

Study on the Influence Mechanism of Gender Discrimination in Children's Toys

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ABSTRACT

Toys have an important impact on children's gender socialization, but this is an area of insufficient attention. Based on literature review and the development history of toys, this paper summarizes the influence of toys on the formation of children's gender concept. Toys mainly affect the shaping of children's gender role in three aspects: male and female appearance, personality traits and social roles, and also affect children's choice after adulthood, aiming to break gender prejudice and create more possibilities for children to freely explore themselves and the world.

Keywords: *Gender socialization, Children's education, Toy*

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

In the study of gender, the social gender is different from the biological gender, which is determined by the primary and secondary sexual characteristics of the human body, while the social gender is a series of norms for men and women derived from the biological gender differences under the influence of specific social culture. Of gender identity construction is the key part in the process of socialization of children, children at an early age don't have the ability to choose items for their own use, the decision in the hands of finished socialization of adults, but because of the physiological sex differences and choice for children with gender differences, adult children choose toys for children to become construction gender identity is the most representative object.

In modern consumer society, we can discover the facts on the gender and toys, all kinds of toys is to classify gender as a variable, namely the girl playing the toy with the boy playing with toys, accompany children grow toy is endowed with obvious significance of gender differences, formed the toy of the gender divide, which also produced against the trend of sex toys, When toys were first born, gender segregation did not exist, so what led to the formation of gender segregation in toys? How does a clear gender distinction in toys affect children individually? This question provokes the author's thinking.

2. HISTORY OF GENDER DISTINCTION IN TOYS

Activity is the decisive factor of human development. The dominant activity of early childhood is game, and the gender role of children is gradually established and formed in the game activities. Toys are an important part of children's leisure activities. Children's direct material media in games are toys, which affect children's cognition of gender and social gender roles. In children's culture, toys as a culture and the childhood growing around toys itself is also a process and result of cultural construction. Thus, the history of toy development is also a history of childhood gender identity. The objects and literature of toys are mostly from folk collections and experts in the industry.^[1] In addition to a few studies that seriously interpret toys from a cultural perspective, most toy studies mainly come from psychological, entertainment or business perspectives. The following is a summary of the history of gender differentiation at home and abroad through literature review.

The history of the development of toys is almost as long as the history of human civilization. According to archaeological evidence, there were primitive toys in the Neolithic Age from 10,000 to 6000 years ago. Ancient Egyptian artifacts dating back more than 5,000 years already include dolls made of clay, wood, animal bones and ivory. In Europe from the 15th century to the 16th century, toys were exclusively grown-ups. The term

toys was often used to refer to any entertainment-like small toys made by hand to meet the needs of wealthy adults with leisure class, and the decorations or small family decorations of various festivals were children's toys.

In the 19th century, children in Western countries were exposed to a limited variety of toys and only had the opportunity to play during holidays and other family celebrations. At the end of the 21st century, the number of toys provided by parents to children is still very limited. It is the will of parents rather than the preference of children that still dominates the consumption of toys. The beginning of the 20th century, obvious and deliberately to sex toys to distinguish phenomenon gradually sprout,^[2] through the imaginative play process, children's toys gradually by experience and exercise some closely related to future career development skills, such as the boy toy mainly train or blocks suit, toys are mainly girl dolls and doll toy house. The former tends to train boys to become future engineers or scientists, while the latter tends to train girls to become mothers and housekeepers.

3. SEX DISCRIMINATION IN TOYS

The role of toys is to entertain, educate and enlighten children. In the process of playing, toys provide carriers for children to experience, interpret and recreate new meanings, and promote the socialization process of children's psychological development. For children, toys play a key role in their decision-making ability, socialization and development of creative thinking. The gender distinction of children's toys is mainly manifested in color, smell and pattern, and type.

3.1. Gender preference for toys is first reflected in color

Pink as a proprietary color name appeared in the early 17th century. The color gender stereotype of pink girl and blue man was a gradual phenomenon in the late 1940s. After the war, these war colors naturally become the main color of machinery and equipment in industrial production, so they are more endowed with masculinity. In the 1960s, the concept of "Susie Housewives" was popular for American women who were willing and willing to become full-time housewives. The close combination of the four feminization concepts of "pink - girl-mother-kitchen" described the stereotyped thinking of social mainstream values on femininity at that time. Pink also became the most symbolic identity color of girls and women. Arming yourself in pink is the most convenient way to incarnate the perfect female image. There is no unified answer to whether the gender preference of color is innate or gradually formed in the process of play in childhood. However, it is generally agreed that genes and socialization processes have

played an important role in the gender preference of toys.

3.2. Scent and pattern are elements with typical sex distinction effect in toy design

Scent may be the most easily ignored purchase factor for toy consumers, but it is used by designers to subdivide consumers and guide and cater to the common toy design features of female users. Due to the different physiological conditions, women's bodies always produce some special odors. In the power network constructed by mainstream cultural discourse in patriarchal society, idealized women's bodies should always remain odorless or aromatic. Therefore, smell plays an important role in the design of women's or girls' products in sheltering and concealing taste. Mature women have various odors of perfume. Paper diapers and toys used by baby girls from birth also usually have aromatic odors. Therefore, smell has also become an element typical gender discrimination effect in toy design. For example, strawberry and cherry are the most feminine smells.

