

THE GENDER IDENTITY OF GIRLS AS A FACTOR IN THEIR PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

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ABSTRACT

In this study, gender identity is viewed as a multidimensional construct that encompasses the subject's attitude to his / her gender, the feeling of compatibility with his gender group, attitudes towards gender groups, regulation of behavior in relation to gender, and feelings of pressure towards gender conformity. We view gender identity as a multidimensional construct encompassing an individual's (a) knowledge of membership in a gender category, (b) felt compatibility with his or her gender group (i.e., self-perceptions of gender typicality as well as feelings of contentment with one's gender), (c) felt pressure for gender conformity, and (d) attitudes toward gender groups. Social identity can support the subject's sense of community and high self-esteem. But the more attachment a person feels to his group, the more difficult it is for him to build relationships with representatives of other groups. In order to track the effects of high gender identity, we investigated its relationship with psychological well-being. It was shown that, with the exception of feelings of pressure, these components of gender identity in girls are moderately interrelated. In addition, they affect psychological well-being in different ways (in particular, they can reduce autonomy, personal growth, and emotional well-being). Therefore, when advising on gender identity, the heterogeneity of this construct should be taken into account.

Keywords: Gender identity, psychological well-being, gender typicality, positive relations with others, emotional well-being.

INTRODUCTION

The role of men and women in the social environment is undergoing significant changes today. And in general, the very process of standardizing gender behavior in modern society is becoming blurred. The prescriptions of what real women and real men should be at a given moment in time seem vague or they are not pronounced in a clear way.

In modern society, the norms regarding male and female behavior are becoming less and less defined. At the social level, this reflects the progress and development of society, but can create interpersonal and inside personal conflicts. Gender identity as one of the forms of social identity satisfies the need for belonging and gives landmarks in social knowledge. All this suggests that gender identity is interconnected with a feeling of psychological well-being.

The purpose of the study: identify the features of gender identity that increase or reduce the subjective well-being of girls.

Research Object: Gender Identity

Research Subject: The Effect of Gender Identity on Psychological Well-Being.

Hypothesis: The influence of gender identity on the psychological well-being of girls is heterogeneously, there are components that increase well-being and aspects that reduce it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Gender identity as the most widespread concept of gender issues is considered by the overwhelming majority of the authors as a kind of social identity. It represents the part of the identity of the person, which is associated with the understanding of the subject of its belonging to the gender group and the correlation of themselves with the culturally specified "samples" of male or female (Kletsina, 2009).

The significance of social identity in the structure, I may be due to the need for belonging (affiliation) and the desire to confirm the correctness of their own beliefs and behavior through social consensus (. Gender identity is particularly convenient in this sense, as often belonging to the group is easily determined externally, and in addition, it definitely embeds a person to a system of social interactions. Considering gender features, many researchers focus on self-describing respondents in terms of "male" and "female" character traits (methodology S. Bem and its modifications), while the socio-psychological aspect of gender self-integrated (for example, ingroup favoritism as a result of strengthening Identification with the group), as a rule, remains out of field of attention (Lopuhova, 2013). Constructing gender identity, a person builds not only his own image, but also the image of the group to which it belongs or does not belong.

Groups often strengthen their inner solidarity by underlining the negative qualities of representatives of other groups and creating an appearance of an external enemy. It is typical of both men and women: both those and others willingly let go of the sharp jokes and make derogatory comments at the address of the opposite sex.

Although durable identification with the group can become a powerful source of identity with the rest of it, and the addition of other groups can increase the sense of self-esteem and ensure the basis for group solidarity, so necessary to motivate the fight against discrimination, yet such behavior can lead to the exaggeration of group differences, conflicts between groups and generate resistance to social change (Bern, 2004).

It is important to note that even in the concept of identity E. Erikson, it is understood as a way of experiencing personal integrity and continuity, therefore, it is more correct that it is precisely the structure of gender identity, and not just separate components.

