

12-1-2014

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Recommended Citation

Janicik, Juliet (2014) "Gender Schemas, Parenting Styles, and Aggression," *Verbum*: Vol. 12: Iss. 1, Article 2.
Available at: <http://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/verbum/vol12/iss1/2>

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Abstract

In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph:

Many different facets shape gender roles during the development of a child into adolescence. From parenting styles to media influences, children learn by observation and are swayed by the plethora or lack of adults in their lives. This control is not only important for the healthy development of their social and emotional well-being, but also for the development of their cognitions and memory in difficult situations (Liben & Signorella, 1993). Though all humans have the ability to make their own decisions, they are haunted and pressured by the influence of others around them, others who are hierarchically above them, or others who are important.



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Many different facets shape gender roles during the development of a child into adolescence. From parenting styles to media influences, children learn by observation and are swayed by the plethora or lack of adults in their lives. This control is not only important for the healthy development of their social and emotional wellbeing, but also for the development of their cognitions and memory in difficult situations (Liben & Signorella, 1993). Though all humans have the ability to make their own decisions, they are haunted and pressured by the influence of others around them, others who are hierarchically above them, or others who are important.

The evidence of gender definition starts from the commencement of life. Though their parents may sit unknowing that their actions affect their loved ones, they separate the boys from girls with blue and pink and sports and dance. They encourage boys to roughhouse and scold girls for getting dirt under their fingernails. These common stereotypes lead to the “boys will be boys” write off and an overwhelming pressure on women to be ‘perfect,’ thin and refined. How do parents acquire these stereotypes and why do we buy into them? Yes, boys will most certainly always be boys in a most literal sense of the phrase, but parents cannot just use that simple fact

of biology to let them get away with behaviors that could destroy their outlook of the world forever.

The negative behaviors that parents disregard are important to explore because of the impact they have on the remainder of both parties' lives. Can parents say that a playful wrestling match on the blacktop or a school fight will not have any implications in the long run? It does if the parents do not change their own habits and interactions with the children. Yes, there are plenty of children who have gotten in their fair share of tussles and have come to grow into perfectly healthy adults. However, there are those who have not received the proper education in how to handle themselves in tricky situations. These young men and women have found themselves in trouble with violence, sex, and substance abuse. However, it may not be fair to say that it is entirely their fault that they have engaged in these actions. Their parents, teachers, and peers have played a large part in the development of their emotions and decision-making habits. This article explores the implications and negative effects of gender schemas on early adolescence and how different parenting styles can be used to curb aggression in relation to these social norms.

Gender Schemas and Gender Nonconformity

Because of these gender stereotypes explicitly outlined by parents in early childhood, children in middle childhood and early adolescence often gravitate toward these norms and make choices that are dominant within their outward gender. In a study on gender nonconformity and peer victimization, Toomey, Card & Casper (2014) found that gender nonconformity is associated with difficult peer relations among females in early adolescence. Gender nonconformity can be defined as the degree to which an individual does not or is not perceived

to conform to gender expectations that are set by the society (Toomey, Card & Casper, 2014). Individuals who do not conform to the norms are at an additional risk for bullying and increased aggression. The question is then, how much pressure are parents putting on their children to conform to these norms? To what extent is this conformity for the benefit for the child or for the benefit of the parent? The relationship between parent and child is extremely important when exploring outcomes in adolescents.

The classic view of gender schemas remains: men spend all day at work, earning money for the family and women remain at home with the family. However in the last forty years there has been a shift in these roles. More women have become active in the workforce and both genders tend to share responsibilities at home (Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002). Despite these changes in roles, views on gender schemas still continue to be important in the upbringing of children. Parents who do not have gender stereotyped views are less likely to reproduce and require gender stereotypes of their children.

Similarly, the actions of children are often influenced both by the history, demographics, and relationships with both parents. For example, fathers are more likely to gender stereotype their children because of a reduction of time spent with the child and lack of time spent rearing the child. Positive relationships between parents and children increase the rate in which parents instill attitudes and beliefs in their children and increase the rate at which those beliefs are accepted. These outcome measures are often higher in late adolescent, college aged children (Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002). Parents are able to influence self-concept, attitude towards others, and work related attitudes. However, when parents are absent, have non-traditional roles, or are overtly demanding of the adherence to gender schemas, gender nonconformity in adolescents is more common. These factors are much more influential in late childhood to early adolescence

rather than early childhood (Tenenbaum & Leaper, 2002). This finding is in agreement with the known cognitive and biological changes that occur in these stages of development.

