

Gendered Identities: Childhood and Adolescence

Chapter 6



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THEORIES OF GENDER DEVELOPMENT

- *Social learning theory*—emphasizes how children learn gendered behavior from their environment (Mischel, 1966, 1970)
 - *Reinforcement*—when a behavior is followed by desirable consequences
 - *Imitation*—copying someone else's behavior
 - *Observational learning*—watching others' behavior and storing it for later use



Learning Gender

- Gender identity & typing is a result of day to day interaction with caretakers and social environment.
- Cognitive factors also plays a role. Children pay more attention to same-gender models.
- Gender typing can be eliminated.

THEORIES OF GENDER DEVELOPMENT

□ Cognitive theories

- *Cognitive developmental theory*—children move through a series of stages in their cognitive development, and there are concepts they cannot grasp until they have reached the appropriate cognitive stage (Kohlberg, 1966)

- *Gender constancy*—knowledge that gender is permanent

THEORIES OF GENDER DEVELOPMENT

- 2-3 year olds can identify as girls or boys.
- By 6-7 children understand that gender is permanent.
- Once aware of gender constancy they match the value and behavior and may exaggerate it.
- Do not attribute learned gender to reinforcements.



Learning Gender

- *Gender schema theory*—the gender schema is learned very early, and it guides the individual in becoming gender-typed (Bem, 1981)



Learning Gender

- Schemas are needed to understand information.
- The schema is learned early and guides gender-typing
- Determines what we attend to and remember.



Learning Gender

- *Gender-schematic*—highly gender-typed; a well-developed gender schema and the reliance on it to make sense of the world
- *Gender-aschematic*—less gender-typed; a less-developed gender schema and less reliance on it to make sense of the world

GENDER IN THE CHILD'S DAILY LIFE



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- At first, parents and family are the strongest influences on gender, followed by peers.



BOYS: THE PREFERRED SEX

- *Female infanticide*—the practice of killing newborn female infants
 - Sex-based infanticide has been documented in about 9% of cultures, and females are the most vulnerable.



BOYS: THE PREFERRED SEX

- *Female-selective abortion*—aborting healthy fetuses only because they are female
 - There is strong evidence that this is practiced in Asian countries, including Korea, China, India, Taiwan, and Pakistan.
 - Experts estimate that in the past two decades, millions of healthy female fetuses have been aborted in Asian countries alone (Miller, 2001).



GENDER INFLUENCES: PARENTS

- One of the most important ways parents socialize babies and young children is through talking.
 - Overall, mothers talk to children more than fathers do, and their talk is more supportive and emotion-focused, while fathers' is more directive and informative (Leaper, Anderson, & Sanders, 1998).



GENDER INFLUENCES: PARENTS

- Parents also play differently with their sons and daughters during the preschool years.
 - Parents do more “pretend” and fantasy play with girls, and fathers in particular do more rough and tumble, physical, and pretend-aggression play with boys (Lindsey, Mize, & Pettit, 1997; Lindsey & Mize, 2001).



GENDER INFLUENCES: PARENTS

- The gender schemas of children, which are applied to both themselves and to others, are formed partly through exposure to their parents' gender schemas.



GENDER INFLUENCES: PEERS

- *Gender segregation*—children often choose to play with same-gender friends.
- Occurs around age 2.
- When playing alone play style is similar.
- Boys tend to create in group solidarity.



GENDER INFLUENCES: PEERS

- Gendered play affects friendship style; girls' friendships tend to be organized around talking about others and confiding in each other, whereas boys' friendships tend to be organized around sports and other activities.



GENDER INFLUENCES: PEERS

- Boys learn competitive, dominance-oriented play styles
- Girls learn cooperative styles
- In mix gender group girls are at a disadvantage.



GENDER INFLUENCES: PEERS

- *When girls want to be aggressive and dominate they used relational aggression.*
- *Relational aggression*—hostile acts that attempt to damage another's close relationship or social standing



Media Influences

Several studies from 70's and 90's showed:

- Boys and men more often were represented as independent, active, competent, and aggressive.
- Girls were shown as passive, helpless, nurturing, or dependent.



Media Influences

- Typical child watches 38 hours of TV a week.
- A meta-analysis showed that the more a child watches TV, the more likely he or she is to have gender-stereotyped beliefs.

Ethnicity, Social Class, & Gender typing

- Asian-American families emphasize traditional roles of women being nurturing and home oriented while men should be strong and stoic but also family oriented.
- Latinos are taught traditional gender from from same gender parent.

Ethnicity, Social Class, & Gender typing

- African-American are less likely to rely on gender stereotype than European American
- African American families have extended families.
- Over half of African-American children are raised by a single-parent mother who works outside the home.



