

What are the influences affecting children's acquisition of gender roles?

Banerjee, R (2005), Gender Identity and the development of gender roles in Dung, S and Littleton, K. eds. Children's Personal and Social Development, Oxford, Blackwell, pp.141-179

p151-152 5 theoretical approaches

① Psychoanalytic perspectives

Freud - oedipus complex

Chodorow (1978)

girls able to continue to identify with mothers => "strong sense of interpersonal relatedness" (p.151).

boys by contrast become more independent because must separate from mother.

Problem: lack of empirical evidence (p.151)

Emphasise: early childhood is an important time in development gender identity.

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② Social learning processes Mischel

schools, media, people transmit idea of gender to children.

Behaviourist approach

"Learning takes place through conditioning, rewards and punishment, and observation of the behaviour of others" (p.152)

Evidence that fathers in particular encourage "gender-typed activities" (p.152) (partic: for boys).

- this could be fairly significant. Activities encourage people to act in different ways (p.153)

Importance "observational learning" (p.154)

- watching others, media

Research: Bandura (1965) videos aggressive behaviour shown to pre-school children → acted differently after

BUT difficulty proving connection.

Experiments (not accurate reflection everyday life?) (p155)

Problem: Why does children's view of gender change with age.

eg young children's views often more stereotyped than parents. (156)

p.156 -157

③ Social Cognitive theory.

Bandura



Sense of gender identity affected by environment
BUT with time children "internalize" the standards of behaviour appropriate for males and females (p.157).

Older children less dependant on external sanctions. They internalize the standards and decide themselves how it is appropriate to act.

p158 -161

④ Cognitive-developmental theory.

Kohlberg "I am a boy, therefore I want to do boy things, therefore the opportunity to do boy things (to gain approval for doing them) is rewarding." (p89)

Kohlberg It is around age 6/7 once children have a secure understanding of "gender consistency" (p.159)
→ children actively seek out what it means to be a boy/girl.

Study - Slaby, Frey (1975) Timed how much attention children pay to female/male onscreen. Those with more defined understanding of unchangeability of gender watched model of own gender more.
Problem. More evidence younger children more stereotyped idea of gender.

★ "the question is not whether cognition is important - everyone agrees that it is - but which particular cognitions should be emphasised" ★ (p.161)

p.161-164

⑤ Gender schema theory.

Martin and Halverson - 1981

Once children can label themselves as a boy/girl (about 3 years old) they actively seek out info. about what this means.

They are trying to make sense of the world.
schema = "a mental structure that guides the processing of info. + experiences (p.163)

2 schemas

"in-group-out group" and "own sex" (p.163)

Evidence (Bradbard et al (1986))

1. Children looked more @ object they were told for their own sex.
2. 1 week later remembered more about objects labelled as being for own sex.
3. Misremembered info. that did not fit gender schema.

* Could explain why older children less rigid in gender beliefs. Also, why children hold more stereotyped views than parents.
Martin (1989) - children asked to predict what toys a boy and girl would like to play with.

Younger children made judgements solely based on gender.

Older children considered gender + info about individual interests.

- Older children understanding distinction % maleness and masculinity, femaleness and femininity.
- also more able to take into account several sources of info - less bound by schemas.