The following components can be distinguished in the gender identity structure:

- Cognitive (cognitive) - awareness of belonging to a certain sex and a description of yourself using categories of masculinity / femininity;
- Affective (estimated) - assessment of psychological traits and characteristics of role behavior based on their correlation with reference models of masculinity / femininity
- Conative (behavioral) - self-presentation of oneself as a representative of a gender group, as well as ways of resolving identity crises based on choices of behavior options in accordance with personally significant goals and values (Malkina-Pyh, 2006).

Gender identity as a multipolar construct consists of many components that are not rigidly interconnected, and each of the gender characteristics can have its own developmental history.

For the past quarter century, theory and research linking gender identity to adjustment have been dominated by androgyny theory, or the notion that mental health is promoted by a perception of the self as both masculine and feminine (e.g., Bern, 2004). Conceptual and

methodological problems have characterized this approach, however. Most notably, androgyny researchers made several questionable assumptions, including the notions that (a) felt overall masculinity and felt overall femininity are orthogonal dimensions, (b) felt overall masculinity and felt overall femininity can be inferred from self-perceptions in a single domain of sex typing (i.e., personality traits), and (c) felt pressure for gender conformity can be inferred from the degree of balance in one's felt overall masculinity and one's felt overall femininity (Egan, Perry, 2001).

The view that felt masculinity and felt femininity are orthogonal dimensions was popularized by Bern. Bern assumed that self-perceived masculinity and self-perceived femininity could be inferred, respectively, from self-perceptions of agentic and communal traits. But the fact that the degree to which a person is sex typed in one domain is often independent of the degree to which the person is sex typed in some other domain makes it imprudent to infer overall felt masculinity or felt femininity from self-perceived personality traits (or from self-perceptions in any other single domain of sex typing). But, more to the point, even though the correlation of self-perceived agentic traits with self-perceived communal traits is often low, suggesting orthogonality, it does not follow that orthogonality characterizes self-perceptions in other domains of sex typing (e.g., sexual orientation, where a preference for partners of one sex tends to be negatively correlated with a preference for partners of the other sex) or self-perceptions on higher order dimensions of gender identity, such as our measures of gender typicality and contentedness (Bern, 2004).

Given Kohlberg's suggestion that children prefer to imitate models perceived as similar to the self, gender typicality or contentedness might predict imitation of same-sex models; given Bern's suggestion that felt pressure for gender conformity undermines behavioral adaptability, felt pressure might predict the choice of less attractive or less rewarding (e.g., lower paying) same-sex options when these are pitted against more rewarding but cross-sex options; and given Bigler's and Powlishta's (Powlishta, 1995) discussions of the pitfalls of harboring a belief in the superiority of one's own sex, intergroup bias might predict uncooperative or hostile interactions with other-sex persons. In addition to influencing overt behavior, the gender identity measures might predict gender-related social information processing (e.g., attention, memory, attributional patterns, and defensive reactions to gender-related ego threat) (Egan, Perry, 2001).

We expect gender compatibility and felt pressure to relate to children's mental health in opposite directions - positively for gender compatibility and negatively for felt pressure. Like Bern, we imagine that girls who feel strong pressure for sex typing will be less likely than other girls to explore a wide range of options when deciding what interests to pursue or talents to cultivate and therefore will be less likely to settle on options that are maximally fulfilling; this self-limitation should be reflected in a lesser sense of satisfaction with the self (though perhaps not in lesser acceptance by peers). In addition, girls who feel strong pressure for sex typing may be said to be experiencing conditionality of support—the sense that one must tailor the self in order to receive the love and acceptance of significant others. Conditional support and the false self it fosters are conducive to low self-esteem and depression (Bern, 2004). Social psychologists have noted that merely perceiving the self to belong to one group rather than to another fosters in-group favoritism.

Because intergroup bias sometimes appears to be a strategy for maintaining high self-esteem, it might be positively associated with self-esteem. However, intergroup bias may cause children to experience difficulties with peer interaction (Powlishta, 1995). For example, the

distorted perceptions and negative out-group attitudes that are part of in-group favoritism may undermine cooperative, respectful interactions with othersex peers, reducing the degree to which the biased child will be liked by children of the other sex (Egan, Perry, 2001).

