules may reinforce gender expectations or roles that children have already experienced through social interactions, such as "boys shouldn't cry", or may also function as a model or guide on how certain genders should manage and express their emotions based on gender roles, or how to understand and expect the emotions of others.

When gendered roles and groups are assigned particular feeling rules, such as girls should be timid or young boys should be tough, gender

stereotypes are conveyed through gender stereotyping of emotions (Plant *et al.*, 2000). Feeling rules produce expectations and guidelines based on the beliefs of how a gender should behave emotionally, perpetuating gender stereotypes while causing actions or effects: *emotionally responding within the gendered social norms*. Explicitly adopting a role was observed as boys were spoken to after rough play during a football game. One boy in particular was quite aggressive and physical with another student, in which the student responded to the teacher that was how the football players on the Manchester United team played; they *hit* each other. The student had assigned an emotional and physical behaviour to the role of "football player" that he then adopted and used to justify his actions during recess.

By applying Arlie Hochschild's (1979, 2012) concepts of feeling rules and emotion work and Judith Butler's (2006) theory of gender performativity, a deeper analysis into the social interactions in the classroom can be deconstructed, using gender stereotyping of emotions as the medium. Observing gender expressions through feeling rules or emotion work outlines a social process in how students acquire or develop the understanding of how to express, manage, or understand emotions. Butler's gender performativity theory, which centres on how individuals *do* gender through performative acts, shows how feeling rules or emotion work are examples of gendered performative acts that are then reproduced throughout the school day, eventually becoming an expression that plays a role in how students manage, express, and understand emotions based on their gender identification. Feeling rules and acts of emotion work that are expressed and reproduced, are performatively acted, and can reinforce gender stereotypes and gender roles, influencing the emotional development of children.

4. Methods

As part of a preliminary study of a research investigation continued through the academic school year of 2023/2024, an ethnographic study was conducted at a public primary school in Lisbon with a second-grade class made up of 22 students: 14 boys and 8 girls, between the ages of seven and nine. Fifteen students were from Portugal, three students from Brazil, one student from Cabo Verde, one student from Angola, one student from Nepal, and one student from Ukraine. Forming the nucleus of this research is a symbolic interactionist perspective, a position supporting the notion that social interactions and the various meanings associated to them are the building blocks used to shape and create identities. Immersing oneself

into the research environment required a research method, such as an ethnography, that provided a wide lens and the flexibility to observe social interactions evolving and changing, reflecting the evolution of behaviour.

The structure of the ethnographic timeline was adopted from Marlies Kustatscher's work (2015) and began with one day per week in late January and ended with one day per week at the end of June: totalling 29 days and just over 100 hours. Different moments during the school year were observed: Carnaval, Spring Holiday/Easter Break, Mother's Day, Father's Day, and the End-of-the-Year School Performances. Science, Portuguese, and Mathematics lessons, as well as Physical Education and recess were observed. Classes were conducted in Portuguese with all students and instructors being native Portuguese speakers, with the exception of the students from Ukraine, Nepal, and Cabo Verde and myself. These specific classes were observed as they were instructed by the homeroom teacher, who had volunteered to allow class observations to occur. Physical Education was taught by a different teacher, who also agreed to be observed after a request had been made. Recess was more of an open observation space that was granted by the headmaster. All notes and observations were recorded in notebooks, discarding the idea of using technology, i.e. laptop or iPad/tablet, as this could lead to a distraction for the students.

Initial interest in the researcher's place of origin arose, as well as confusion regarding the idea that *everyone* was a student, which was the "identity" assumed by the researcher. Throughout the semester, the role of the researcher developed and shifted from "fly on the wall" to a more involved participant observer, sometimes being invited to participate in class activities or games at recess. Usually, the researcher limited participation and maintained an observer role to gain an overall perspective of the class. The two students who were not native Portuguese speakers sometimes required an English translation to understand the task and assistance would be requested or given, changing the researcher's role into educator (the researcher's professional background).

Observations were mostly recorded from students' group tables or benches around the school's playground. Sitting at a group table allowed for closer insights into conversations and interactions, as well as a spatial perspective of what students experienced, as there was an opportunity to sit at all group tables. There was a specific table, located towards the back of the classroom, where the majority of time was spent as the position provided an overall view of the class. Other seats in the classroom did not offer

unobstructed views of the front board or the homeroom teacher's desk, or all of the students were not in sight.

