Analysis of the Similarities and Differences Between Gender Stereotype and Gender Role in China

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ABSTRACT
In contemporary society, people have a growing sense of gender differences and their potential influences, but the problems brought by gender stereotype still need to be solved immediately. This article basically introduces gender roles and gender stereotypes, their differences and similarities, and what people can learn from this comparison with some potential applications. By using meta-analysis and investigation to find the concept of gender stereotype and role, comparing them, and having the responses in real life by different ages of people in China, it can be concluded that gender stereotype is more negative towards the society and needs to be annihilate. Gender role is currently being accepted widely and the biological difference is a large ingredient of it. Therefore, along with the development of society, people should view gender role in a more scientific way, making it as a tool to make people’s life easier.

Key words: Gender role, gender stereotype, China, similarities, differences

1. INTRODUCTION
Along with people’s awakening of human rights, “everyone is created equal” has been planted into most of the people’s heart. However, gender stereotype has become one of the most appealing topics of people to discuss at present. In China, as the oldest and one of the biggest countries in the world, gender stereotype is always a huge problem that needs to be solved. In the past, the position of male and female has a dramatic difference, and it is normal for a family to abandon a newborn girl only because she is “she”. Although the progression is fast since the People Republic of China was established, people in China still have some types of stereotype on the daily basis, and the situation might be more severe in the countryside.

Gender role is another interesting terminology in the field of psychology. It is basically talking about the role of male and female in the society. Therefore, the interesting thing is that gender role is a positive terminology, but gender stereotype is a negative terminology, and it is hard to distinguish gender role and gender stereotype. People in China ( especially in the country side ) would like to put the gender stereotype in a leading position, telling others “girls should do this” and “boys should do this”. These two terms are basically talking about same things, but the author will try to analyze different aspects of gender stereotype and gender role in China, trying to figure out the the differences and similarities between them and how they will influence Chinese people's daily life.
However, along with the progression of contemporary society, young people are increasingly realizing that male and female having more similarities than differences. In addition, feminism is gaining a more important position because feminist will have the idea that males and female should gain same right and both sex should have the equal opportunity to obtain any jobs. In China, the definition of gender role is still being widely accepted, and people in different ages have different understandings about why males and females are different and the social roles that they need to accept.

Gender stereotype is basically about the belief of negative understanding of male and female’s some characteristics like the physical strength, math skills, language learning skills, social ability, and even driving skills. The bias of gender and gender stereotype has existed for a long time in China. People would normally put people in each groups, giving them some characteristics that they think are belonged to “this sex group”, and these characteristic are normally not so pleasant. The situation is even severer in the countryside. The gender stereotype causes the position of different sex groups have a sever difference—males in the leading place for the majority of time. In some areas, women are still not recommended (or nor allowed) to go to school because males, who are in the leading position, “think” women are not suitable for studying and learning. People now are having a growing sense of the harmful gender stereotype, but it is still damaging daily life of uncountable Chinese people. Next, the author is going to compare the differences and similarities between gender roles and gender stereotypes to make a further investigation.

3. ANALYSIS OF THE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The question is that why people are using “gender role” and “gender stereotype”, two different names, to analyze things that look similar. There are some similarities...
between them, but what really matters the most is the
differences, and how can people learn and improve the life.

3.1. Similarities

The terminology “gender role” is now widely accepted and
being widely used. Gender role is a gradual learned
personality classification methodology in individuals'
socializing process [1]. According to Bem Sex-Role
Inventory (BSRI), which is a measure of masculinity and
femininity and is used to research gender roles, assessing
how people identify themselves psychologically, there are
four major traits of personalities in regard to gender role:
masculine, feminine, androgynous, and undifferentiated.
People are using such classifications all the time without
consciousness and actually it is influencing people's daily
life. According to the meta-analysis in the research posted
by Chinese researcher Wei Liang, people in different age
period has a consensus: people who are in the
Androgynous trait are the best [2]. The reason is they do
not have the personality that coming into extreme. These
kinds of people have characteristics from both feminine
and masculine, gaining positive features and using them
well. Masculine group and the Feminine group are the
second and the third common categories, which are the two
that go to the extreme direction. These two are the
so-called “classical gender personalities”, meaning that
they are the ways that people think “male should be like”
and “female should be like".
Gender stereotype is about people’s stereotype that what
should be a male or female looks like. These unchangeable
ideas that would not change is not absolutely based on
facts. They only exist in people’s minds, giving the hint
that people must have such characteristic because they are
in such sexual groups, which quit like the description of
the role of gender role, because both of the gender
stereotype and gender role are telling people that they
should be in some ways, putting them in to groups and
judging whether the individual behaviors and the group
have difference or not. Putting the situation in a smaller
perspective, when looking at the masculine and the
feminine group in the gender role, it is really easy for
people to think that this is what gender stereotype wants to
achieve. Gender stereotype wants people to behave in the
way that classical males and females should be. Gender
role and gender stereotype make the rules of people’s
sexual group, and they are classifying people in such
categories. Both of them are doing the process of
assimilation, putting people into the concepts that already
existed, which is the so-called stereotype & rule.

