

Sexual (Gender) Social Adaptation of a Child During the Perinatal Period

Jeanne Nikolaevna Dyuldina

The Ulyanovsk State Pedagogical University of I.N. Ulyanov,
Ulyanovsk, Russia

Abstract: In this article is made an attempt to consider the primary sexual (gender) social adaptation of the child during the perinatal period. The author reveals the urgency of this problem showing its importance for modern psychology and pedagogy, therefore this is interdisciplinary problem, which is objective and diversified. The author suggests that the child begins sexual (gender) social adaptation even in the womb. The child feels thoughts, feelings and emotions of the mother and these impressions later form his character, behavior, mentality and primary sexual (gender) social adaptation in the perinatal period. There is the close interaction between mother and a child during the perinatal period and especially emotional relationship. Emotional disorders, which can negatively impact the child's development and the stability of adaptation processes by the moment of birth including subsequent interaction with the environment and these processes, unfortunately, are paid little attention, that results in intense and sometimes irreversible consequences for human development. Therefore, the importance and the sensitivity of the perinatal period in the human development plays extremely important role in the social adaptation and formation.

Key words: Gender (gender-role) social adaptation • Primary sexual (gender) social adaptation of the child
• Intrauterine sexual (gender) social adaptation of the child

INTRODUCTION

The difference in the content and manner of communication of the boys and girls is neatly noted by Russian poet S. Mikhalkov in the poem about the kids playing in the yard: "Here's, a nail in my pocket!" - proudly says one of the boys. As a response, the girl declares her "amazing" typically domestic news "decorated" with sentimental details: "But, our cat today gave the birth to kittens, yesterday. Kittens grew up a little, but do not eat from the saucer."

These differences are also shown in the famous Russian child's song of Ya. Khelemskiy and Yu. Chichkov "What is it made of", where the peculiarities of boy's behavior are described with high accuracy "they made of freckles and firecrackers, arrays and batteries, springs and pictures, marbles and blotting-papers, our boys are made of!". About the girls they said "they made of flowers and small bells, writing-books and glances, the handkerchiefs and clews, secrets and candies, our girls are made of".

According to current scientific concepts, *the primary sexual (gender) social adaptation of a child* begins

immediately after the birth. The historical and cultural heritage, which have passed from generation to generation as the proverbs, legends and other are also important. We also support this idea, since, in our opinion, the child begins the sexual (gender) social adaptation even in the womb. The modern society, globalization and modern medicine allow the identification of the sex of the child at early stages of pregnancy that turns into particular attitude to the child according to particular gender - male or female. Even the attitude of parents to the early choice of the name of the baby is social adaptation to particular gender. The parents name the baby already in the womb give the name, talk to him as with a representative of particular gender that testifies the first moments of the sexual (gender) social adaptation of the child even in utero.

It is important to mention the fact that in ancient times there were no opportunity to identify gender in advance, but the mankind tried to know developing different tables and superstitions that evidences about an attempt to the early social adaptation of the child even in the womb.

In present, the *common scientific* formulation of *gender (gender-role) social adaptation* is the process when the child identifies himself with the representatives of appropriate gender and learns to the socially acceptable appropriate behavior of men and women.

There is no translation of the term “gender” in Russian language and its spelling is adopted in English.

In the *English-Russian dictionary of V. Müller*, “gender” has two meanings:

- Grammatical gender,
- Gender as playful designation.

In the modern *Philosophical Dictionary*, the term “gender” refers to a social gender.

In a *Large Sociological Explanatory Dictionary*, the word “gender” has two meanings:

- Total - the difference between men and women by the anatomical features;
- Sociological - social division, often based on anatomical features, but sometimes different from them.

In psychological dictionary, the definition “gender” refers to the complex physical, reproductive, behavioral and social features determining the individual as a man or a woman; and the definition “psychological gender” as a characteristic of the personality and behavior of the person with masculine or feminine features [1, p. 266].

It is important that Sh. Bern distinguishes four stages of establishing a sexual (gender) identity:

- *Gender identity* (when the child perceives itself with particular gender);
- *Gender constancy* (a child understands that his gender is constant and cannot be changed);
- *Differential imitation* (a child desire to be the best boy or girl);
- *Gender self-regulation* (occurs, when a child control a behavior himself) [2].

Thompson S. allocates the *three stages of sexual (gender) social adaptation* in the early development of the gender role:

- A child understands that there are two genders;
- A child identifies himself with one of genders;
- A child controls behavior himself choosing the new forms of behavior [3, p. 339-347].

