

**THE REPERCUSSIONS OF PARENTAL REJECTION: INDIVIDUAL
INCONGRUENCE AND ANXIETY IN DAVID WALLIAM'S *THE BOY IN
THE DRESS***

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Abstract

The current movement in society away from binary classifications of "man" and "woman" is exemplified by recent initiatives such as gender-neutral restrooms, clothes, and terminology. The intention of the parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) is to forecast and elucidate the effects of acceptance-rejection in a broad range of interpersonal relationships throughout a person's lifetime. The study aimed to acquire new perspectives into potential relevance in evaluating how young people around the world see gender. Two potential motives for this evolution were determined and examined: first, many people might not identify with rigidly binary categories; second, there might be unfavourable societal repercussions. The interactions between the main character and other characters in David Walliam's book *The Boy in the Dress* are the main focus of the argument. Furthermore, this study expands the accepted definition of cultural appropriation beyond race to include gender and dissects the acts of gender fluidity portrayed in this performance. The main character Dennis in the story *The Boy in the Dress* is shown as being rejected by his parents due to the gender binary's underlying assumptions.

Keywords: Gender binary, parental acceptance - rejection, interpersonal relationships, societal repercussions, man, women, performance

Introduction:

West and Zimmerman's (1987) seminal work evaluate the ways individuals are deemed accountable to 'do gender' in everyday encounters. 'Doing gender' demands humans' attire, conduct, and engage in social contexts in ways that reveal their biological sex (Lorber, 1994; West & Zimmerman, 1987). When people 'do gender,' they generate a set of social distinctions between male and female categories, which West and Zimmerman (1987) argue are imitations. These presumptions comprise a framework for hetero and cisnormativity: the prioritization of social and cultural disparities resulting from the persistence of an essentialist, binary paradigm of gender (Bauer et al., 2009; Butler, 2007). According to theorists, hetero and cisnormativity are ingrained in social environments, socially sustained in family and educational settings, which are taught and reinforced from an early age (Donelson & Rogers, 2004; McGuire et al., 2016).

Interpersonal interactions have unfamiliar cognitive impact for people of all ages, genders, races, ethnicities, societies, financial level, and geographic borders (Duck, 1999). Relationships between parents and children are extremely important for teenagers. According to an extensive literature of research, psychological functioning, and development in both children and adults are significantly predicted by the quality of parent-child relationships, which are marked by parental acceptance (love) and rejection (lack of love) (Khaleque & Rohner, 2002; Rohner, 1975, 1980; 2002; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2014). Young people who encourage hetero- and cis-normative assumptions in Western societies (e.g., LGBTQ+ communities) face discrimination, lower academic achievement, and negative effects on their psychological well-being in the normative school environment when compared to their peers (Bradlow et al., Citation2017; Kosciw et al., Citation2020). Research is currently commencing to demonstrate how institutionalized hetero- and cis-normativity in Western school contexts may promote the gender binary.

Existence Implementation: A Holistic Approach to the Ramification of Parental Acceptance and Rejection:

Parental acceptance-rejection theory (PARTheory) is a socialization theory that attempts to anticipate and clarify the primary explanations for why parents accept and reject their children both domestically and internationally, as well as their correlations (Rohner, 1986, 1990, 2001; Rohner, Khaleque, & Cournoyer, 2014). According to PARTheory, parental rejection consistently affects children's behavioral functioning as well as psychological adjustment spanning the world's population. Parental rejection is at the negative end of the spectrum and parental acceptance is at the positive end, representing the bipolar component of parental warmth described by PARTheory. A parent's ability to feel and show love, affection, care, support, and nurturing towards their child is referred to as parental acceptance. The lack or departure of warmth, love, or affection from parents towards their children is referred to as parental rejection. Three main approaches emerge for parents to show their love or lack thereof. Indifferent and neglectful, angry and or cold and uncaring are some of their possible traits. Added to that, individuals may subjectively suffer undifferentiated rejection as a result of parental rejection. Without necessarily having empirical signs that the parents are cold and uncaring, hostile and aggressive, or apathetic and neglectful, undifferentiated rejection is the sense that one's parent(s) do(es) not truly love them or care about them.

