Gender Role Development

Classic explanations

Some terminology……

Sex

Our biological make-up - sexual identity - are we biologically male or female?

Gender

The cultural interpretation of sex

Gender identity

Do we consider ourselves to be male or female?

Psychological concept referring to the inferences we make about being male or female

Gender roles

Behaviours, interests, attitudes, skills and personality traits that a culture considers appropriate for males and females

Gender-typing

Process by which children learn and acquire gender roles

Gender stereotyping

Preconceived generalisations about male and female behaviour

Explanations

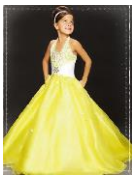
Biological

Evolutionary

Biosocial

Psychoanalytic

Social Learning

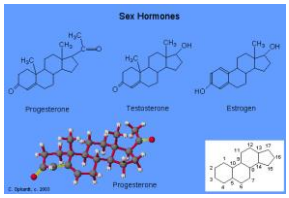


Cognitive-Developmental

Biological Influences

- Sex chromosomes
  - XX or XY
- Heredity and Hormones
  - Infants enter world with some predispositions to 'masculinity' and 'femininity' due to exposure to hormones in the womb
  - Oestrogens and Androgens influence behaviours considered 'male' or 'female'
    e.g. boisterousness in males

    Play behaviour – boys: 'rough and tumble' play



Evidence for biological explanation of gender development?

- Violent male criminals (Dabbs et al, 1987)
  - Violent males - high levels of testosterone
  - How might we critique this?
- Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (Berenbaum and Bailey, 2003; Hall et al, 2004)
  - Inherited hormonal disorder (androgens)
  - Development of male characteristics in females and early puberty in boys and girls
  - Girls – behave in more masculine ways and show masculine preferences regarding activities e.g. sports

Evidence for biological explanation of gender development?

- Batista family (Imperato-McGinley et al, 1974)
  - Dominican Republic
  - Single family - 10 children - 4 grew up as girls but developed into muscular men
  - Twenty-three affected families (37 children in total)
  - Common female ancestor (mid-18th century)
  - Occurs only when mutant gene carried by both parents
  - Late flood of testosterone produces dihydrotestosterone (for male appearance)
  - Age 12 – vaginas healed over, they grew full-sized penises and testicles
  - Behaviour changed to match that of boys in Dominican Republic
    - Suggests that testosterone had <u>pre-programmed masculinity into their brains</u>

Batista family – could this case support an **Interactionist explanation**?

Directness or indirectness of effects of anatomical differences

e.g. androgens

- Direct effect
  High level of activity
- Indirect effect
  Expectations due to musculature

Biological: Male and female brains - Hardwiring?

- Baron-Cohen (2003a, 2003b)
  - Female brain - empathy/sensitivity
  - Male brain - understanding and building systems
  - Three common brain types:
    1. Empathising stronger than systemising (E)
    2. Systemising stronger than empathising (S)
    3. Equally strong in both empathising and systemising (balanced brain, type B)
  - Some evidence that girls show more empathy than boys, while boys are more interested in how objects work
  - Men better at map reading and mental rotation *(Golombok and Fivush, 1994)*

Sociobiological view

- Men and women are the product of a complex system of factors and forces which combine in various ways to produce a whole range of masculinities and femininities (Gross, 2010)
- Interaction between biological and social factors is important
- Money and Ehrhardt (1972) Anatomy is destiny
  - How we are labelled sexually determines how we are raised
- 'Male' and 'female' brain? Incongruent with biological sex?
- Schaffer (2004)
  - 'Baby X' studies – 'David' or 'Dana' – neither overtly masculine or feminine in appearance
  - Played with range of toys
  - When cried in response to jack-in-the box – labelled as either anger or fear

Sociobiological view

- Intersex studies (natural experiment)
  - Gender of rearing different from their chromosomal/anatomical/hormonal (CAH) gender status e.g. genitals not sufficiently male or female
- Money and Erhardt (1972) CAH children initially raised as boys – underwent gender reassignment and raised as girls
  - Strong preference for female role
  - Claim that gender of rearing can be changed if within 'critical' period ($2^1/_2$ – 3 years)
  - Cite penile destruction cases – BUT these demonstrate varying outcomes
  - Money and Erhardt (1972): well-known case

    Twin Bruce Reimer - accidental penile destruction during circumcision
    - Surgically reassigned, raised as girl 'Brenda'
    - By 14 – changed name to 'John' – surgical penis construction
    - 1997 - age 31 - married and now David Reimer
    - 2004 - age 38 – suicide

