CHILDREN & Gender

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Boy or Girl?
Sex vs. Gender

Sex:
“Refers to the biological differences between males and females, such as the genitalia and genetic differences”

Gender:
“Can refer to the role of a male or female in society, known as a gender role, or an individual’s concept of themselves, or gender identity”

Information retrieved from: Newman, 2018
https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/232363.php
Girls vs. Boys

Descriptions

Girls:
“Quiet”
“Shy”
“Docile”
“Cooking”
“Teacher”
“Actress”
“Arts and crafts”

Boys:
“Trouble”
“Always wants his way”
“Rambunctious”
“Fishing”
“Baseball”
“Hiking”
“Manufacturing industry”
Impact of Gender Roles on Children and Development

❖ Career choices
➢ “Women do not pursue job paths within STEM and men do not hire them because neither group perceives those jobs to be appropriate for women” (Puchner, Markowitz, & Hedley, 2015, p. 24)

❖ Health concerns
➢ “Dysfunctional behavior . . . lower self-esteem . . . depression and eating disorders, diminished cognitive efficiency” (Ward & Aubrey, 2017)
➢ “Their anxiety is correlated with depression, binge drinking, and drug use” (Ward & Aubrey, 2017)
What influences these Gender Roles?

● Parents
  ○ Have the strongest influence on children
  ○ Pass on their own beliefs about gender
  ○ Approval/Disapproval of children’s gender expression

● Peers
  ○ Other children’s reactions and comments at school
  ○ Gender divided play

● Television and Other Entertainment
  ○ Commercials targeted to specific genders
    ■ Ex: Barbie commercial only has girls playing
  ○ Presents many male and female stereotypes
  ○ Male’s often outnumber females
Kohlberg’s Cognitive Developmental Theory of Gender

Three Stages

1. Gender Identity (2–3 years old)
   a. Child recognizes that they are male or female and other people are as well, but fails to recognize that gender is “constant”

2. Gender Stability (3–7 years old)
   a. Child knows that gender is “fixed”
   b. “When I grow up I will be a mommy/daddy”

3. Gender Constancy (7–12 years old)
   a. Child understands that gender does not change despite appearance or activities
Discussion Questions

1. What do you think about “gender neutral parenting?”

1. Do you think that toy sections and marketing should continue to be divided by gender or combined?