

Research on Family's Part on Gender Role Education of Preschool Children

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ABSTRACT

Gender roles refer to social expectations of men and women in terms of their behavior and attitudes. Everyone is playing their own gender roles based on their gender conception. The gender role of preschool children is greatly influenced by the family, which requires measures for cultivation. The author studies gender education of preschool children through observation and investigation. The following countermeasures are proposed: complete family structure, parental involvement (especially of the father), and scientific gender conception of parents and primary caregivers.

Keywords: family, preschool children, gender role

I. INTRODUCTION

Gender roles reflect expectations of the behavior and attitudes of men and women imposed by society. For example, the popular "breadwinning men and homemaking women" mirrors the public depictions of gender roles. Society demands that men be tall, strong, responsible, and reliable. They are supposed to protect their families, and behave casually. Women, on the other hand, should be pretty, slim, virtuous, filial, caring for their children, and preferably working. Men who cry and is afraid of thunder are mocked for being timid and cowardly. Women who wears suits instead of skirt, and smokes and drinks alcohol will be considered less feminine and manly. By contrast, a woman who cries a lot in difficult time and is afraid of thunder is normal and won't be laughed at for being timid. The public hold that a man who wears suits and often smokes and drinks is normal. Men who don't smoke or drink are even considered unmanly. Gender roles are vividly demonstrated in the above content. The general public enjoys relatively fixed view of genders and reacted differently to the same behavior.

II. THE NECESSITY OF GENDER ROLE EDUCATION FOR PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Everyone in the society has his own view of gender, and everyone plays his gender role according to his own view of gender. There exist people in real life who, whether their appearance or the way they act, make others feel uncomfortable. For example, a man with long hair, delicate fingernails, holding a sun umbrella

with orchid-shaped fingers. Some men always think that they are, or should be, a woman, so they usually behave like a woman. In addition, some women wish they were male and thus behave like a man. These are manifestation of masculine female and feminine male, respectively. What's worse, sometimes it's hard to judge a person's gender based solely on physical appearance or dress. They don't enjoy distinct gender identity, that is, sexual differentiation is not completed yet.

As an independent person, young children also need to play appropriate gender role. Gender roles were first developed in the family by parents. However, some parents care little about the cultivation of gender roles, believing that this is something that can happen and be mastered naturally, just as children grow teeth at a certain age without special attention of their parents. However, inappropriate gender behavior and gender orientation in daily life indicate the necessity of family guidance and training involving gender for preschool children.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF GENDER ROLES IN PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

Timely and scientific guidance and education of preschool children's gender roles are necessary and important. The gender role development of preschool children is based on their mastery of the concept of gender, that is, preschool children are not born knowing their gender. In other words, preschoolers do not know whether they are a boy or a girl until they have mastered the concept of gender, cannot correctly identify their gender, and cannot play different gender roles. Only when preschoolers have gender awareness, master the concept of gender, know their own gender, and understand the differences between men and

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women, can they further observe and distinguish the gender behaviors displayed by people of different genders, and then grasp the gender roles that men and women should play.

The development of preschool children's gender roles goes through three stages.

A. Stage 1: Preschool children have a preliminary understanding of gender roles and can gradually judge the gender of others and themselves (2-3 years old)

The stage sees preschool children born without gender awareness and did not know whether they were male or female gradually develop gender awareness, understand and master some knowhow of gender roles, thus identifying the gender of others. Preschool children around 2 years old can basically identify the gender of others and know the gender of their father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, etc. But they are still unable to accurately identify their gender. By the age of two and a half, and even around the age of three, some preschoolers can identify their gender. They know whether they are a boy or a girl. They hold that the boy has short hair, wears pants, likes to play with cars and so on, while the girl has long hair, wears skirts, likes to play with dolls and so on.

B. Stage 2: Self-centered recognition of gender roles in preschool children (3-4 years old)

Preschool children at this stage can accurately identify their own gender and the gender of others, master more criteria of gender roles, and know more differences between boys and girls in color, game, food, etc. However, their cognition is not completely consistent with the views of the public. Influenced by their thinking characteristics, they are relatively self-centered and can only recognize gender roles from their own perspective, without knowing or considering the views of the public on this issue. For example, a boy who knows that girls wear skirts and boys wear pants thinks that boys can also wear skirts, so he wears the skirts of his sister without feeling inappropriate. In his opinion, the public share the same idea with him.

C. Stage 3: Stereotyped gender roles for preschoolers (5-7 years old)

Preschool children at this stage have acquired more knowledge about gender roles. They can distinguish between men and women in terms of appearance, clothing, toys, etc., as well as in psychological performance including personality and emotion. For example, brave, bold, and noisy boys, and lachrymose, timid, and quiet girls. Preschoolers' understanding of gender roles has deepened, but stereotypes have also begun to emerge. For example, boys can not cry like girls, or they will be laughed at by others; boys

shouldn't play with dolls that is exclusive to girls. A girl can't be a policeman, who must be a male. Nurse must be female. When they see a "male nurse", they are deeply overwhelmed. How can a boy be a nurse? Similarly, boys in this stage refused to dress up as girls and dance with girls, arguing that it was not the right thing for boys to do, and they also resisted wearing pink clothes as it was against the gender of boys.