Kon I.S. [4, p. 166-210] notes that the primary perception of the sexual (gender) affiliation is formed in the child by the first 6 months after birth (what in our opinion is an indication that sexual (gender) social adaptation begins from the first moment, when mother and father of a child know the gender of the expecting child. This is the core element of identity of a child in the mother’s womb). With growing of the child, the volume and content of gender identity change due to acquisition of a wide range of masculine and feminine features.

Mudrik A.V. notes that the essence of gender (gender-role) social adaptation, is consists in that “the little boys and girls, young men and girls, men and women, developing and changing the life conditions of particular society, learn and reproduce the gender roles accepted in particular society and the culture of gender relations” [5, p. 15].

It is considered that the *prenatal period* is the time before the birth of the child. The science distinguishes two components of this period:

- *Prenatal period* begins from the parents’ decision to conceive a baby and until 28th week of pregnancy,
- *Perinatal period* begins from 28th week of pregnancy until the early weeks of the child’s life.

Thus, the prenatal period in the development of the baby is related to both a child and his parents.

Verny T. claims that the human personality is formed before his birth. The child feels thoughts, feelings, mother’s emotions and these impressions later form his character, behavior and mentality. A 28-week fetus already has facial reactions and expresses an attitude (grimaces) to the taste of the food eaten by the mother: displeasure for salty and bitter taste and pleasure for sweet. Fetus reacts by special expression on mother’s tears, cry and anger [6, 7].

Purpura J. indicated exact time of the formation of the child’s personality in the womb - the period between 28th and 32nd week of pregnancy, since beginning from this period, the information enters a child’s brain and transmits to the different parts of the body. It was also noted that, a few weeks later, the child’s brain signals become more expressed and could be registered allowing the determination the time of sleep and awake [8].

Therefore, if the personality is formed in the womb, then the primary sexual (gender) social adaptation of the child begins simultaneously.

In present, there are numerous scientists who made the great contribution to investigations of gender (gender-role) social adaptation:

- In national science: V.V. Abramenkova, G.M. Andreeva, I.O. arteneva, B.M. Bid-Bad, I.S. Kon, S.A. Makarenko, A.V. Mudrik, F.A. Mustaeva, V.S. Mukhina, A.V. Petrovskiy, N.L. Selivanova, V.A. Sukhomlinskiy, T.M. Taranova, K.D. Ushinskiy, L.P. Shustova and many others;
- in international science: Sh. Bern, A. Bertin, S.L. Blem, T. Verny, E. Maccoby, N. Jacklin, M. Johnson, J. Stockard, J. Purpura, S. Thomson, D.B. Chamberlain, etc. [6-13].

Currently, there are the following theories on the social adaptation of gender:

- Psychoanalytic theory,
- The theory of social learning,
- The theory of cognitive development,
- The theory of the new psychology of gender.

We have considered their main provisions below [1]. *Psychoanalytic theory* considers that identification of the child with the parents is the general psychological mechanism of understanding of the gender role excluding the role of coevals, other adults and the media. This is occurred when the individual development which was previously paid attention in terms of behavior and concepts stipulated by the gender was related with sexual development. According to numerous authors (N. Jacklin, M. Johnson, E. Maccoby, J. Stockard, S. Thomson, etc.) and the experience acquired by little boys and girls in the family, is determined by their inherent biological demands. This experience solely affects the child's features of the character specific for particular gender.

Appearing at a young age, these features are fixing during the child's grow. According to the authors of this theory, the general role in gender differentiation belongs to biological factors besides the social adaptation. In this case, the personality harmoniously and fully develops and follows the traditional pattern of behavior typical for men and women. The development of the neofreudianism revealed that the compliance with these models is not "guarantee of the psychological well-being, neither women nor men".

The *theory of social learning* (a theory of gender typification) based on the affirmation that human behavior is generally formed by positive or negative effects from the external environment. The gender-role behavior depends on parental models, which the child imitates. The main principle of education of gender-role behavior is

"differentiation of gender roles through observation, reward and punishment by direct and indirect conditioning".

That is, parents during communication with the child (boy or girl) by name, differences in cloth, toys and other attributes of livelihoods surrounding the child clearly indicate the gender of the child for himself and other people maintaining the typical gender behavior of the child and complain this does not correspond to the accepted model. According to adherents of this theory, the children tend to identify themselves with the parent, who has more rewards and imitate the parent, who has the power (what is controversial in our opinion).

