

The Effects That Young Success have on a Child and Their Development Within Society



From #1 Child Star to *List Verse's* #10 “Child Star Gone Bad”

Childhood Identity

While growing up, every child tries to find a way to define themselves. This often leads to children becoming involved in some sort of extracurricular activity.

- Sports
- Music
- Drama
- Dance



Childhood Identity

As time goes by, children began to define themselves by the activities they participate in, and they begin to adapt to the stereotypes surrounding their chosen activity. Common stereotypes for these activities are....

- Jocks: tough, rugged; put their physical success above their education
- Musicians: child prodigies; no social life; practice for hours and hours every day
- Actors/actresses: must be the perfect role model for young children; have huge success; become a “star”
- Dancers: comfortable with exploiting their sexuality; have eating disorders

Role of Media and Society

Media and Society encourage these stereotypes through movies and television.

A prime example of this is the movie “Mean Girls.”

- The plot of this movie is focused around stereotypes
- They have characters playing the stereotypes of
 - + jocks
 - + goths
 - + the slutty, popular girls
 - + cheerleaders
 - + nerds

When it comes to these stereotypes, Fabiola Hernandez states that they, “unfortunately hold true most of the time” (Hernandez 1).



The Pressures of Society and the Need to Succeed

In the end, children not only have to deal with the pressures presented by the media and society to fit in and conform to the stereotype of their chosen activity; they also having to worry about succeeding and reaching the standards set by themselves, their parents, and their teachers.

Success = Happiness

Many people associate success with happiness.

Because of this, they want their children to succeed in whatever they do.

- If their child is entering a sports program, they will want to sign them up for one that experiences more success.
- This success will encourage their child's confidence and self-esteem

As time goes on, just being a member of the team is no longer enough. Parents would like for their child to be an “important” member of the team and be a reason for the team's success.

- If the child is not an active member of the team, the parents often feels like their child is not getting everything they should out of the sport.

Roles of the Parent

Parents often feel that allowing other children to have complete control over the outcome of the game and consuming the spotlight will harm their child's self-esteem.

- They will encourage their child to work harder during practice and try harder during games.
- They want their child to have their moment in the spotlight

If children believe that their actions and abilities are not enough to meet their parent's approval, they will begin to doubt their self-worth.

- This will harm the child's self esteem.

Roles of the Parent

- “Research of Youth Sports: Critical Issues Status” reported that.....

A young athlete’s emotional response was further shown to be related to his or her perceptions of parental pressure by Hellstedt (1988). Hellstedt (1988) found that the “degree of parental pressure is related to the type of affective reaction from the young athlete” with high levels of parental pressure related to negative athlete response. The athletes were also shown to be apprehensive about how their parents would react emotionally, such as with disappointment or disapproval, when they did not perform well. In addition, according to these young athletes, continued sport participation was due, in part, to the desire to please their parents... (Gould 28).

Roles of the Parent

Study also listed the five biggest parent-child interaction problems perceived included (Gould 31):

- overemphasizing winning
- holding unrealistic expectations
- coaching one's own child
 - criticizing one's child
- pampering their child too much

This study showed that a child is willing to go to any means to receive approval from his or her parent.

- Lack of approval makes a child feel like he or she has failed to succeed
- This often leads to stress and anxiety



Is Winning Better?

Even those children labeled as the “top talent” have to deal with stereotypes and the pressure to succeed.

- Two of my own students, Mary and Jane, are prime examples of this Situation.

Mary and Jane both have a natural talent for the art of dance.

- This led to them joining a competitive program at a young age.
- They both received their first solos at the age of seven and experienced a large amount of success.
 - + Often won overall awards
 - + Parents and dancers were still happy and proud when they didn't.

Parents and teachers wanted to nurture the girls' talents and allow it to make them the best dancers they could be.

Is Winning Better?

The following year, the girls were given an additional solo (two total) and taught harder tricks.

- They were expected to practice at least 1 hour a week
- Girls were excited to be learning skills the “Big Girls” did.

This advancement in their training led to more success.

- They were receiving higher scores, winning more overall awards, and beating many of the girls they had placed under the year before.

Because the girls were now higher ranked, they were becoming one another's competition.

- Parents did not handle the situation well.
 - +Jane's mother started making back-handed comments towards Mary after she performed.
 - +These acts infuriated Mary's mother.
- Animosity and distrust between parents soon transferred to kids.
 - +The girls were comparing themselves against one another in the class room.
 - + Jane went on a diet to be as skinny as Mary; Mary did everything she could to achieve the new skill before Jane.

Is Winning Better?

Teachers talked to both the parents and the girls to try and fix the situation, but it had gone too far. The distrust and jealousy, while subdued, still remained.

Following year, they were again given harder skills, and a strong emphasis was brought to their technique training.

- These girls at the age of 11 were performing skill many senior dancers could not perform.
- Would get frustrated to tears when couldn't achieve a new skill right away.
- Practiced harder than ever and did everything they could to eliminate any error that could possibly result in a point deduction.

Were now in Top 5 at every competition they attended.

- The girls had reached a professional level for their age group, and because of this, the girls and their parents expected to win.
- If they did not, they results were angry parents and sulking children.

Is Winning Better?

Dance was no longer just a fun activity for them.

- It was the most important thing in their life.
- It was their means of judging their own self-worth.



Pressure to Succeed

Another instance where stereotyping and the pressure to succeed can have a very negative effect on a child is in the entertainment industry.

- The term “Child Star gone bad” is one almost everyone will know of.

Parents have seen the viscous cycle that continues to occur within the entertainment industry, yet they still try to promote their children and subject them to evils of the industry.

- Recent Headliners:

+ Miley Cyrus

+ Lindsay Lohan

List verse labeled Lindsay Lohan as #10 on their list of “Child Stars Gone Bad” (F. 1).



Pressure to Succeed



Another young star who has recently hit the headlines is Demi Lovato.

- While Lovato has not been exposed to the ways of the industry as long as Cyrus and Lohan, she was still affected just as badly, if not worse.

“Music Agenda” claimed that Lovato entered a “treatment center” for “emotional and physical issues” on November 1, 2010 (Vena 1).

- The specific details of these issues have not been released.
- However, an inside source says, “She fought through eating disorders and has struggled with cutting” (Kaufman 1).

Pressure to Succeed

Reasons for these issues have not been released.

- It is believed that the pressures of society and past bullying play huge factors though.

Without the need for the “perfect body” that society demands of female stars today, would Lovato have turned to an eating disorder?

- Answers to this question and others like it will never be known.
- However, it is reasonable to conclude that the stereotypical image of the young, thin, and beautiful female star that Lovato was pressured to be did nothing but make her situation worse.



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The children of today already have a hard time dealing with the pressures of society and the stereotypes forced upon them by the media, that the added stress of parental and teacher approval can often take them to their breaking point.

- MedicineNet.com stated,

“Adults should not pressure a young child to focus only on winning even if exceptional [talent] is shown. A young [child] who might show natural talent in a particular [activity] must work hard and show [their own] dedication in order to succeed” (“Tips On Choosing A Sport For Your Child” 1).

Forcing young success does nothing but compel a child to fall under the pressures and stereotypes that the media and society has placed before them. This causes them to believe that just being themselves is no longer good enough.

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