Psychological Development in Relation to Gender Stereotypes

Gender role schema and parenting style plays a large role in predicting psychological well-being and relationship satisfaction. Though women are often thought to have higher levels of distress and psychological problems, men with gender role conflict also have intimacy problems, lower self-esteem, greater rates of depression and other negative emotional factors (Rochlen & Mahalik, 2004). Gender role conflict in men indicates any negative psychological state that results from socialized gender roles. This conflict can have negative consequences on either the men or others around them. According to Rochlen and Mahalik (2004), women who were associated with men who had this difficulty had higher levels of depression and anxiety, as well as decreased satisfaction in the relationship. These findings indicate the importance of connection between the man and a woman in a relationship as well as positive gender schemas within a relationship. If the man or woman has a negative connotation associated with his or her gender role, there is a smaller likelihood that there would be a positive, satisfactory outcome for the duration of the relationship.

These negative emotions have ties with upbringing and classic gender schemas. Women are more likely to ruminate and are stereotyped to ruminate about problems, be stricken with depression, and talk about emotional events or feelings. Men are less likely to ruminate and are more likely to participate in a problem focused coping style, which seeks to find a solution to the problem rather than seek emotional social support or use cognitive, self-talk based coping (Cox, Mezulis & Hyde, 2010). These attitudes are generally instilled in women and men by age 11. By

this time, mothers encourage gender-specific behavior towards their daughters, such as education and occupation. Because of the mother's role, girls are more likely to endorse feminine emotions and ruminate over negative emotions. This influences the child's ability to cope with stressful situations and thrive in difficult social situations. Some research suggests however, that mothers use the same amount of problem-focused coping with both sons and daughters (Cox, Mezulis & Hyde, 2010). It is important that mothers (or fathers with sons) do not simply use emotion-focused coping with their daughters because it may lead to avoidant behaviors based on the appraisal of the stressful situation.

A normal part of childhood and adolescence is aggression, hostility and emotionality. There are three competing theories based on these qualities that are overtly displayed in adolescence depending on parenting styles and social roles within the home. These theories allow for some insight into the minds of individuals that break social barriers, gender norms, and societal norms to express their feelings in an uncommon way. Social Selection Theory (SST) states that the origin of male aggression is a result of unequal parenting styles and a greater emphasis on male reproduction (Archer, 2004). This excess in testosterone causes males to become more aggressive toward other males and engage in risky behaviors across cultures. Social Role Theory (SRT) claims that sex differences in aggression occur as a result of the division of social roles in the home and in the work force (Archer, 2004). These roles produce characteristics that are expected across generations for each gender; boys are permitted to be aggressive and status is an excuse for violence. Social Learning Theory emphasizes the learning of aggressive behavior through education and media throughout development (Archer, 2004). Social Learning Theory often parallels SRT, but emphasizes the use of observation and modeling in aggressive behavior.

These three theories indicate sex differences in overt aggression and verbal aggression. Males often display higher levels of aggression than women cross-culturally, which is consistent with both the SST and SRT models, respectively. Similarly, using observational learning, children learn that aggression is appropriate from adults, other children, and media that they are exposed to. However, the sex differences are still consistent with social selection theory. Individuals are more likely, when primed with violent media, weapons or other antisocial behavior, to engage in violent behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). In addition to social factors, a number of other personality (e.g. hostility, Type A, high self-esteem), sex and situational factors influence whether an individual will engage or consider an aggressive action depending on the cues at hand.

Media Influences on Aggression

Children and teens often look to adults to solve their problems, but these solutions may not often be taken seriously because of adolescent rebellion, lack of attention, or peer pressure. Sometimes children are more influenced by people their own age than by their parents, and even more so by the media they encounter on a daily basis. Television, internet, magazines and video games are a threat to influencing positive behavior in teens and young adults (Engelhardt & Bartholow, 2013). Children often have an easier time remembering and mimicking stereotyped behavior if it is displayed through pictures or videos. When the videos and pictures (or scripts) are consistent with gender-stereotyped behavior, children are less likely to alter or misinterpret the information than if it was inconsistent (Liben & Signorella, 1993). This implies that children are primed with this information at an early age and are rarely exposed to information about the other gender or neutral gendered stereotypes. However, the influence of these pictures and this early intervention can impact the way these individuals view media and use it later in life.

