

*The (De) Construction of Gender Identity in Children's Literature Written
in English by Sri Lankan Authors*

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Abstract

This research paper is an exploration of the social constructions of gender identities portrayed in selected texts written in English for children by Sri Lankan authors. It draws from *Mythil's Secret* by Prashani Rambukwella (2009), *Paduma Meets the Sunbird* by Nihal de Silva (2006) and *Mona's Mission Impossible* by Razana Sameem (2009). The study is based on the premise that children's literature produced in Sri Lanka by Sri Lankan authors would seek to explore the nuances of gender identities that are constructed within Sri Lanka.

The goal of this paper is to deconstruct the social constructions of gender identities that are portrayed in the selected texts in an attempt to analyze the specific gender roles that are socially acquired by children. This study addresses the question of how gender identities of children, within a Sri Lankan society, are depicted in the selected texts, and evaluates the assignment and acquisition of gender roles therein. It limits itself to deconstructing the portrayal of gender identities, and also seeks to unearth the different forces of socialization that influence the molding of a child's gender identity, while examining the process of socialization and other contributing factors relevant to the construction of gender identities within Sri Lanka. This paper addresses a gap in research in children's literature produced in Sri Lanka in English, and takes an interdisciplinary approach utilizing feminist, psychoanalytic and sociological theories.

Keywords: Gender identity, Social construction, Gender roles, Socialization