

Remember your childhood - Socialization

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Part 1: Practical Guidance and Didactical Approach

Background and keywords:

Socialization is a complex process which is conditioned by many external and internal factors and one that goes on throughout life. The process of socialization plays a dominant role in shaping male identity of individuals. Adopting gender roles takes place in a particular social environment and undergoes general laws.

Similar topics:

Gender role, internalization, group, social environment, education.

Materials:

Test: How would your parents react if you ...?

Duration:

3 one-hour class sessions

Number of participants:

10-15 boys (and girls)

Age:

10-11 years old boys (and girls)

Aims:

Aims regarding worksheet 1:

- analyze socialization activities applied by their parents which aimed at shaping gender roles;
- learning socialization mechanisms concerning gender roles in the family;
- self-reflection on their own socialization experience concerning gender roles.

Aims regarding worksheet 2:

- analysis of influence of typical gender socialization experiences on the development of boys;
- determining the scope of biological and socio-cultural differences as a basis of gender polarization;
- considering the influence of gender stereotypes on the participants' life and development and realizing the possibilities to overcome them.

Reflection:

Initial knowledge: participants know the notion and contents of gender stereotypes.

Part 2: Theoretical Background and Further Information

Socialization is a process and result of teaching individuals the system of values and norms, patterns of behaviour applied in a particular community as well as definite skills. It prepares one to enter the world of social institutions and takes place through influence of social environment, people and education institutions.

Regulatory and group mechanisms affect adopting sex roles and their internalization.

Conditioning: reinforcing boys' behaviours that are in accordance with cultural gender patterns and not reinforcing behaviours that are not (e.g. disapproval of a crying boy).

Learning gender roles through observation:

1. adults' behaviour (mum is cooking and cleaning, dad is repairing the car, watching the match);
2. the observed adult person may become a model (a boy-child refuses to help in the kitchen, because dad does not do it) and the child may identify himself with him and adopt emotional states and qualities of the model.

Learning through language:

1. when a child receives a direct verbal message how to behave according to its sex;
2. through verbal and written messages (literature, handbooks) boys acquire knowledge on the current system of gender roles;
3. the structure and lexis of the language convey information on gender and gender roles.

Learning through acting as a result of doing tasks assigned by adults. This way boys consolidate certain behavioural habits and have an opportunity to practise gender roles (boys do DIY with their fathers).

Comparative reference makes adopting gender roles easier when boys compare their own feelings and personality traits with group standards referring to sex and age and also compare themselves to their peers of the same sex and the opposite sex trying to become similar or different from the other one in order to earn approval of the group.

Group pressure:

1. on a micro social scale through the system of reward and punishment parents or peer group exert pressure on boys to behave according to sex patterns. Fear of being rejected, losing love or aggression makes them lean towards conformism (laughing at a mummy's boy in a peer group);
2. on macro social scale through a system of social control which has formal and informal sanctions at its disposal for behaviours which are not in accordance with sex standards in a given community (wearing make-up or women's or girls' clothes by boys).

Group culture (roles, norms, life patterns) determines behaviour norms and lifestyles in which individuals may function depending on their sex so that they can deserve social acceptance. People who depart from generally accepted customs or playing roles according to common patterns meet with social disapproval.

Bibliography and List of Sources:

Konarzewski, K.: Podstawy teorii oddziaływań wychowawczych. Warszawa PWN. 1982

Muszyński, H.: Zarys teorii wychowania. Warszawa PWN. 1978

Tilmann, K.J.: Teorie socjalizacji. Społeczność, instytucje, upodmiotowienie. Warszawa PWN. 1996

Worksheet 1:

Remember your childhood

Aims:

Participants have an opportunity to:

- analyze socialization activities applied by their parents which aimed at shaping men's gender roles;
- learning socialization mechanisms concerning gender roles in the family on the men's world culture;
- self-reflection on their own socialization experience concerning men's gender roles.

Initial knowledge:

Participants know the notion and contents of gender stereotypes.

Arrangement:

Semi-circle or round table

Duration:

From 20 to 35 minutes

Materials:

Test: How would your parents react if you ...?

Activity:

1. The leader asks participants to close their eyes and, in their imagination, go back to their childhood (nursery, first grade) in order to recall how they were dressed, what they did, what toys they had, how their parents behaved towards them, what they said to them. Volunteers may share their memories.
2. All male participants get a test "How would your parents react if you ..."

How would your parents react if you ...?

- ... asked them to buy you a doll?
- ... wanted to go to a fancy dress party dressed as a princess?
- ... cried and called your parents for help because another child took your toy?
- ... wanted to spend a lot of time helping in the kitchen?
- ... played hopscotch instead of ball?
- ... played with girls from the neighbourhood and not with other boys?
- ... *(leader can give other questions)*

3. Participants share their feelings and conclusions.

Worksheet 2:

What would your life be like if you were a girl?

Aims:

- analysis of influence of typical sex socialization experiences on the development of boys;
- determining the scope of biological and socio-cultural differences;
- considering the influence of sex stereotypes on the participants' life and development and realizing the possibilities to overcome them.

Arrangement:

Semi-circle or round table

Activity:

1. Boys sit comfortably, close their eyes and imagine "What would happen if they were born as a member of different sex? What games would they play? What toys would they have? What clothes would they wear? Who would they play with? Who would they sit with in the class? What sports would they play? What TV programmes would they watch? What books would they read? What would their everyday life at home be like? After a few minutes they open their eyes and write down what they thought about.
2. They close their eyes again and try to imagine what their future lives would be like as adults if they were girls then they make a note of what they thought about.
3. In pairs they share their ideas, then talk about them in turns and write more details which contribute new things.



4. Groups of several people of the same sex write down their ideas concerning "What limitations do my sex and social role resulting from it involve and what opportunities it gives compared to the opposite sex?"
5. Groups present and compare their work in terms of biological and social restrictions.
6. Participants think about problems resulting from the question "How would human existence of my life if society functioned without sex stereotypes?"