PARTheory incorporates several notable characteristics. First, it makes significant use of cross-cultural data from throughout the world as well as significant ethnic groups in the United States (Rohner, 1986, 2002; Rohner & Khaleque, 2002a). Second, it incorporates historical and literary sources that date back more than 2,000 years. Third, it creates a conceptual framework for explaining the lifetime and universalist views incorporated into the three subtheories of PARTheory by drawing on approximately 2000 actual research on parental acceptance and

rejection conducted since the 1930s (Rohner, 2002; Rohner & Khaleque, 2005). More details about these sub-theories are provided below.

PARTheory's Personality Subtheory

The personality subtheory of PARTheory asserts that parents' acceptance or rejection of their children has an enormous influence on how their personalities emerge throughout their lives. To be more precise, the sub theory postulates that children are highly motivated by their emotional desire for positive reinforcement from parents or other attachment figures. Children tend to react emotionally and behaviorally in certain ways when attachment figures fail to provide for this demand. The subtheory, for instance, asserts that children who are rejected are likely to experience anxiety and insecurity. Moreover, depending on the form, frequency, and intensity of the rejection, parental rejection is predicted to cause other personality outcomes in both children and adults, such as hostility, aggression, passive aggression, or issues with managing hostility and aggression; dependence or defensive independence; low self-esteem; inadequate self-adequacy; emotional instability; negative worldview; and emotional unresponsiveness.

PARTheory's Coping Subtheory

Research conducted both domestically and abroad supports the premise of PARTheory, which holds that around 80 percent of children and adults—regardless of location, race, or ethnicity—generally experience negative effects from parental rejection (Rohner, 2001, Rohner & Khaleque, 2002a). Only a tiny portion of the remaining 20% are referred to be "copers" in PARTheory. These are the individuals who, according to the personality subtheory of PARTheory, continue to be mentally well-adjusted despite having suffered severe parental rejection as children. Copers can be divided into two categories, according to the Coping Subtheory: "affective Copers" and "instrumental Copers." Those who experience parental rejection yet go on to have generally good mental health are known as affective copers. Those who succeed in their professional, occupational, or task-oriented life despite psychological handicaps brought on by parental rejection are known as instrumental copers. The coping subtheory of PARTheory has not received much empirical investigation to date, but the evidence that is currently available indicates that the emotional support of important individuals who do not reject a person can significantly lessen the anguish associated with parental rejection.

PARTheory's Sociocultural Systems Subtheory

The sociocultural systems subtheory within PARTheory intended to anticipate and interpret the global socio-cultural linkages and primary causes of parental acceptance and rejection. In this regard, the subtheory asserts that in communities where they are generally dismissed children are expected to acquire cultural assumptions about the supernatural realm (God and spiritual beings) as being irrational (i.e., unfriendly, deceitful, destructive, or negative in some other way). In traditional civilizations where the majority of children are taught in love and acceptance, it is assumed that the supernatural world will be viewed as beneficial (that is, warm, generous, protecting, or positive in some other way). Strong cross-cultural data supports these hypotheses (Rohner, 1975, 1986; Batool & Najam, 2009). Parental acceptance and rejection are also generally linked to a wide range of other sociocultural correlates, including home structure, artistic preferences, and individual career choices, according to the sociocultural systems subtheory of PARTheory, which is supported by cross-cultural data.

PARTheory's Sociocultural Systems Subtheory PARTheory's Sociocultural Systems SubtheoryThe sociocultural systems subtheory within PARTheory aims to forecast and interpret

the global socio-cultural linkages and primary causes of parental acceptance and rejection. For instance, the subtheory states that in communities where they are generally dismissed children are likely to acquire cultural views about the supernatural realm (God and spiritual beings) as being irrational (i.e., unfriendly, deceitful, destructive, or negative in some other way).