Evolutionary approach

- 'Gender' - human evolution
- Derived from **sociobiology** and Darwinism
  - Natural selection
  - Humans = animals
    - Rape adaptation hypothesis (Thornhill, 1980s)
  - Influence of mind
    - Domain-specific biases in learning gender roles
- Survival and reproduction
- Human nature = mechanisms (natural selection) and emotions

Socio-biological: Parental Investment Theory

Wilson (1987)

- Reproduction is inexpensive for males, costly for females
- Social structures and patterns of behaviour have evolved around this
- 'The family' emerged – female trades reproductive capacity for male protection
- Female need to be sure that male will remain to protect
- Male must protect female to ensure own genetic offspring
  - In almost all societies, men concerned with controlling female sexuality
- Societies organized into families

Adaptation over time - psychological differences based mainly on different reproduction roles (e.g. Janicki, 2004)

Psychoanalytic perspective

Linked to the phallic stage – the Oedipal/Electra complex

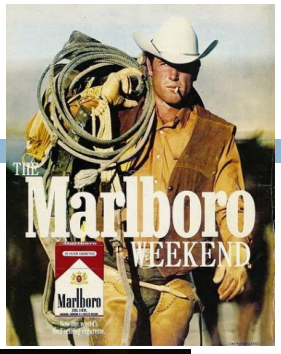
Stage	Ages	Focus of Libido	Major Development	Adult Fixation Example
Oral	0 to 1	Mouth, Tongue, Lips	Weaning off of breast feeding or formula	Smoking, Overeating
Anal	1 to 3	Anus	Toilet Training	Orderliness, Messiness
Phallic	3 to 6	Genitals	Resolving Oedipus/ Electra Complex	Deviancy, Sexual Dysfunction
Latency	6 to 12	None	Developing Defense Mechanisms	None
Genital	12+	Genitals	Reaching Full Sexual Maturity	If all stages were successfully completed then the person should be sexually matured and mentally healthy.

Challenges to Freud's theory include?

Single parent families, gay or lesbian parents?

Child very different from same-sex parent?

Child very similar to opposite sex parent?



Social Learning explanation

- Culturally determined
  - e.g. Kwoma tribe (Papua New Guinea) - large, strong women able to carry heavy loads considered highly desirable by men (Whiting, 1941)
    - For most men in the Western world….not so much
  - Socializing agents within each culture – repetitive messages
  - Bandura and Walters (1963): Principle mechanisms:
    - Reinforcement
      - Langlois and Downs (1980): Fathers particularly sensitive to child's gendered playing/toy selection
      - Openly ridiculed cross-sex play; strongest with sons
    - Observational learning (models)
      - Different models become prominent depending on sex of child
    - Self-regulation
      - Learns from others' responses to regulate own behaviour according to gender

Social Learning explanation

Parental influences

During child's second year:

- Fathers - time, talk with sons
- Mothers - time, support for daughters

(e.g. Lamb, 1981)

Fathers

- More physical play with sons
- More sensitivity to daughters

(Lindsay and Mize, 2001)

Different types of father?

Social Learning explanation

Argued that:

Parental treatment influences children's gender knowledge

Gendered behaviour?

(e.g. Turner and Gervai, 1995)

Alternative parenting / families?

Increasingly accepted in many cultures

Social Learning explanation

Peer influences

Children – 'gendered' ideas

(Ruble and Martin, 1998)

By 3 years - gender appropriateness

By 4 years – policing each other

But – must be linked to cognitive development

'Gender appropriateness' – fluid, changing, cultural

BREAK

10 MINUTES!

Social Learning explanation

Findings supporting SL explanation

- Parents allow sons to show more aggression than girls (Sears et al, 1957)
- Boys more likely to imitate aggressive models (Bandura et al, 1961, 1963)
- Children more likely to imitate same gender models
- Parents encourage their same-gender children to participate in gender appropriate activities (e.g. Lytton and Romney, 1991)
- Children take into account both their own gender and the gender-appropriateness of the model's behaviour (Bussey and Bandura, 1984)

Social Learning explanation

Findings not supporting SL explanation

- No consistent differences in ways in which boys' and girls' behaviours are reinforced
- Bandura's findings (imitation of same-gender models) not always found in other studies
  - Barkley et al (1977), meta-analysis: of 81 studies, only 18 matched Bandura's findings
- Maccoby and Jacklin (1974) Children aware of own gender and prefer to imitate gender appropriate behaviour, regardless of sex of model

Findings not supporting SL explanation

- Hetherington (1967) Children prefer to imitate parent they spend most contact with
- No correlation between extent of parents' sex-typed behaviours and strength of sex-typing in children (Smith and Dalgleish, 1997)
- BUT – a correlation found between father traditional/egalitarian attitudes and four-year-olds perceptions of gender roles (Quiery, 1998)

Note dates of supporting and non-supporting studies.
Ideas, expectations and positive role models change over time.