As much as parents would like to prevent negative behaviors and teach their children the ‘right’ way to approach problem situations, media outlets give teens the opportunity to access photographs, videos, and explicit content that leave an especially negative connotation and perception on how to treat humans. The age limit on certain content poses no threat to viewers and sharers of the subject matter alike, but acts as a challenge to those who wish to expand their horizon and enter to the wonder that will lead them down the path of emptiness.

Education about Aggression

Because some parents choose not to educate their children properly about the dangers of negative behaviors, such as pornography, of having a sexual relationship early in life, or of not dealing with their problems in a healthy manner, they run the risk of their children developing habits that are hard to break. These habits are hurtful both to the victims that must endure pain, scars, and humiliation, and to the perpetrator that must struggle with insecurity and anger. The life they lead is one that can be prevented, but not one that can often be foreseen.

It is important that individuals receive both proper care and education about all topics relating to social dominance, violence, and protection against stress, and violent situations. In a study examining the relationship between maltreatment of individuals and their outcomes in high-risk social situation, Teisl, Rogosch, Oshri, and Cicchetti (2011) found that both children and adolescents who were maltreated or that came from an at-risk home were more likely to have higher levels of social dominance and were more likely to be a bully. There was no indication that there is a gender difference in maltreated children. However, there was a specific subset of individuals, who remained resilient during the maltreatment and were therefore, untouched by the effects of the ignorance. These individuals developed significant social functioning and were

able to resist the bully classification. This emphasizes the importance of parental intervention early in life so as to not leave the social learning solely to the children.

Men and women are both subject to harmful relationships – both romantic and platonic, infidelity, and aggressions within relationships. Though parents, peers, and related adults would all like to see healthy relationships among teens, there is no question that exposure to violent media and unhealthy representations of relationships from peers and adults impact the decisions they make about their own. When presented with ideas about infidelity, women are more likely to become aggressive (de Weerth & Kalma, 1993). These females, who have high social status, are more sexually active, and highly competitive are more concerned with their partner's sexual history and are more inclined to act aggressively than males regarding unfaithfulness. This is a deviation from a normal sex patterns, but shows the importance of cultural shifts and differences regarding observation and social role functions in women. Though males often aggress in a more direct manner than women, incidence is likely to be equal for general aggression types across gender (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Males, also haunted by status, power and emotional instability can engage in violence with women and other parties.

Implications

In order to combat this kind of aggression as a result of observational learning, SST, and SRT it is important to include several different factors into parenting style. Parents should be wary of their own actions and be able to use both a problem-focused and emotion-focused coping style with either gendered child so as to not stereotype their children toward any sort of emotionality. An additional component to be considered could also be a factor of religion. In a study used to determine the whether associations between authoritarian parenting styles pertain

to Conservative Protestant families in relation to different demographic and social factors, Gunnoe, Hetherington, & Reiss (2006) found that authoritarian parenting styles are related to both the internalizing and externalizing of emotions in adolescents in the control group families but not in the Conservative Protestant families. However, religious affiliation did not indicate any relationship with adolescent adjustment.

The relationship between religious affiliation and adolescent emotion however, has positive implications for the actions of adolescents in families that combine both a view of religiosity and authoritarianism. Though children of authoritative parents are more likely to ruminate or are more likely to be aggressive, those with a religious background as well are also more likely to have positive coping strategies, to internalize social praise, and are less likely to be vulnerable to psychopathology (Gunnoe, Hetherington & Reiss, 2006). The question is then, is there a positive value to adding religiosity to parenting styles in order to decrease aggression and increase healthy relationships? There are always anomalies in every situation – violence in “normal” families, unexpected emotionality – but the common factor remains a stable social situation throughout. A family, religious or not, that displays positive modeling, coping, and emotional strategies for their children encourages healthy outcomes for their adolescents and their relationships as they grow into adults.

Conclusion

Humans have an innate need to be aggressive and sexual, but also have a need to be passive, compassionate and caring. Humans are influenced not only by their own previous actions, but also by the actions of others, their genetics, and the social roles that have been set by generations before them. Changing roles in society has dismantled these gender schemas, which

has led to an increase in aggression in both men and women. Children and adolescents are learning from both their parents and violent media that aggression is a normalcy that cannot be avoided, that unhealthy relationships are healthy, and bullying is normal because they, too were mistreated. The only way to seriously combat this issue is with positive parenting by modeling, positive social support, and both problem-focused and emotion-focused coping. Though parents may be tempted to enforce gender schemas, it is important to enforce positive, healthy emotional expression, even if it means stepping away from social norms and into nonconformity.



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