Media Influences

- Video games most sexist
- No females in 41% of games
- When they did appear they were sex objects, helpless victims, or targets of aggression.
- 15% had females as action heroes, whereas 28% showed them as sex objects.

VULNERABILITIES OF CHILDHOOD

Abuse

- *Childhood sexual abuse*—coercive sexual interaction between a child and an adult
 - Children, particularly girls, are most often abused by someone they know and trust.

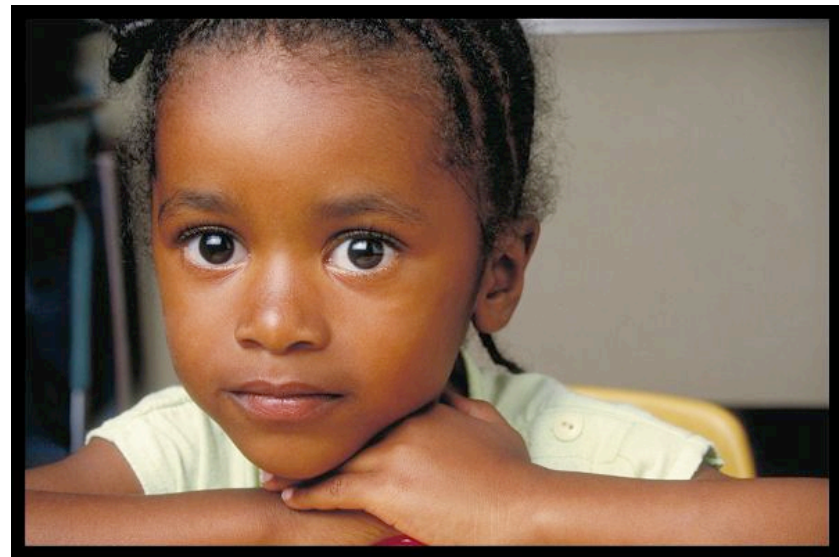


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VULNERABILITIES OF CHILDHOOD

- Estimated 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys will have experienced an episode of sexual abuse while younger than 18 years.
- The numbers of boys affected may be falsely low because of reporting techniques (Botash, Ann, MD, Pediatric Annual, May, 1997).

VULNERABILITIES OF CHILDHOOD

- 67% of all victims were under the age of 18);
- 34% of all victims were under age 12.
- One of every seven were under 6.
- 40% of the offenders who victimized children under age 6 were under the age of 18

VULNERABILITIES OF CHILDHOOD

- Most children are abused by someone they know and trust,
- Boys are more likely than girls to be abused outside of the family.
- 4% of the offenders were strangers, 20% were fathers, 16 % were relatives and 50% were acquaintances or friends

VULNERABILITIES OF CHILDHOOD

- Almost five children die everyday as a result of child abuse. More than three out of four are under the age of 4.
- A report of child abuse is made every ten seconds

VULNERABILITIES OF CHILDHOOD



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Poverty

- Over 14 million American children live below the poverty line (Arnold & Doctoroff, 2003).
 - Children from low-income families are exposed to more violence at home and in their neighborhoods and schools than those from middle-income families.
 - They are more likely to experience parents' divorce, family breakup, and foster care (Evans, 2004).



LEAVING CHILDREN BEHIND: PUBERTY & ADOLESCENCE

- *Puberty*—series of physiological events that changes a child into a person capable of reproducing
- *Adolescence*—the period after puberty and before adulthood
- *Growth spurt*—a gain in height and body fat

LEAVING CHILDREN BEHIND: PUBERTY & ADOLESCENCE

- *Secondary sex characteristics*—physical characteristics that appear during puberty that differentiate between the sexes without having a direct reproductive function (e.g., breasts, body hair)
- *Menarche*—the onset of menstruation
- *Gender intensification*—increased pressure to conform to gender roles beginning in early adolescence

VULNERABILITIES OF ADOLESCENCE

- **Self-silencing and self-esteem**
 - *Self-silencing*—the stifling of feelings and thoughts by adolescent girls in an effort to fit in and be seen as a “nice girl”
 - *Self-esteem*—a person’s overall level of positive regard and self-respect

VULNERABILITIES OF ADOLESCENCE

- **Peer culture and harassment**
 - A national study of children in grades 8 through 11 showed that 83% of girls and 79% of boys had experienced harassment (AAUW, 2001).

VULNERABILITIES OF ADOLESCENCE

- Boys tended to view sexualized harassment as flattering, whereas girls were more likely to report that it made them frightened, self-conscious and embarrassed.