Usually, in order to characterize the state of the subjective world of an individual in terms of its favorableness, various definitions are used, such as: satisfaction with life, feeling (experience) of happiness, emotional comfort, well-being and subjective well-being. As internal psychological conditions for the emergence of the experience of "happiness" A.A. Kronik points out "high assessments of the significance of the world and (or) one's capabilities through various forms of self-regulation: increasing the significance of the world and the degree of satisfaction with it, strengthening one's capabilities through decreasing the complexity of the world or increasing one's own abilities" (Kronik, 2003).

Over the past decade, in various scientific studies, the concept of "subjective well-being" has been considered as an independent phenomenon, as a result, approaches to its understanding directly depend on the theoretical position of the researcher and the tasks of his research.

According to E. Diener, subjective well-being consists of satisfaction, a complex of pleasant affect and a complex of unpleasant affect. According to E. Diener, subjective well-being includes a cognitive assessment of various aspects of life and emotional self-acceptance, and the experience of subjective well-being is comparable to the experience of happiness (Diener, 2006).

In the hedonistic approach, subjective well-being is viewed on the one hand as achieving pleasure, and on the other as avoiding unpleasure. In this case, pleasure means both the bodily aspect and satisfaction from achieving meaningful goals and results (Ryff, 2014).

The eudemonistic approach to subjective well-being, in certain aspects, is both an alternative to and an addition to the hedonistic position. It lies in the fact that well-being is reflected in the fullness of self-realization and is a kind of formation that combines cultural, social, psychological, physical, economic and spiritual factors. This approach is considered in positive psychology by K. Rogers, K.G. Jung, E. Erikson and others (Ryff, 2014).

The most classical theory within the framework of the eudemonistic approach can be considered the theoretical position of K. Ryff, which is associated with the eudemonism of Aristotle's ethics. K. Ryff considers subjective well-being as a basic subjective construct that reflects perception and assessment of one's functioning from the point of view of the top potential human capabilities (Ryff, 2014).

METHODOLOGY

Most commonly, selfattributions of instrumental traits have been used to infer selfperceived masculinity, and self-attributions of expressive traits have been used to infer self-perceived femininity. Although popular, the practice of assessing self-perceived gender typicality in terms of self-perceived personality traits (or any other specific class of sex-typed attributes) has several limitations (Egan, Perry, 2001).

First, it is now clear that sex typing is multidimensional. Second, when respondents rate themselves on specific gender-linked attributes, they may be doing so without perceiving the attributes to be relevant to gender.

We believe that people not only generate domain-specific self-perceptions (e.g., "Are my recreational interests typical for my sex?") but also integrate diverse information about gender and self to reach more abstracted, hierarchically superior components of gender identity (e.g., "Overall, am I a good fit with my gender category?"). Moreover, in our view, it is at the level of integrated, higher order appraisals that people's judgments about themselves in relation to gender take on their greatest meaning and affective force and are most likely to bear implications for psychosocial adjustment (e.g., self-esteem and depression).

We have developed the author's methodology for diagnosing gender identity, based on S.K. Egan, D.g. Perry (Egan, Perry, 2001). The first component of gender identity we investigated was children's sense of psychological compatibility with their gender category. The second new measure of psychological gender identity we developed was intended to capture the degree to which children feel compelled to engage in gender-congruent conduct. The separate assessment of felt gender compatibility and felt pressure for sex typing is an important feature of this study. As pointed out above, some researchers have assumed that strong self-perceived gender typicality implies strong felt pressure for gender conformity (e.g., Bern, 2004). In contrast, we do not expect a strong correlation between felt gender compatibility and felt pressure. The third measure of gender identity we developed was one of intergroup bias - the sentiment that one's own sex is superior to the other. Here, the object of evaluation is one's group rather than the self.

To measure psychological well-being, a questionnaire C.D. Ryff was used. In it, psychological well-being is considered from the position of an eudemonious approach (Ryff, 2014).

