

Aspects Of Social Identity, Self Concept, Self Esteem, Self Functioning And Gender Aspects (Part 3)

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2.3 GENDER IDENTITY

According to the Children's Health Encyclopedia gender identity is a person's sense of identification with either the male or female sex, as manifested in appearance, behavior and other aspects of a person's life. Psychologists believe human sexual identities are made up of three separate components.

- a. The first shows the direction of a child's sexual orientation, whether he or she is heterosexual (straight), homosexual (gay) or bisexual.
- b. The second is the child's behavior, whether a female is a "tomboy" or a homemaker-type and a male is a "macho guy" or a "sensitive boy".
- c. The third is the core gender identity. The deep inner feeling a child has about whether he or she is a male or female.

Gender identity emerges by the age of two or three and is influenced by a combination of biological and sociological factors reinforced at puberty. It is often associated with the choice and use of toys in this age group. Once established, it is generally fixed for life.

Gender identity refers to perceiving oneself as male or female. In fact, gender often is the first distinction that children make in classifying people (Turner & Gervai, 1995). Most children label themselves correctly as boy or girl by the age of 2 1/2 to 3 years. They base their gender label on "superficial" characteristics such as clothes or hair length (Beal & Lockhart, 1989). Once children define themselves as a boy or girl they use these labels to guide their behaviour.

Gender typing refers to the psychosocial processes by which children acquire value and perform gender-typed behaviour patterns-those considered appropriate for their gender. Even though gender behaviours and roles are learned, in some sense we are already “gendered” at birth. Gender typing is multidimensional in that many different behaviour patterns and personality characteristics become gender-predictable, including preferred activities and interests, relationship and language patterns (Turner & Gervai, 1995).

Gender identity disorder (GID) is the formal diagnosis used by psychologists and physicians to describe who describe persons who experience significant gender dysphoria. Gender dysphoria means the person is discontent with the biological sex they were born with. It is a psychiatric classification and describes the problem related to transsexuality, transgender identity and transvestism.

Transgender is a general term applied to a variety of individuals, behaviors and groups involving tendencies that diverge from the normative gender role (woman or man). It can also be said as the state of one’s “gender identity”(self-identification as woman, man or neither) not matching one’s “assigned sex”(identification by others as male or female based on physical or genetic sex). Transgender people may identify as heterosexual, homosexual, bisexual and so on.

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