

Childhood Discrimination Towards the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Group (LGBTQ)

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ABSTRACT

Discrimination toward the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) groups is one of the most frequently debated topics and is with much research value. The degree of discrimination toward gender identities and sexual orientation differs from one's own is tested in this paper. This research targets the middle-aged population in China. 40 students from primary schools were randomly selected and did an Speeded Categorization Task (SCT) with interviews. By analyzing their score and narratives, the SCT reflects instinct responses, suggesting a reliable response from the population. The result of this research was that children showed almost no discrimination to any of the LGBTQ groups. This may indicate that education and social norms affected people's discrimination toward others in a deeper way.

Keywords: Middle-Aged Children, LGBTQ group, Discrimination, Gender Minorities, Stigma

1. INTRODUCTION

The lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer, abbreviated as the LGBTQ group refers to five groups of people who are either identified with, or choose to be a part of the: Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer group. They are gender identities and sexual orientations. Unlike the biological signals indicating sex, gender identity and sexual orientation are one's own choice, or sense, of being included in a particular group [1]. LGBTQ are some of the most common groups that we refer to nowadays. People are inventing new pronouns, medical use, social equipment, and education requirements based on the newly explored genders and orientations [2]. Debates on whether these facilities for the LGBTQ communities are required are still unsettled. However, this research has not focused on the necessities of the convenience that were built for the LGBTQ communities.

Based on the current societal circumstance, this research endeavors to explore whether the past research results are suitable for all circumstances, or, in all cultural backgrounds. Using the SCT task to understand the most intuitive response from children, also takes into account the biological choice of a human being on accepting new concepts to evaluate the outcome. Since past researches were solely based on European or American geographic locations and cultures in Asia are

completely different from those from the other side of the world. The present research will be supplementing evidence to the existing studies on childhood discrimination toward gender identities and sexual orientation by doing similar research in China.

1.1 Children's Discriminating Behavior

Discrimination discussed in this paper refers to both sexism and prejudice, where prejudicial is societal pressure that was forced to another based on their difference in gender identity and sexual orientation either high anticipation nor negative opinions [3]. It is considered a major influence on the life of an LGBTQ individual, and thus a triggering behavior for some with mental disorders. [4].

New researches relating to the increasing number of groups different from boys, girls, and heterosexuals have aroused social issues. Especially for some cultures. Social norms in Asian cultures have not fully adapted to the concept of accepting more than the categories of "boys and girls" or "heterosexual". Homoprejudice violence refers to behaviors against others because of their perceived sexual orientation, and this is a severe issue even in Guangzhou, one of the most developed cities in China [5].

Furtherly, Studies were done to show how children

with gender-atypical struggles through life and experience severe stress have shown the need of exploring this topic deeper [6]. To find empirical evidence of whether young children intuitively show discrimination shows whether a human would accept this concept easily without any environmental educating or indoctrinating. And thus, furthering the topic more deeply about the rights of the atypical groups in society. European and American culture-based researches have shown discrimination behaviors toward one another could start from as young as the start of school-age [7]. However, Hokulea's study targeted the environmental factors in prejudice behaviors and wasn't aiming to show the intuitive responses from the children.

On the other hand, there are also evidence pointing out that children's intuitive response toward certain groups is not a sufficient variable to predict a broader view. For example, children could be mainly affected by some words from their parents even if the parents weren't intended to indoctrinate them on certain concepts [8]. In addition, a study done to research the racial bias in children has found that children might not be able to clearly understand the definition between the categorizing [9]. Thus, it would be hard to conclude from such a study design that the response of middle-aged children could be an indicator of all public perspectives.

Accordingly, the mechanism of how middle-aged children discriminate remains unclear. Much of the previous articles have stated the various factors that could play a part in affecting how children view concepts, it's still not clear how discrimination started and how it could end intuitively. It is therefore necessary to focus on the intuitive response to find the "purer" outcome.