Were measured the following dimensions: (1) the extent to which respondents felt their lives had meaning, purpose and direction (purpose in life); (2) whether they viewed themselves to be living in accord with their own personal convictions (autonomy); (3) the extent to which they were making use of their personal talents and potential (personal growth); (4) how well they were managing their life situations (environmental mastery); (5) the depth of connection they had in ties with significant others (positive relationships), and (6) the knowledge and acceptance they had of themselves, including awareness of personal limitations (self-acceptance). Taken together, these dimensions offered a notable contrast to extant indicators focused on feeling good, happy, positive or satisfied with life.

In the study, 40 girls participated, the middle age is 21 years old.

Results Processing

Indicators of gender identity and psychological well-being were calculated according to the instructions for questionnaires and result of initial processing are entered into the Excel program, after which these data can be processed using the SPSS 21.0 statistical program. There were used:

1. Descriptive statistics
2. Spearman's correlation analysis

RESULTS

Based on descriptive statistics, it can be said that the sample is heterogeneous in the three Felt Pressure scales, Intergroup Bias Intergroup and Gender Rules Adherence. According to these parameters, a negative excess is revealed. Perhaps such results are associated with the fact that on the one hand, the girl lives in an eastern country with patriarchal views on the norms of masculinity and femininity, but at the same time they are students of the university, where egalitarian views are common. Figure 1 shows the distribution of responses for 6 aspects of gender identity.