IV. COUNTERMEASURES ON GENDER ROLE CULTIVATION OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN IN FAMILIES

According to the above content on development stage, preschool children foster gender awareness and grasp the concept of gender when they are 2-3 years old, and gradually exhibit certain gender behaviors. Family is essential in both the formation and further development of gender roles. Therefore, how to realize the effect of family in the gender role cultivation of preschool children is an important issue worth studying. The author proposes countermeasures from the following three aspects:

A. Complete family structure

Family structure is varied, including nuclear family (a family consisting of a couple and their unmarried children), stem family (a family consisting of parents and one married child and their spouse and children, consisting of two couples), joint family (a family consisting of parents and two or more married children and their spouses and children, consisting of three or more couples), single parent families (a family consisting of a divorced, widowed or unmarried single father or mother and their children or adopted children), remarried family (a family in which one spouse remarried after the death of his or her spouse or after divorce), other family (a family in which the relationship between members is ambiguous). Family structures have different effects on the cultivation of preschool children's gender roles. Given that there are male and female genders, only by observing and comparing the differences between male and female genders can people distinguish their behaviors, and then imitate the corresponding behaviors and play gender roles. Preschool children living in a family without male or female parent (single parent families, divorced families, or female-only families, or male-only families) for a long time are hindered in understanding, distinguishing between genders and forming gender concepts, thus hamstringing the cultivation and behaviors of gender roles. As a result, a complete family structure is the premise and foundation for preschool children to develop their gender roles well. The family with both parents is the most ideal. Father and mother play the gender roles of male and female respectively. They are the closest and most trusted

people for children before they go to school in the world, so their gender behaviors have the greatest and most far-reaching impact on children.

B. Parental involvement (especially of the father)

Complete family structure is the integrity of the external form. The factor that really sways the development of gender roles in preschool children is the involvement of parents, especially that of father. Complete family structure is easy to realize, however, not every parent can be involved, which is important. In many families, parents are too busy to accompany their children or even go home, and the children have few chance to see their parents. Some parents often go on business trips or come home late at night, and rarely see their children. Such a "sound family" has a negative impact on the gender role of their children. Some parents rarely travel, go home on time every day, but indulge in his own world after work (or work, or busy with the housework, watching TV or games, or take phones everywhere they go), husband and wife often accuse each other, or seldom communicate. No benign interaction is formed, which cripples the cultivation of children's gender role. In addition, in some families, the wife bears almost all the responsibility of raising children, taking care of children's daily life, education and study. The father, though come home every day, is engaged in either phone or work, with no mention on the life and study of his children. Such "invisible dad" has little effect on children. If the wife complains, often loses her temper or gets angry at the child, the child's gender role development will be affected. Therefore, the healthy development of children's gender roles requires not only a well-structured family, but also the active participation of parents. Under the influence of breadwinning men and homemaking women, it is mainly mothers who participate in and influence the growth of preschool children in Chinese families. Compared with mothers' high and comprehensive participation, and long-term influence, fathers' participation is significantly lower, with short time and limited aspects. The development of preschool children's gender roles requires observation and imitation of the gender behaviors of both female and male roles. Therefore, gender role education for preschool children in the family requires the participation of both parents, especially of the father.

C. Scientific gender conception of parents and primary caregivers

Preschool children's gender awareness and observation of gender roles mainly comes from parents or other primary caregivers. Both parents and primary caregivers have their own gender conception, that is, their own perceptions and understandings of male and female gender. They will play their gender role and perform what they think is the right and reasonable

gender behavior based on gender conception. They will also unconsciously take their own gender conception as the criterion to guide, demand and cultivate the gender behavior of preschool children, who will gradually form their own gender concepts and behave accordingly under such guidance, and later affect the gender concepts and behaviors of next generation. Therefore, it is important for parents to form a scientific gender conception, which will sway not only their own gender behavior, but also their children and their offspring. Gender concepts of parents and primary caregivers should be scientific, such as avoiding gender stereotypes. If adults say "uncle police" and "aunt nurse" to their children every day, over time, their children will form a typical gender stereotype. They will think that the police must be men, and that only men can be engaged in the profession of police, while women cannot become police; and a nurse must be a woman, and only a woman can be a nurse. Once ingrained, such stereotype can affect career choices. Girls would never consider a position as police, nor would she accept her daughters' choice of being a police. Similarly, boys will not choose to be nurse, nor can he accept his son to be nurse.

V. CONCLUSION

The education of preschool children's gender roles in families are urgent and important. Parents and primary caregivers must strive to form scientific gender conception. Only under the guidance of scientific gender conception can preschool children behave properly, play proper gender roles, and then form their own reasonable gender conception.

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