3.3. Gendered toy types

Gendered toys vividly reflect the traditional social division of labor between men and women in the real society. Canpenny listed 206 most common toys in the United States and invited adult consumers to evaluate them. The results showed that most of the toys suitable for girls were related to housework, mother's role and cosmetic beauty, while most of the toys suitable for boys were sports equipment, transportation and mobile troops. A study on children and toy selection in Sweden shows that 97 per cent of boys are more likely than girls to choose toys on topics such as transport, balls, weapons.^[3] Atfield's comparative study found that due to the passive characteristics of femininity, the expression of girls' dolls are gentle, smile, affinity, more decorative details of clothing, less flexible body joints. Moreover, the masculinity initiative characteristic manifests in the toy design aspect, then mostly displays for the offensive posture, the anger, the brave or other exaggerated expression, the simple but the line feeling extremely rich clothing, as well as the extremely flexible body joint and so on.^[4]

Gender stereotypes in toys also largely limit children's greater likelihood of self-development in this highly gendered society. Generally speaking, the type of boy toys is mainly to stimulate children's spatial imagination, such as spatial positioning, planning routes, logical analysis, system thinking and so on. These abilities help boys become more likely to achieve results in the field of natural science, such as mathematics, physics, economics, chemistry, etc. Girls' toys mainly cultivate children's social survival and development

skills, as well as oral language expression ability, and these abilities make adult women more suitable for humanities and social sciences, or coordinate multi-role family life. Thus, toys play an important educational role in the formation of children's gender psychology and consciousness. The researchers therefore encourage parents to play more gender-specific toy types to children contrary to their physical gender in order to reduce the gender and personality differences between men and women born and acquired and achieve more comprehensive qualities or skills. But whether it can realize the cross-gender toy experience which is conducive to children's development and socialization process, also need to refer to parents' own gender identity and gender attitude.

4. THE INFLUENCE OF GENDER DISTINCTION IN TOYS ON CHILDREN

4.1. The effect on the physical appearance of children

Dolls are shaped into a female form, which to some extent emphasizes the "girl attribute" of dolls, implying that dolls are girls' proprietary toys. At the same time, in the image of the doll, the image is mostly round face, lovely dimple, long hair, and wearing beautiful skirt, representing the ideal shape of women in people's minds. The society shows its evaluation standard of female beauty in the form of doll, which affects the girl's understanding of female beauty and solidifies into a pattern of thinking. When girls grow up, this psychological restriction is reflected in women's leisure activities, and they pay special attention to their image in front of others. This sensitive psychology directly affects women's participation in leisure activities.^[5]

Toys like Transformers show broad shoulders, strong muscles, a strong waist and a strong body. Their varied shapes and movements reflect movement and vitality. When boys grow up, they follow this "masculinity" in their choice of leisure activities: they love ball games, hip-hop, rock climbing, racing, and so on. These leisure activities either help them build a strong body or show their strong body shape. The choice of leisure activity types for adult men is consistent with the male characteristics emphasized by their childhood toys.

4.2. Influence on the Formation of Children's Personality Traits

Toys also play an important role in the formation of personality traits between men and women. From the classification of toys, visual emotional, musical rhythm and analog toys are more suitable for girls, while operational and action toys are more suitable for boys. In today's China, due to the changes in family patterns,

children rarely have partners of their age at home, so toys are almost the best companions to accompany them. With the help of visual emotional toys, girls can regulate emotions and relieve loneliness. Playing 'doll' not only cultivates girls' rich vocabulary and fluent language, but also cultivates their quiet personality. They learn to be gentle and understand people well. At the same time, analog toys also play an important role in shaping women's quality. Analog toys are the reduced version of daily necessities in the adult world. These items represent daily life, are the simulation of adult activities, and are a mirror of their future life. In the process of playing these toys, girls learn to organize housework, take care of family, small visual emotional and analog toys to cultivate the quality of girls affect their adult leisure activities. Girls for gentle, elegant, quiet understanding makes more.

4.3. Impact on children 's future social roles

Toys and social roles are described above. Girls' toys are mostly dolls and simulated household goods, while boys' toys are balls, robots, guns and so on. It can be seen that girls' toys are relatively single, mostly belonging to the home type; Boys' toys are more diverse, creative and aggressive. Girls' toys usually do not have much cognitive function or prepare for future careers, while boys' toys can lay the foundation for their future roles. Girls' toys are basically carried out within a small range of two or three individuals, which are cooperative rather than competitive. Although they are not subject to rules, they are orderly. They do not do aggressive physical contact or control, but play a parental role of mutual love. This difference in toys makes girls at a disadvantage in the future, and this game cannot prepare them to adapt to the economic role to be played by the future society. Therefore, compared with boys, girls' games are actually with other factors, making them weak in future life.

5. CONCLUSION

Education should start from the child, from the toy, from the child's closest partner, eliminate the child's gender stereotypes. In this respect, parents play a role that cannot be ignored. In the early stage of children's growth, there is no gender difference in toys, but when parents choose toys for their children, they usually choose toys that are traditionally suitable for their children's gender, which will undoubtedly strengthen children's gender distinction of toys, and then produce adverse gender cognition for the future. Therefore, when choosing toys, parents should give up the traditional stereotyped gender cognition of toys, let children choose toys freely, cultivate rich interests and hobbies, so as to facilitate the free and balanced development of adult life and create more possibilities for children's future.

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