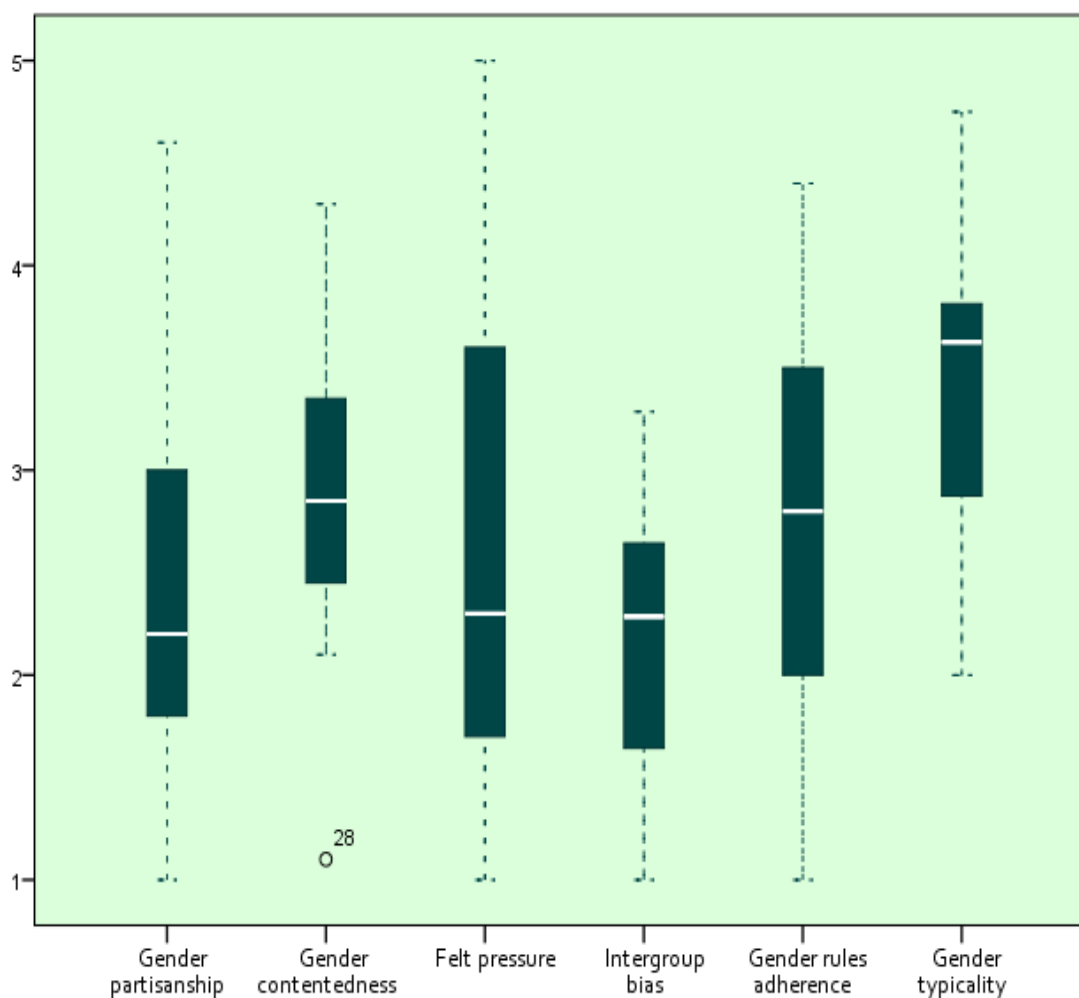


Fig. 1. Descriptive statistics on gender identity scales

As can be seen from Figure 1, most indicators fall within the limits of average values.

Since our sample is small, for analyzing the links of gender identity components among themselves and with psychological well-being, was applied Spearman's correlation analysis. Figure 2 shows the links between gender identity components.

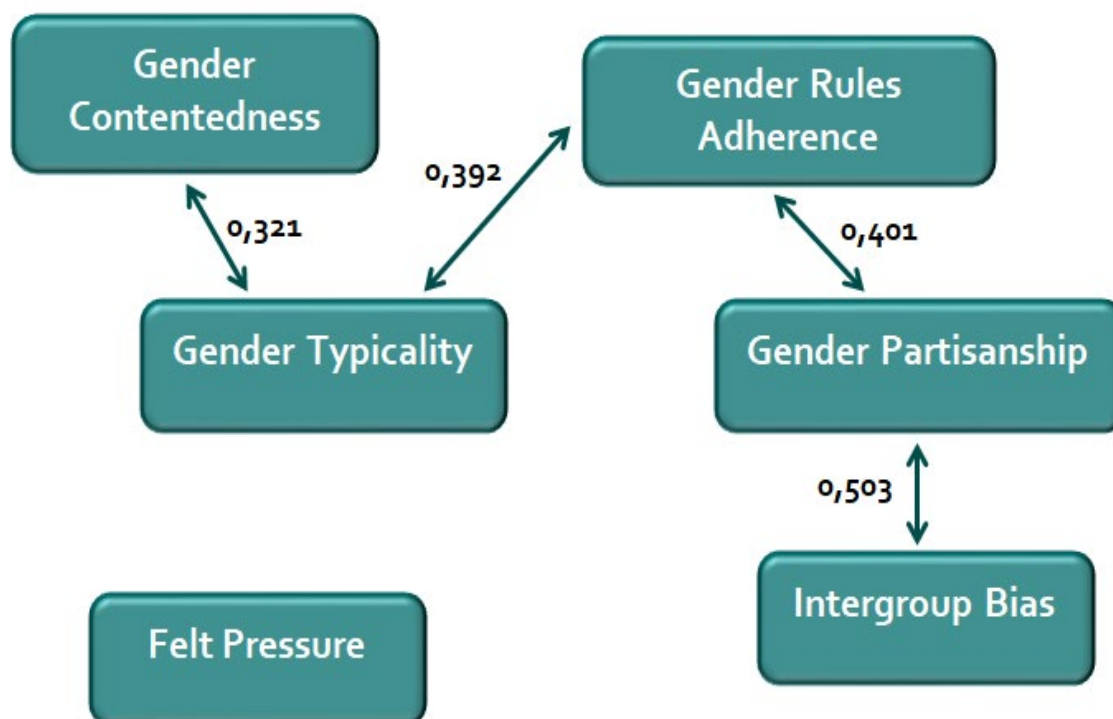


Fig. 2. Correlations between components of gender identity

The commitment of the group is associated with an outgroup negativism ($\rho = 0.503$; $p = 0.001$) and with the commitment of gender standards ($\rho = 0.401$; $p = 0.010$); Gender typical increases gender satisfaction ($\rho = 0.321$; $p = 0.043$) and the adherence of gender standards ($\rho = 0.392$; $p = 0.012$). In this scheme, a central element can be considered gender typical, which affects other gender identity components. It is important to note that the feeling of pressure is not associated with other aspects of gender identity.