Over time, students, especially at the table where the researcher was usually seated, became more familiar and comfortable. While this was not directly verbalised, the number of curious stares for extensive periods decreased, and overall body language was more relaxed, with more dialogues and questions arising. Increased curiosity into what was being written also occurred, usually followed by questions. Seeing as the notes were written 90% in English and 10% in Portuguese (in moments where writing fast was required, it was easier to maintain Portuguese), it was difficult for students to understand the written notes, sometimes resulting in students seeking guidance from English speakers (student with a parent from the United Kingdom and student from Nepal) in the classroom. When questions did peak, these dialogues usually took place during recess. Dialogues with the homeroom teacher also occurred during Physical Education or during brief monthly lunch meetings, to review the progress of the project. Most dialogues between the homeroom teacher and the researcher involved background information into the students' academic and home lives, which provided greater understanding into observations made.

Prior to beginning the study, consent forms were given to all legal guardians in both English and Portuguese explaining the purpose of the study. The data and observations collected, names of students and educational staff, and the identity of the school have been treated completely confidentially. This study has adopted a childhood studies framework in that students are participants and not subjects; that is, it is a study *with* students and not *on* students.

Examples of feeling rules and gender stereotypes were quickly recorded when observed throughout the school day. Microsoft Excel served as the initial software to record the handwritten notes, and these files were eventually transferred and coded on MAXQDA software. After reviewing the recorded notes, three categories were created to present how gender and emotion socialisation (in the form of gender stereotypes and feeling rules) manifested in the classroom. The categories of analysis were: 1) **Discourse**; 2) **Learning Material**; and 3) **Student Actions**. Category 1 includes social interactions that were directly and verbally communicated and relayed gendered ideas or gendered emotion-related messages/acts. Category 2 refers to gender stereotypes and feeling rules present in learning material. The last category, Category 3, was challenging to classify as it involved actions from different

school settings, such as class performance and playground activities. These observations reflect actions embedded with gender stereotypes or feeling rules, and/or when emotion work was being performed. Each category served as a specific lens to understand how gender and emotion socialisation manifested.

5. Results

Nearly 1,000 social interactions containing gender stereotypes and feeling rules were recorded throughout the spring semester and over 800 of those were organised into each of the categories. Roughly 80% of the observations were Student Actions, Discourse about 10% of the time, and Learning Material less than 10% of the observations. Student Actions was recorded every observation day and Discourse was the next most common category, being recorded 20 out of the 29 days. The category appearing the least was Learning Material with a presence of 18 days. Some examples from each category can be observed in Table 1.

**TABLE 1. OBSERVATIONS FROM DISCOURSE, LEARNING MATERIAL,
AND STUDENT ACTIONS CATEGORIES**

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES
Discourse	• Using Terms of Endearment: *princesa vs. senhor* • Challenging Feeling Rules: Class discussion on how people can be sad without crying • Doing Feeling Rules: Students being tasked with verbally expressing and reflecting on actions (usually during peer-peer arguments) • Giving hugs during *Conselho de Turma* (could also be in "Student Actions")

Learning Material	• Gendering Emotion in Literature: Boys/Men (aggressor) and Girls/Women (victim) • Presenting Feeling Rules: Video Presentation explaining how sorry, or *desculpa*, does not always solve conflicts. Repeated gendered emotion stereotypes with aggressive boy character and timid, victim girl with woman instructor encircled by hearts. • Gendered Colour Coordination: Colour Sexism – Using pink for boys and green for girls gives a reason to be upset (two separate stories); and using pink classroom instruments to discipline a boy.
Student Actions	• Boy students being more interactive (volunteering answers, shouting answers, or correcting students) during academic classes, such as maths or science, and girls being more timid and shyer/quieter. • Cheering and throwing fists in the air to congratulate students who completed a science activity. When students were unable to achieve the set goal, there was mostly silence. • Group of boy students being physically aggressive towards another student (boy) during recess. The student did not respond and continued to play until returning to the classroom (emotion work).

6. Discussion

Quantifying the categories produced unexpected results, slightly overshadowing a complete look into the repetition and reproduction of gender stereotypes/gendered emotions present in the classroom. Student Actions were recorded every observation day, and the data shows that Discourse and Learning Material were both present about two-thirds of the observation days. Consider learning material: gender stereotyped-posters on

the walls, or gender stereotyped-stories discussed for one-two weeks; it is known that these were repeated (observed) on more than one day, even though not conveyed in the data. Recording gender stereotyped-material each day it was present, such as a story discussed over many classes or a gender stereotyped-poster on the wall for weeks, could have provided a greater view into the repetition and reproduction of gendered material. Recognising this is important to clarify, as the repetition of class discussions about stories or gender-stereotyped material were also observed despite not being quantified. The following sections describe each category and/or examples in greater detail.