Social Learning explanation

Strengths of a socialisation approach

- Breadth and multiplicity of processes it examines
- Scope for individual differences

BUT:

Focus is complex - clear causal connections?

Social Learning explanation

Questions regarding a socialisation approach

- Social learning theory assumes processes of learning are much the same at any age
  - Does not account for age-related changes in sex-role beliefs
  - e.g. young children may hold very traditional, 'black and white' beliefs
- Social learning 'modelling' experiments
  - Adults model children's behaviours in studies
  - Real life – adults illustrate adult behaviours – may not be of much interest to young children, so influence of modelling may vary with age

Cognitive-developmental explanations

1) **Kohlberg:** Piagetian basis – schemas:

- **Gender labelling** (approx 2 – $3^1/_2$ years) – slowly becomes aware that belongs to particular sex group
  - At first, just a label
  - Adapts gender labels – who belongs in which group?
  - Not always aware that this categorisation can be lifelong (Slaby and Frey, 1975)
- **Gender stability** ($3^1/_2$ – $4^1/_2$) – gradually becomes aware of durability of own gender
  - But still dependent on physical concept of gender – superficial characteristics e.g. clothing
- **Gender constancy** ($4^1/_2$ – 7)
  - Awareness of the permanency of gender
  - Challenge: Jacklin (1989) – 2-year-olds often show a preference for gender-appropriate toys

Kohlberg: self-socialisation of gender roles:

Selective attention

- Children attend to and imitate same-sex models
- Follow gender appropriate activities
- Pattern is strongest in children who have achieved gender constancy

(Ruble et al, 1981)

Cognition before observation and imitation?

Cognitive-developmental explanations

2) **Gender Schematic Processing theory** (Martin and Halverson, 1981)

- Emphasises the child's active processing of gender-related information
- Diverges from Kohlberg in a crucial respect
- Argues that child does strive to develop an increasingly complex schema about their gender group (values, behaviours etc.)

  BUT - this starts when child discovers their own gender identity - not when they obtain gender constancy

  - Child's self-perception becomes sex-typed
  - Focus on activities identified as sex-group appropriate/less attention to other activities
- Helps explain resilience of children's sex role beliefs and attitudes
  - Process information schematically (admit or ignore information) – congruent information supports/strengthens schema

Cognitive-developmental explanations

Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1983, 1985, 1993)

Gender typing = gender schemas (re. appropriateness)

Perceptions of the world set parameters for behaviour

Easy acceptance of gender labels

Gender schemas promote gender stereotypes

Bem: Androgyny most advanced level of gender role identity?
Biological sex unimportant?

Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) (1974) – 3 x 20 items

BSRI (short form) – 3 x 10 items

Masculine items

- Assertive
- Leadership ability
- Dominant
- Strong personality
- Forceful
- Aggressive
- Willing to take a stand
- Independent
- Defends own beliefs
- Willing to take risks

Feminine items

- Understanding
- Sympathetic
- Eager to soothe hurt feelings
- Sensitive to needs of others
- Compassionate
- Loves children
- Affectionate
- Gentle
- Warm
- Tender

Also **'filler' items** (gender neutral): e.g. truthful, happy, conceited….

- Focus of items – personal characteristics – but not physical
- 7–point Likert scale
  - 1= Never/Almost never true
  - 7 = Always/Almost always true
- Masculine if above median score of Masculine items
- Feminine if above median score of Feminine items
- Androgynous (above median in both Masc./Fem.)
- Undifferentiated (below median in both Masc./Fem.)
- Most advanced level of gender role identity?
- Biological sex unimportant?
- Source of 'masculine' and 'feminine' items?

Alternative Gender identities

- Alternative understandings of our own sexuality
- Alternative congruence with own biological sex characteristics
  - Biology and Genes competing with material for Social Learning?
- Alternative interpretations of 'family'
- Alternative beliefs regarding the right to have a family
  - Controversial?

Seminar topic next week: alternative gender identities

Compulsory reading:

Hegarty, P. (2009). Toward an LGBT-affirmative informed paradigm for children who break gender norms: A comment on Drummond et al. (2008) and Rieger et al. (2008). *Developmental Psychology, 45, 895-900.*

Reading

- Bee, H. L., Boyd, D. R. (2007). *The Developing Child.* Boston : Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.
- Berk, L., E. (2006). *Child Development*. Boston : Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Boyd, D. R., Bee, H. L. (2008). *Lifespan Development*. Boston : A & B Pearson.
- Durkin, K. (1995). *Developmental Social Psychology: from infancy to old age.* Oxford : Blackwell
- Santrock, J. W. (2006). *Child Development*. Boston ; London : McGraw-Hill.