It should be noted that not all components of gender identity are correlated with each other. This means that the subject's ideas about himself in terms of gender are rather heterogeneous. Perhaps they are influenced by various socio-psychological factors.

In addition, although the obtained correlations are positive, they are not very large. That is, the connection between the components of gender identity is not very close.

Finally, in Figure 3, connections between gender identity and psychological well-being are displayed. The figure shows only statistically significant correlations. Positive relationships are indicated by blue arrows and negative correlations are indicated by red arrows.

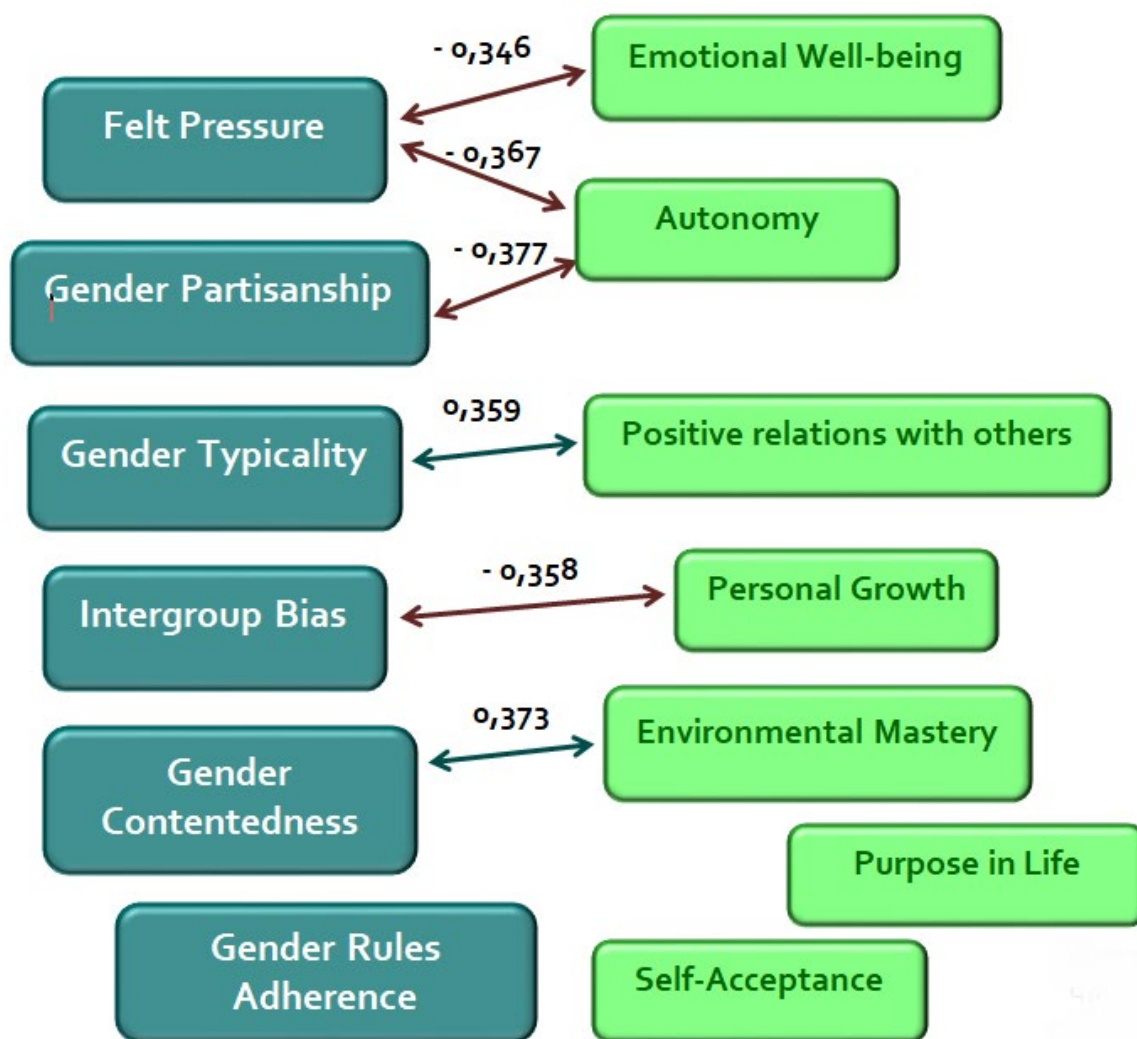


Fig. 3. Correlations between gender identity and psychological well-being

Figure 3 shows that an increase in gender typicality and gender satisfaction has a positive effect on the feeling of well-being, and the growth of pressure, commitment to the group and intergroup perception worsens the psychological state of the girls.