6.1. Category 1: Discourse

Originating from Austin's speech act theory (1955), speech such as words, utterances, and phrases are understood to have performative responses. When an individual articulates a statement, this also creates effects, such as performative actions. These verbal acts are also examples of expressions, and in the context of this research, they are gendered expressions. Butler writes how speech is a bodily gesture with a linguistic consequence (p.26, 2006); speaking is something we *do*.

Category 1*. Discourse: Using Terms of Endearment*

When a student is called *princesa*, expectations and ideas of what it means to be a girl could be attached or assumed. A multiple-choice question from the students' textbook tasked students with matching the phrase "pretty girl" (*menina bonita*) with a word: A) witch (*bruxa*); B) princess (*princesa*) – correct answer; and C) green goblin (*duende verde*), supporting the idea that a princess is someone who is pretty. The common usage of this term arguably reflects the stereotypical gender role society expects from young girls: submissive, caring, obedient, aesthetically pleasing, and timid, to name a few characteristics (Bai, 2022). Emotionally and traditionally, Disney princesses are not usually portrayed as strong and confident characters compared to their "prince charming", whom they seek to marry. This idea mirrors West and Zimmerman's (1987) analysis of how men are socially connected to dominant behaviour while women are more submissive. The social representations and stereotypes displayed by fairytale characters reinforce hegemonic masculinity models and also symbolise a stage of development and preparation of women for their social roles as wives and later on, mothers (Mira, 2017), reinforcing their presence within the private

sphere and consequently removing the theme from the public domain.

Addressing boys as *senhor* associates a higher status to boys, as society commonly uses "Mr."/ "Mrs."/ "Ms." to show rank and respect within social classes, as well as power. Status can be observed as a very powerful tool in the dynamics between individual and socialisation as it may serve as an incentive to assimilate cultural norms and practices. (Bigler *et al*., 2013).

Category 1. *Discourse: Challenging and Doing Feeling Rules*

Not only does teaching require a certain degree of empathy, but instructors also have the responsibility of teaching emotions, which has been evidenced by the number of Social and Emotional Learning programmes incorporated into school curricula in the last decade (*Devagar se vai ao longe* – social and emotional competency programme in Portugal). The homeroom teacher's reflection on expressing sadness worked to build students' emotional understanding as they understood crying and being sad to be a mutually exclusive relationship; this not only positively affects students' social skills but also positively impacts their academic performance (Bahman and Maffini, 2008).

Each week students met to discuss class issues and concerns during class meetings, or *Conselho de Turma* (class council), where conflicts would often be resolved, involving both student and teacher input. Observing the teacher routinely require students to reflect on their actions, taught students to understand and manage their emotions, displaying once more how emotion socialisation occurs at school and can be facilitated or "socialised" through caregiver-child interactions, such as teacher-student relationships (Cekaite and Ekström, 2019). Following resolved conflicts or misunderstandings was usually an apology: saying "sorry" or "*desculpa*", accompanied by a hug between the involved students. When one responded or asked for forgiveness, a hug would follow. Even though considered a positive act of affection, how or why had giving a hug become an accessory attached to the word "sorry"? Does an apology without a hug imply a less sincere apology, and is it socially acceptable to hug anyone every time apologies are exchanged – regardless of gender or age? Communicating an apology is arguably one of society's most common feeling rules associated with repentance, while giving a hug was observed as a physical response to an apology despite any verbal cues given.

6.2. Category 2: Learning Material

Learning material refers to posters, textbooks and library books, worksheets, and/or presentations presented to students. Observing and analysing learning material allows for the understanding of the forms of gender stereotypes/ feeling rules taught, reinforced, and potentially acquired by students.

Category 2. *Learning Material: Gendering Emotion in Literature*

Occurrence of gender-stereotyped literature material has been documented in a number of studies (Peterson and Lach, 1990; Hamilton *et. al*, 2006; Damigellaa and Licciardello, 2014; Samagaio, 2018), where common depictions of gender stereotyping of emotions were observed with sensitive girl characters and tough boy characters, or an imbalanced number of men and women were used to represent specific professionals. Frequent portrayals of similar gender-stereotyped and gendered emotions were present in class material. While inundated with inaccurate gender representations, gender stereotyped portrayals in children's literature can lead students to accept gender roles which guide towards a specific gendered behaviour (Taylor, 2003). Serving as one of the most important learning tools for students, the content found in textbooks or on library shelves function as very powerful socialisation tools (Zipes, 1981; Tepper *et al.*, 1999), and can further develop gendered ideas (Samagaio, 2018).