1.2. LGBTQ group

The LGBTQ refers to some of the most commonly seen gender identity and sexual orientation groups other than boy, girl, and heterosexual. Because the total number of gender identities and sexual orientations are still in debate, and different groups are required to find the best result in this study, LGBTQ is picked from the gender and sexual orientation list. It is the variable measured to explain the degrees of discrimination.

The following is the simplified explanation that was given to the children which derived from the Oxford dictionary: L stands for Lesbian, which means girls who date girls only. G stands for Gay, which means boys who date boys only. B stands for Bisexual, which means people who date both boys and girls. T stands for transgender, which means they think they didn't identify with their sex at birth. Q stands for Queer, which means they could choose to be any sex or gender apart from boys, girls, and heterosexuals.

1.3 The relationship between children's discrimination and the LGBTQ group

The relationship of discrimination toward the LGBTQ group has been introduced by the concept of stigma. Which means negative attitudes toward someone based on their distinguishing characteristics. The current education in the Chinese culture has stigmatized gender roles and thus the average acceptance toward different opinions is lower than those of European cultures [10].

However, this paper hypothesized that children would show an equal attitude toward the different sexual orientations and gender identities without being exposed to long-term stigmatizing education environments.

1.4. Research objective

The present study set out to investigate whether children at an early age will show discrimination toward different gender identity and sexual orientation. The study address relationship between the LGBTQ community and children's discrimination. We hypothesize that: (1) 5-8 years old students will not show any discrimination toward the LGBTQ community. (2) Children will show no discrimination to neither difference in gender identity nor sexual orientation. (3) The birth sex of the children will not cause a great difference to the result either.

2. METHODS

2.1 Participants

A total of participants of 40 participants were recruited from primary schools in China. Considering the law that forces all kids to go to school until the 9th grade in China, it is suitable in this case to draw all our samples from primary schools. To eliminate the bias as much as possible, we will randomly select one public, private, and church-funded education system. This led us to the final 40 voluntary participants: 14 from public schools, 14 from primary schools, and 12 from church-funded education systems. The mean age of participants was 6.64 ($SD = 2.28$), and the male-female rate is 50-50. None of the participants has ever encountered anyone from the LGBTQ group before in history.

2.2. Procedure and materials

All children will complete a Speeded Categorization Task. This will include four tasks. The entire experiment will be recorded with consent from their guardian.

First, we first did an interview on the definitions of LGBTQ groups one by one, 15 minutes a session. to all 40 children to make sure they understood the concepts. This will be in the oral form of either an online classroom or in-person teaching by a researcher to make sure that all

children understand what does the five gender stands for because we cannot assume that all children can understand those Chinese characters at the age of 5-8. The definition used is mentioned in section 2.2. The researcher will not show any emotion toward the genders so that they won't be leading the children to act the same. If children create any question that may ask the teacher to show preferences toward anything, the researcher will only gently shift to the next group.

Second, the children will be led to a screen that contains an SCT matching test. It would be done group by group to make sure that the researcher could monitor the experiment. Then, 1 picture of an Asian individual that is identified in one of the LGBTQ groups will arise on the screen with their group name and definition, 5 pictures will be shown at once. Then, three multiple-choice questions will appear at the bottom of the screen to let the children select from the big screen. The experiment will be replicated for 5 times, a total number of 25 pictures will be shown on the screen, 5 for each group. The three questions are: (1) Who do you want to be friends with? (1pt); (2) Who do you feel no dislike toward? (0pt); (3) Who do you feel dislike toward? (-1pt).

Third, to grade the participants and to analyze the data, we wanted to set no bias toward any gender as our value 0 between the possible score of +5 and -5. Sample of evaluation: a +5 score means that the children felt strong anticipation toward all individuals who are identified in the LGBTQ group, and dislike none. Additionally, a value of -5 indicates where children have shown a dislike toward all LGBTQ groups.

Last, we then interview with all participants to let the participant tell us what their gender is. The result from this interview could also be used to study if different gender groups will lead to a different level of discrimination.