DISCUSSION

The results support the thesis that gender identity is multidimensional. It is apparent that by adolescence girls have developed fairly stable conceptions of (a) the degree to which they typify their gender category, (b) their contentedness with their gender assignment, (c) whether they are free to explore cross-sex options or are compelled to conform to gender stereotypes, and (d) whether their own sex is superior to the other. These dimensions of gender identity are not strongly related to one another, yet all relate to psychosocial adjustment. The pattern of results helps identify not only components of gender identity that promote or undermine children's well-being but also sources of confusion in previous research on the relations between gender identity and adjustment.

That self-perceived gender typicality and felt pressure for sex typing are uncorrelated and relate to adjustment in opposite ways (positively for gender typicality, negatively for felt pressure) is

especially noteworthy. It indicates that self-perceptions of gender typicality do not necessarily reflect an unhealthy gender-role straightjacket that undermines well-being; rather, they appear to contribute positively and directly to a healthy sense of self.

Clearly, it is felt pressure for gender conformity, not a perception of the self as gender typical, that is harmful. Thus, children's adjustment is optimized when they (a) are secure in their conceptions of themselves as typical members of their sex yet (b) feel free to explore cross-sex options when they so desire.

An important implication of these results is that researchers working in the area of gender identity should use measures that capture intended constructs in explicit and precise ways. For example, if one wishes to examine effects of felt pressure, one ought to measure felt pressure directly rather than infer it from self-perceived sex typing (e.g., self-perceived agentic or communal traits) or overall gender typicality. Furthermore, it is hazardous to use generic terms like gender identity, gender schematicity, sex role orientation, masculinity, and femininity unless their precise meanings are spelled out and one is able to rule out alternative, unintended interpretations of the terms.

For example, studies have sometimes found that females who perceive themselves to be high on expressive traits and low on instrumental traits are disadvantaged on some index of adjustment or competence. One interpretation of such findings is that "femininity" is harmful to girls. However, investigators rarely make clear whether by "femininity" they mean a felt pressure to conform to female stereotypes, an overall sense of the self as female typical, or simply a preponderance of female-typed personality traits in the self-concept. If by concluding that femininity is harmful to girls, investigators mean to lay the blame on an overall construal of the self as female typical, the blame is probably misplaced given that the present results indicate that gender typicality is a positive influence on adjustment. The negative adjustment outcomes that have been attributed to girls' "femininity" are more likely attributable to a concomitant (but unmeasured) felt pressure for gender conformity or to the lack of specific adaptive instrumental competencies.

CONCLUSIONS

This study illustrates the advantages of using multiple indexes of adjustment when evaluating the impact of gender identity on the psychological well-being of girls.

Certain of our scales are open to an interpretation in terms of non-gender-specific factors. It is possible, for example, that our felt pressure scale is a general index of anticipated negative reactions from others rather than a measure of pressure anticipated specifically for gender-linked conduct.

No reference to the sense of pressure from any of the studied characteristics of gender identity was found, which may be an indirect evidence that this experience is largely due to the overall supportive or limiting focus of the social environment, impacting more widely than only in terms of gender issues. And therefore, perceived girls as relatively not related to gender identity.

Future research might be devoted to identifying additional determinants of our gender identity measures.

In conclusion, it is important to respect the multidimensionality of gender identity. Efforts to reduce gender identity to a monolithic entity are probably misguided. We have shown that certain components of gender identity, such as gender typicality and gender contentedness, are associated with favorable adjustment, whereas other components of gender identity, especially felt pressure and intergroup bias, are associated with unfavorable adjustment.

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