Category 2. *Learning Material: Presenting Feeling Rules*

By means of video presentation, feeling rules were taught as the presenters discussed the effectiveness of saying *desculpa* (sorry) and how apologising does not always alleviate emotional wounds. Similarly to past literature, the video introduced stereotypical gendered emotions: aggressive (boy) and vulnerable (girl), and the girl accidentally bumped into the boy who responded angrily and aggressively. Presenting boys as aggressive and girls as less aggressive, reflects socially emotional and cultural stereotypes and expectations.

Furthermore, the instructor, whose role it was to address what had occurred, was displayed with hearts encircling her. This also served to create an image of the nurturing girl/woman stereotype. Wikler (1976) conducted a research study that reflects this precise idea, in which students expected instructors who were women to be nicer and more approachable than instructors who were men (Hochschild, 2012). This is a social norm and

stereotype placed upon teachers/professors on the basis of their gender.

Following the presentation was a brief discussion on what to do when students feel angry and upset. A boy provided a more active approach by suggesting listening to music and a girl proposed writing, while another girl expressed thinking of "pretty words and images". These responses reflected stereotypical gender emotional management methods: active or aggressive and passive or more peaceful, the latter being for girls.

Category 2. *Learning Material: Gendered Colour Coordination*

As pink is stereotypically and socially accepted as a feminine colour in Western countries (Yilmaz *et al.*, 2018), a story plot involving an angry boy borrowing a pink bookbag or disciplining boy students with the use of pink class instruments implies that boys should not use the colour pink. Linking anger and the colour pink, as the storyline did, follows the gender stereotype that pink is for girls and not for boys, stigmatising the colour and expressing sexism through colour. In this instance, receiving a pink item equates to being angry, and is a feeling rule within this social interaction: *boys should be angry when they are assigned a pink object* (or a stereotypical girl object).

Additionally, as pink stereotypically symbolises a feminine characteristic, boys may assume that they are to be angered when they are assigned a stereotypical feminine object or, a girl may feel inferior by witnessing a colour socially assigned to girls be stigmatised in class content, by adult role models, and perhaps class peers. This may also influence boys who like the colour and could conflict with their opinions in regard to the colour. By using the colour pink, an individual is *doing* girl and the feeling rule attached says boys should be angry if they have to use a pink object (or more generally, an object socially assigned to girls). Gender stereotypes in this example have the ability to relay messages on how students should manage, express, and understand their emotions, and those of others.

6.3 Category 3: Student Actions

Student Actions involve social interactions where gender stereotypes and roles or feeling rules and emotion work were observed through physical actions or the lack thereof. Category 3 attempted to capture students *doing* gender.

Category 3. *Student Actions: Class Performance*

Believing that boys are academically sharper at maths, or more generally, in the STEM fields, than girls, and that girls have stronger linguistic skills is a common academic misconception (Dickinson, 2021). Even though some teachers hold these traditional beliefs, most boys and girls enter school at a similar academic level (Gentrup and Rjosk, 2018). When teachers have higher expectations for specific groups of students, typically these students tend to perform better (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968), and this has an influence on a student's perception of themself (Ertl *et al.*, 2017). Studies show that boys tend to be more confident than girls in mathematics (Hart, 1989; Geist and King, 2008), which was a frequently observed interaction not only in mathematics, but during all academic classes.

Girls often appeared to be less confident, quieter, and more timid to respond to questions than boys, who frequently responded, as well as interrupted class peers and the instructor with answers or correcting students (sometimes providing an incorrect answer when correcting students). This behaviour is aligned with the work by Fennema *et al.* (1990) who observed a first-grade class where boys were more likely to volunteer maths answers, as well as enjoy the class more than girl peers. Accepting a gender role in an academic setting may instil subconscious rules on how one should express and manage emotions. If a girl holds the false belief that girls are bad at maths and is reluctant to answer a question, then this results in the student being less confident and nervous in this academic setting.

Additionally, there were moments when a degree of responsibility was placed upon girls, to ensure others were behaving correctly, usually during group work. On more than one occasion, the teacher asked a girl to inform her if her group members, who were boys, were misbehaving. Placing the responsibility on the girl to inform the teacher if the students misbehaved removes a sense of accountability from the boys and transforms that responsibility into a nurturing or disciplinary task, reflecting gender roles.

Category 3. *Student Actions: Recess*

After reflecting on Maria do Mar Perreira's ethnographic work (2012), where *doing* gender was observed during recess at a Portuguese school, it was apparent that the playground would present opportunities for students' personalities to become more visible. Access to the playground provided a space to observe students speak more freely and participate in different activities. Boys engaged in more aggressive and competitive activities and

girl activities were calmer and more passive. Adler *et al.* (1992) supports these observations as their work cites the role of boys to include activities that centre around ideas of masculinity and toughness, whereas girl roles traditionally include activities that focus on relationship building and emotional support, as well as appeal to enhancing physical appearances.