We also have to analyze the errors, which include the fact that children are likely to miscategorize gender-based on the appearance of the people in the picture. And with repeating the same experiment three times will eliminate that error.

3. RESULTS

The result of the data supported the hypothesis of this paper: children didn't show discrimination toward others. From all the students that we have interviewed, the average discrimination score was 0.4 out of -5 to 5, which is a result very close to the ideal 0 that the hypothesis has anticipated. The mean value between the male and females did not differ much. The mean between the score of males is 0.35 and of females is 0.45. Considering the population and grading scale, a difference of 0.1 is not significant enough for this research to conclude that female is more likely to show discrimination toward the LGBTQ community.

The above graph showed the score of each group in the LGBTQ group to better interpret the results. To show the details of the data, they-bar of the graph has been magnified, the original max and min of the data were from -5 to 5. Thus, even though it seems that the Bisexual and Transgender group is showing a greater difference on the graph, it can not affect the overall average score of the children.

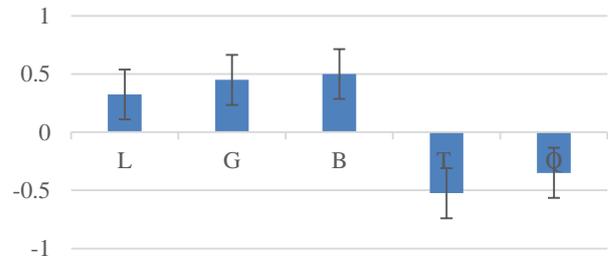


Figure 1 Discrimination and LGBTQ

4. DISCUSSION

This article will apply the main narrative framework to place gender identity in children's development in the macro background of gender hierarchy. This perspective can help developmental scholarship shift from focusing primarily on child-level results in gender studies to considering how children respond to and contribute to a larger cultural background. The result is expected to be an empirical taxonomy of narrative types that reveals the different ways in which children in this sample describe gender, not only in the content of their discussions but more interestingly, how their emerging gender narratives relate to gender. This study has examined childhood discrimination toward the different gender identities and sexual orientations.

In particular, children's deviation from the main narrative will make a noteworthy contribution to the broader literature of gender identity and development research, which is mainly constructed based on how children abide by or adapt to social norms. Viewing children's initiative primarily as a process of adaptation emphasizing how they acquire, adopt, and strengthen social norms, behaviors, and attitudes can underestimate the potential role of children in resisting and undermining social inequality. The estimated data can support the development research: the main narrative accounts for 64% of the sample, and one-third of the sample tells alternative narratives that question, challenge, or undermine the main narrative. In other words, conceptualizing gender development from the perspective of adaptation and resistance not only will enable us to regard children as agents of social change, but also accurately capture the normative diversity of children's emerging gender identities.

4.1. Types Of Gender Narrative: From Analytical Framework To Empirical Taxonomy

The integration of adaptation and resistance will provide a coding scheme that can transform the main narrative framework into an empirical classification. Although there is some evidence that gender dominates the content of narratives in emerging adults [11], the current study will be the first analysis to provide empirical examples of how such narratives sound in childhood. The two main narratives of difference and gender blindness will illustrate the two ways for children's gender stories can be consistent with or strengthen the gender hierarchy. Different narratives consist of a series of content, but share a ubiquitous mandatory script: "Boys and girls are different" [12]. This is not to say that all children who talk about gender differences talk about gender inequality or differential treatment. On the contrary, in a hierarchical society based on patriarchy, differences and inequality are intertwined and are often synonymous. In other words, the difference is not benign; instead, it embeds comparisons and rankings of socially-valued differences. Then, children's narratives of difference will reinforce the main narrative that boys and girls, men and women are different. This forms the basis of differential treatment and inequality.