The Boy in the Dress is authored and revealed for young readers, and it has nu-groupers illustrations by Quentin Blake. The argument covers a wide range of concerns in terms of reality, including the attachment between parents and children, the sociocultural system, etiquette, fear of difference, gender stereotypes, roles of gender, clothing, harassment, multiculturalism, and friendship. In general, these subjects are closely related to the construction of identities and personal growth. The primary protagonist in *The Boy in the Dress* is Dennis, a 12-year-old. These sayings captured Dennis's everyday way of life. "Dennis's ordinary boy who lives in an ordinary house in an ordinary street" (Walliams 11). He excels in football and is the team's top player. Dennis inhabited a home with his father and his fourteen-year-old brother John. When Dennis was seven years old, his parents were split. The phrases that proceed illustrate Dennis's part ways with his mother. "Dennis's mum had left home a couple of years ago" (Walliams 12). He perceives his mother by a yellow outfit that she used to wear, and he misses her terribly. "It showed a joyful scene: a younger John and Dennis with Mum at the beach, Mum wearing a lovely yellow dress with flowers on it" (Walliams 14).

Dad seldom said much after his mother left, but when he did, he would frequently yell. As a result, Dennis watched a lot of TV, especially *Trisha*, which was his favourite series. Dennis cherished *Trisha*. Dennis's participation in the show was already uncomfortable with Dad. "Dad wasn't keen on Dennis watching the show anyway. He said, "It's just for girls, that" (Walliams 24). The "behavioural" dimension of parenthood is derived from parental acceptance and rejection. Every human being can be categorized along this dimension or continuum since, as children, all of us have encountered some sort of affection from alarming carers. The behavioural dimension, then, is concerned with the qualities of the familial connection that exists among parents and their offspring as well as the behavioural patterns and linguistic way that parents employ to communicate these emotions. Parental rejection denotes the other extreme of the continuum and is characterised by a range of physically and mentally harmful behaviours and effects, as well as by the absence and significant retreat of these feelings and behaviours. Dennis's father's behaviour worsened tremendously after his mother stepped out. This further caused the brothers to drift apart. Dennis feels his father rejects him without any distinction, giving him the impression that he does not love or care for him and that he has demonstrated this by acting aggressively, uncaring, or neglectful. The lines that followed served as an example of this:

It was one of the rules of the house:

No talking about Mum.

No crying.

And worst of all - no hugging. (Walliams 17)

Dennis was depressed as hell. He occasionally cried in bed at night because he missed his mother immensely. Since he and his brother shared a room, he attempted to cry as silently as possible so John wouldn't hear. "But Dennis *couldn't* stop crying. The pain ebbed and flowed inside him like the sea, crashing down on him, almost drowning him in tears" (Walliams 18). Dennis purchases a copy of *Vogue* from Raj, the proprietor of a nearby store, after spotting his mother's identical outfit on the cover. "Dennis liked the picture on the cover. It was of a very pretty girl in an even prettier yellow dress with what looked like roses sewn on the front, and it really reminded him of the dress his mum was wearing in the photograph he's kept" (Walliams 39-40). However, John

calls Dennis "Denise" to make him laugh. When Dad discovers the magazine, he is enraged and makes Dennis throw it away. His father's resentment towards him:

"What the hell *is* this?" said Dad. His eyes were popping out he was so angry.

"It's a magazine," replied Dennis.

"I can see it's a magazine." ...

"It's *Vogue* magazine, Dad."

"I can see it's *Vogue* magazine." (Walliams 39)

The personality sub theory of PARTheory implies a strategy to anticipate and clarify Dennis's personality as well as the psychological or mental health impact of his perception of his parents' approval or rejection. Dennis would frequently stop by Raj's shop on his way to or from school, sometimes just to talk. Whenever he picked up the issue of *Vogue*, Dennis experienced a slight feeling of resentment. In an attempt to conceal the *vogue* below it, he also picked up a copy of *Shoot* on his way to the counter because he knew that women typically purchased it. He was eager to go home so he could flip through the magazine's hundreds of vibrant, sparkling pages. Dennis giving his perception of the magazine:

Like a treasure box from an old film, the magazine seemed to shine a golden light on his face, The first hundred pages were all adverts, but in a way they were the best bit – pages and pages of glorious photographs of beautiful women in beautiful clothes and make-up and jewellery and shoes and bags and sunglasses. (Walliams 48)

Additionally, the sub theory suggests that Dennis's rejection by his father and brother John caused youngsters to presumably experience feelings of inadequacy and anxiety. He heard a key penetrate the door abruptly. It was John, his brother. Dennis concealed the magazine beneath his mattress with rush. Somehow, he knew that his brother wasn't supposed to see it. However, Dennis's slip to the mythical realm of beauty came to a prohibit the day his father came across the magazine. "I can see it's *Vogue*. What I want to know is why a son of mine wants to *look* at a fashion magazine?" (Walliams 51). Dad's voice sounded like a query, but it was full of energy and frustration. The parents' rejection of their child's distinct individuality and behaviour. "No, son, it's just not right. Dresses. It's weird" (Walliams 53).

The premise PARTheory's coping sub theory of holds that parental rejection typically has a detrimental impact on both adults and children, regardless of geography, racial or culture. Despite the detrimental effects of parental rejection, Dennis served as a model of behaviour for instrumental copers because of his success in their professional, occupational, or task-based lifestyles. Dennis gets put in detention at school that day for kicking a football through an office window. He converses with Lisa James, who is allegedly the most stylish and attractive student in the school, while he is being held in detention. Dennis receives an invitation from Lisa to her home the following day, where she dresses him in girly attire and shows him her assortment of *Vogue* magazines. "Dennis undressed down to his socks and pants, and then stepped into the dress and pulled it on up over his shoulders" (Walliams 98). Lisa became Dennis's emotional pillar and assisted with alleviating his pain over his parents' rejection. "Nice. It feels nice." In fact, it felt more than nice; it felt wonderful. Can I see in the mirror?" (Walliams 98).

PARTheory's sociocultural system in *The Boy in the Dress* navigates outside of the gender binary, heterosexual people typically fear differences because of societal standards, cultural expectations, and a lack of exposure to or comprehension of other perspectives. When faced with non-binary or gender-diverse manifestations, heteronormative perspectives—which place an

emphasis on traditional gender roles and binary distinctions between male and female—can cause discomfort or anxiety. Heteronormativity societies revolve dependent on the binary concept of gender, so it can be difficult for people to understand or relate to identities that do not fit into these predetermined categories. Insufficient knowledge about non-binary or genderqueer identities can also be a source of fear because people fear that these identities will threaten the stability and intimacy of heteronormative structure.

Dennis attends school beside Lisa, who is Denise. Dennis is having trouble understanding the teacher when she speaks to him in French in class. As a last resort, he criticises her French accent, which upsets her. Dennis's girlfriend becomes agitated when he starts talking to Mac during breaktime, and she attempts to confront him, causing his disguise to come off. When the headmaster, Mr. Hawtrey, enters the canteen, he discovers Denise's wig lying on the ground. After witnessing Dennis cross-dress in class, Mr. Hawtrey loses it and throws him out of the school, preventing Dennis from participating in a crucial football game. The following lines reveals the expulsion status of Dennis from the school:

“There will be no more football for you, boy.”

“Please, sir! I’m begging you...”

“I said, ‘YOU ARE EXPELLED!’ You must leave the school premises immediately.”
(Walliams 164)

Individuals in Western educational settings would institutionalize hetero and cisnormativity to perpetuate the gender binary. The increasing acceptance of hetero and cisnormativity, which pushes people to adopt essentialist gender roles, can be connected to young people's difficulties navigating Western normative educational environments (Bragg et al., Citation2018).

Conclusion:

All of these statistics support the PARTheory's assertion that, regardless of variations in gender, ethnicity, race, language, sociocultural background, or other such defining characteristics, the experience of parental rejection is one irreducible, root cause of social, emotional, behavioural, and social-cognitive problems in the development of children, adolescents, and adults everywhere. Since everyone seems to be affected by perceived acceptance or rejection, this opens the door to the development of interventions, treatments, laws, and other useful applications that will improve human welfare globally while also taking cultural equity into account.

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