3.2. Differences

In giving the idea that gender stereotype and gender role
really have many things in common, there is also lots of
differences existing. For most of the time gender role is
showing people’s anticipation on each gender groups
without any negative feelings, because it can help people
in all age ranges simplify their gender classifications from
the complex society. People are complicated, and the way
for people to distinguish others from the surface will be
necessary in some time. The general public will have a
higher possibility to use gender role as the basis of judging
whether a person is “great or not”. Frequently, people are
thinking more positively about gender role, thinking in a
way that the gender role is just due to the biological
differences between each genders. According to the
definition of gender role, referring to the differences of
psychological characteristics or behavioral patterns
brought about by people's gender differences, with male
and female having different characteristics in posture,
manner, tone, bearing and many other aspect, people can
clearly see that physical differences is having the major
gender responsibility towards gender role.
In comparison, when people are looking at gender
stereotype, “stereotype” itself occupies a greater
proportion. If someone see others behaving out of their
anticipation, they would give a negative output toward that
person in most of the times. In other words, they would
like to force others behaving to what they think they
should behave. The formation of gender role and the
ingredients are also different. Gender stereotype does not
contain lots of physical factors, instead, the social
influence (interaction) plays the major role. After making a
survey on people’s attitude in China (people are divided by
ages), there is a clear result. All the aspects of people
toward gender role is moving to the negative direction.
Everyone in the survey thinks gender stereotype will bring
negative effect toward the society, but for gender role, it is
in a more positive way, and the major cause of the gender
role is the biological difference. In addition, according to
the survey, in contemporary society, people in all ages
have some basic ideas about the damage of gender
stereotype, and even a children who is less than 16 years
old can tell the damage.
Figure 3 Male&female distribution

Figure 4 Age distribution

Figure 5 Idea about the existence of gender role
4. DISCUSSION

From the previous description of the gender role and gender stereotype, the comparison of their similarities and differences, as well as the survey, it can be clearly seen how different they are and the way of both of them to influence our life. Gender role is one of the most common classification method of people, which is just basically classifying people with gender. As there are biological gender differences in physical structure, people would normally put the different gender groups in different position. For example, female are more good at doing things that consume a lot physical strength; however, they would prefer to do the things that need more patients like wedging. In comparison with male, they are more physically strong, and due to the biological differences, they would normally good at doing physical tasks. This kind of characteristics of action split can be traced to ancient times, the time that males going hunting, and female taking care with children. The idea of having such physical-differences-caused social differences actually follows the idea of Darwin’s evolutionary perspective of psychology, and the majority of people would like to understand it and follow the rules of gender role.

If telling that gender role is a positive result from biological differences of each genders, the gender stereotype would be the scum of human civilization. The formation of gender stereotype is the accumulation of the cultural sediments. When people are saying someone should do something, they are fitting people to their existed ideas that came from the past. What is more, the gender stereotype will also be formed by people’s interaction and imagination. From people’s experiences, normally gender stereotype would only be harmful to the general public.

5. CONCLUSION

In contemporary society, along with the progression of the technologies and more strengthened interaction among countries, the majority of the old “rules” for genders are obsolete. These rules combine and interact, passing though many people, and finally form what is called gender stereotype. The existence of all the gender stereotypes would be harmful to everyone who currently lives in the world, and people have to get rid of it; while gender role is caused by the biological differences of male and female. Normally it will lead people to have an easier life, because it can help distinguish people, and help people get the work that is suitable for them directly. Males and females (as a whole) have some abilities on doing specific tasks over the other gender, so it makes sense for people to choose tasks that is more suitable for them based on their gender. However, nowadays people have a growing sense that gender is not that consolidated, and there are females who are stronger than males, as well as males who do things in a more precise way, and “physically weaker males”. People now would know how to choose jobs or exercises based on their own situation and their understanding of what is “sex” and “gender”. When living in the world with variety of scientific knowledge and skills, there are no things that is absolutely correct all the time, so people should make the gender role as a tool to help classifying the society when necessary. Also, nowadays the emergence of Feminism and the fight with the so-called “masculinity” also shows the idea that people are not only limited in gender aspects. Even now males are participating the movement of feminism, and experts are thinking it would be necessary for the society [5]. All the gender stereotypes, which would damage the peace and equality of the society, should be avoid.
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