The main narrative framework will also allow us to hear the children's alternative narratives—their resistance or destruction of the hierarchy. In particular, inconsistent narratives seem to capture children at the crossroads of the main narrative and their own life experiences—reciting the main narrative and contradicting it. These narratives are estimated to highlight the tension between personal and social norms. Consistent with previous research, the increasing social cognitive skills in mid-childhood seem to include gender inconsistencies in society [13]. Although the alternatives are estimated to account for only 13% of the sample, it might further illustrate that for some children, the development of gender identity is to a large extent a process of resisting social norms rather than "adopting" them. This resistance may be the product of other people's obvious socialization or personal bias (for example, gender inconsistency), which makes the main narrative more obvious and therefore more controversial [11].

Age differences are also expected in the hypothetical narrative types. Younger children seem to rely more on differential narratives. At the other end of the spectrum, older children talk about appearance more flexibly, not according to the constancy of the category, but according to the diversity within the "girl" and "boy" categories. The vitality of mid-childhood, when young people start to ask who I am and who I can be in this society, requires some consistency [14]. However, the premise of the main narrative is that it is the dominant story, so the individual will not "naturally" develop into an alternative narrative.

McLean et al. [11] Found evidence of "traditional" gender narratives in emerging adulthood. Conversely, inconsistent narratives are expected to evenly distribute across age groups (26% and 21%) may mark a "turning point" on the road of development [14]; moments when individuals either acquiesce to the main narrative or continue to resist it. In this way, inconsistent narratives may be the right time to intervene and cultivate this resistance.

As assumed, in general, girls are more likely to tell alternative narratives than boys. This supports the theory and previous studies [12], which show that girls can be more clearly faced with gender inconsistencies due to their subordinate status in the hierarchy, and it can be said More motivated to question or resist repressive narratives. In addition to observing more girls than boys telling the narrative of resistance, the content of the narrative can show that among boys who did question the main narrative, they often noticed its impact on girls. For example, boys who tell narratives in another native language tend to comment that girls are treated unfairly or underestimated simply because they are girls. There are expected to be fewer boys, although some people notice the restrictions imposed on them by the main narrative and expect boys to be "strong and strong." This discovery seems consistent with the view that boys face greater pressure and social sanctions than girls when they deviate from gender norms.

In contrast, children who rate gender as "a little bit" or "not much" important are more likely to tell narratives that either directly challenged gender inequalities (counter-narratives) or questioned gender-based inconsistencies (in-congruent). This might support gender-schema or salience theories, such that children who are more attuned to or centered on gender are also more stereotyped in their attitudes and identities.

4.2. Limitations And Future Research Directions

Despite the merits of the present study, it has several limitations that require more research. The sample base could be from a larger database, researchers could also improve the accuracy of the result by providing more choices for participants to choose from.

These data will span the number of life years in personal change. The empirical classification of narrative types identified in this analysis can be extended to other developmental periods. It will better answer the question of whether the taxonomy is related to other identities (such as race) because this research focuses on yellow children living in China. This will further explain that there may be no obvious difference between the gender narrative type and the ethnic narrative type that children tell, but as the age grows, the narrative type will change from one narrative type to another according to experience and socialization.

The research will be a novel contribution to the literature. The use of the master narrative framework, qualitative and mixed-analytic strategies extend existing research and offer new directions. Yet, it cannot explain variations such as: Are certain narrative types more stable than others? Who is more susceptible to change? Another recognition is interviewer effects. Boys and girls are most familiar with talking with acquaintances such as teachers or classmates in school contexts, so some of the interview questions probed by a stranger from this new research might somehow affect their answer exposure, or some expressions of how they view might be revealed in a strange oral interview environment.

Even with the limitations, the research can guide targeted intervention plans. For example, although both differential narratives and gender-blind narratives seem to reinforce the main narrative, children in these respective narrative types may need different strategies to cultivate awareness of inequality and resistance to gender stereotypes. In this way, empirical taxonomy can be used to formulate interventions for parents and educators who wish to cultivate socially conscious youth and contribute to a fairer society.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study also identifies the relationships between biological sex and childhood discrimination and provides a new perspective in developing future education programs.

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