

Summary of “Teachers’ Perceptions of Their Students’ Gender Roles,” from *The Journal of Educational Research* by Moshe Tatar and Gina Emmanuel

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In this article, Tatar and Emmanuel (2001) conduct an exploratory study into the Israeli education system to determine the significance of teachers’ perceptions of gender roles on the behavior, aspirations, and expectations of students. Even though the Israeli Declaration of Independence (1948), demands equality without exception of religion, race, or sex, the authors report that gender inequalities are prevalent throughout Israeli society. In politics, the number of female parliament members decreased in 1996 from 10% to 7.5%. In business and management, women are only 2% of company directors, and on average they have higher levels of education than men in the same fields. In 1964, Israel passed a wage discrimination law specifically targeting gender pay discrepancies, yet women still earn 30% less than men.

The authors note that education systems typically seek to create learning environments conducive to all students achieving their potentials. The same is true the Israeli education system, but Tatar and Emmanuel found gender inequality in student achievement, aspirations, and self-evaluation. Stereotyping by parents, peers, and teachers influences and reasserts gender role stereotypes. Of these, they argue that teacher gender role stereotyping is the most influential in perpetuating educational discrepancies of gender; sadly, few studies address this. Some of examples of educational stereotyping are that girls are bad at math and technology, or that the man is the dominant one and works outside of the home at a prestigious job while the woman who is subordinate is confined to the house working menial jobs. Stunningly, the Israeli workforce is comprised of 45% women as compared to 63% men. This statistic indicates that though there are fewer women working, it is not as tremendous as social stereotypes would suggest. Globally, educational discrepancies exist. The American Association of University Women found that males perform forty points higher on the mathematic sections of the SAT. In the United Kingdom, girls are ahead of boys academically until age 16; this is generally true of countries with egalitarian educational systems. However in Israel, boys surpass girls academically at age nine; that is the earliest in the world, which indicates a high level of educational gender discrepancy.

In this study, Tatar and Emmanuel interviewed 221 Israeli teachers from 17 schools, both primary and secondary levels. Using a questionnaire, subjects were asked general background questions pertaining to gender, place of birth, education level, and subjects they taught. Following the demographic questions, the teachers then took the “Teacher Gender Role Attitudes Questionnaire,” on subjects like gender roles in education and questions that prompted comparisons between male and female students, i.e. “who does better in their studies or with technical items (217).” Tatar and Emmanuel found that female teachers and elementary school

teachers are the least likely to respond in ways that support gender stereotypes. In the Israeli classroom, Tatar and Emmanuel note that previous studies indicate that boys have a higher rate of interaction with their teachers at approximately fourteen interactions during a ten-day period as compared to female students who receive no interactions in the ten-day period. As a result, the authors conclude that the self-esteem and motivation of the girls is negatively affected. Tatar and Emmanuel (2001) found that secondary teachers were more discriminatory in their responses to the questionnaire, but that elementary stereotypes may take until secondary school to manifest. Interestingly though, male elementary teachers gave more gender equal responses to the questionnaire than female elementary teachers; perhaps because in Israel, elementary teaching by males is going against stereotyping itself. Tatar and Emmanuel also indicate that though teacher awareness/gender equality trainings were taken by 15% of study participants, teachers were not fully self-aware of their own needs to implement such training.

The strength of Tatar and Emmanuel's article is its innovation in researching an issue that is seldom addressed but significant. As the authors say themselves, teacher gender role stereotyping is the most significant factor in educational discrepancies of gender with very few studies focusing on it. It is acknowledged that teachers have the greatest influence on educational stereotypes but Tatar and Emmanuel are part of the minority attempting to address the problem. Also, the methodological approach of questioning both primary and secondary level teachers holistically examines possible situations of gender stereotyping in various educational contexts, further increasing the significance of their conclusions. Throughout the article, Tatar and Emmanuel are exceedingly insightful on what constitutes an educational stereotype, "that girls are bad at math and technology." This indicates the specificity of the questions used with teachers and further lends credence to the authors' conclusions and suggestions. Overall, the authors contributed holistic and insightful knowledge to an under-researched topic. As it is an exploratory study, Tatar and Emmanuel are cautious not to draw definite conclusions while providing significant insight into the issue of gender stereotyping in education and its results.

Tatar, Moshe and Gina Emmanuel.
2001 Teachers' Perceptions of Their Students' Gender Roles. *The Journal of Educational Research* 94(4):215-224.