An overwhelming and toxic characteristic associated with boys or men is to be tough. In fact, when using the Cambridge Dictionary research tool to search for synonyms for "manly", suggestions included: "brave", "courageous", "fearless", and "powerful", as well as the antonym "weak". One afternoon, this idea that boys should be tough manifested into different actions on the playground: 1) eight students hitting and kicking another student while playing a game; and 2) the other student withstanding the physical acts. Boys who are more physically aggressive and insubordinate tend to be higher on the popularity scale than their fellow classmates who are less defiant (Adler *et al.,* 1992), perhaps functioning as an encouragement for the aforementioned behaviour.

When an individual manages their emotions, as to shape and create new emotions from what is felt internally, such as the boy maintaining a neutral state until returning to his classroom from recess, Hochschild refers to this as emotion work (1979, 2012). Whether the initial response to not cry and continue playing was related to gender expectations remains unknown and perhaps the student did not want to cry in front of his colleagues and show he was bothered. Research shows that boys are socialised into being "fearless" and girls are socially instructed to be "fearful" (Goodey, 1997). Placing the expectation of being fearless or tough in order to *be* a boy, or *doing boy*, could result in emotion work, such as the previous student hiding his feelings. Similarly, girls may also perform emotion work if they break stereotypes and are rarely fearless, or that is *doing girl*.

Expectations can be found in many places around a school that result in students being placed in a social interaction where emotion work is performed. How often do students find themselves in social interactions at school, a place that is supposed to be safe, that contradicts their internal feelings with their feelings that are out on display? Or, how common is it for students to adhere to gender roles and expectations that go against how they feel and think?

Conclusion: Gender Stereotypes, Feeling Rules, and Inequalities in the Classroom

Following the spring semester, numerous observations were recorded as gender stereotypes and feeling rules gave way for gendered emotions to be understood and studied through gender and emotion socialisation. Gender stereotypes laid out a script for students to use as an emotional guide. They continue to be active class members and material for children to become socialised into, being detrimental to the overall development of children. Students are learning how to perform and manage their emotions as they are presented with gendered emotion stereotypes that may be adopted as representative of the gender they identify with, having negative effects on their emotional development.

Through class literature or moments on the playground, or terms of endearment, gender stereotypes were reproduced throughout the school day. In some instances, the same gender stereotypes or gender roles, such as boys are the aggressor and girls are vulnerable, were repeated. Through gendered discourse and class material, feeling rules were directly (i.e., teacher sharing with students that they can be sad without crying) or indirectly (i.e., boy or girl story characters assuming gender stereotyped emotions/ feelings) introduced or reinforced, as well as reproduced. Students were not only confronted with gender expectations and gender roles, but were also observed acting them out, that is, *doing* gender.

As gender stereotypes are expressed through feeling rules, students may adopt and later reinforce these gender roles and expectations when expressing, managing, and understanding emotions. Using gender stereotypes to guide class performance can result in girls feeling less confident to volunteer answers or more timid to address a problem or prevent a boy from not only expressing sad feelings, but not knowing *how* to express sad feelings. While gender roles and expectations may limit students from expressing themselves freely, it also prevents students from learning *how* to express themselves, or that is, processing their emotions; thereby, understanding their emotions. Without developing the skills to express sadness or other emotions, a student would suppress their emotions. The suppression of emotions may also hinder a student's ability to be empathetic with class peers.

Gender stereotypes and roles teach girls to smile, be happy, and not be angry; to be conscious of their bodies; to adhere to stereotypical occupations; and to question their intelligence (or even be embarrassed by it

in some cases). Classroom observations made in the spring, reflect the idea that girls may feel more timid in front of their boy counterparts and this may be explained by the assumption that they are less academically talented. For boys, gender stereotypes instil the expectation that they must be tough, strong, courageous, and intelligent in STEM fields; and anger and violence are more socially acceptable and masculine.

As this study has exemplified, gender stereotypes and feeling rules are present in the classroom and are continuously reproduced and expressed. This can influence how students understand, express, and manage emotions through emotion and gender socialisation. By performatively acting the emotionally gendered expressions acquired and learned through gender stereotyping of emotions, students' social and emotional skills will be constructed from a foundation of gender stereotypes and roles, leading to the conformity of toxic and generational stereotypes and expectations. Understanding the intricate working of gender stereotyping of emotions and gender expressions and dismantling the patterns in the classroom is essential to providing a prosper learning and developmental environment for all students.

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