In the theory of *cognitive development*, the child's gender roles are not "passive product of a social exercise and occurs as a result of active structuring of experience obtained by a child". Proponents of this theory likewise the proponents of the theory of social learning, note the significance of the positive and negative support from adult. However, "cognitive information" received by a child from adults and understanding of own particular gender is allocated as the main gender social adaptation of the child.

According to the adherents of this theory, the gender-role stereotypes, which function for organization and structuring of appropriate information are significantly influence the gender-roles understanding. "Sexual typification" occurs due to ability of children to group and process information. Thus, "gender-role stereotypes" are considered as a positive process contributing to the attainment of gender identity.

The disadvantage of this theory of cognitive development is that this explains only the emergence of gender identities without an explanation of gender-role behavior.

The *theory of the new psychology of gender*, which emerged in the 1970s in the Western countries, reveals the general role of the social expectations of the society in the formation of psychological gender.

On the basis of the theory of new psychology of gender, J. Stockard and M. Johnson assumed that "biological gender (chromosome and hormonal) can only promote the identification of potential of human behavior and generally - this is the psychological and social gender, which is accepted for term of life". The formation of the psychological and social gender is affected by class character, ethnical, racial variations of gender roles and expectations [14, 15].

We suggest that the *primary sexual (gender) social adaptation of the child* begins even in the perinatal period (before birth) because the child is already able to accept the changes of the emotional state of the mother (T. Verny and others) [7] and that is the ground of the first moments of intrauterine social adaptation.

Emotional disorders, providing the pathogenic effect on the child's development and the stability degree of adaptation by the birth, as well as the subsequent interaction with the environment, unfortunately, are paid little attention, in spite these result in significant and sometimes irreversible consequences for human development. There are wonderful proverbs, which clearly show the experience and knowledge of ancestors that a man is formed, educated and socially adopted as a person even in the womb and until he turns three years, because these periods are the most sensitive to the different events:

- “As a man sows, so shall he reap”,
- “Drink in with mother's milk”,
- “Educate the little child lying across the bed and not along”, that is, what we put in the intrauterine child, we will receive in the future. The emotional and psychological relationship is the link between adaptation and primary sexual (gender) social adaptation of the children in the perinatal period.

Destabilization of the emotions is contributed by different factors:

- High anxiety of the mother during pregnancy;
- Continuous stress;
- Suffering about unwanted pregnancy;
- Sudden fright and other.

The first attachment of mothers and children is very important since this plays a major role in the development of the child and the formation of his relationships in both the family and society. Pediatricians believe that the first hour after birth is the most critical period for the successful development of relations, affection and trust between parents and children. This is the time, when infants are in a state of maximum sensitivity, which essentially determines the depth and strength of the attachment between mother and child.

Thus, early social adaptation includes the time from pregnancy until the child enters a school. Among cross-cultural means of early social adaptation, the most important are:

- Feeding methods of infant and care;
- Household and hygienic skills of parents;
- Material culture and products surrounding a child;
- The elements of spiritual culture (lullabies songs, tales, legends, proverbs, folklore etc.);
- The style and content of communication, as well as methods of encouragement and punishment in the family;
- The consistent inclusion of a person to the numerous types of relationships in communication, game, cognition and subject-practical activities.

Among the agents of *primary sexual (gender) social adaptation of the child* are the parents, brothers and sisters, grandparents, relatives, nurses, friends of a family, coevals and other close related people met him during the first moments of life (including the perinatal period). Ethnographers, historians, psychologists and other scientists concluded in the cross-cultural studies that even the type of care for a baby, the character of the swaddle (free motions or not) affect the child's development, although this influence is often insignificant for some nations and cultures, but the significance of the emotional part is recognized as extremely important.

Unfortunately, Shikhova E.P. and Fillipovskaya T.V. note that the social and cultural meaning and social consequences of a positive or negative environment during this period are paid little attention [16, p. 276-281].

Brekhman G.I. and Fedor-Freiberg P.G. have determined an innovative paradigm that clearly differentiates a system of obsolete theoretical concepts on the stage of development of unborn child and socio-cultural formation of the individual (Table 1) [17, p. 228-230].

Brekhman G.I. and Lapochkina N.P. showed the comparative data on the reflection of emotionally-psychological characteristics of women with unwanted pregnancy on the social behavior of children (Table 2) [17, p. 271-272].

Burns B. in the preface to the book “Different faces of maternity” has written: “If we would like understand the child's development and are convinced that the early years are essential to the life of a child, probably, it is important to investigate our understanding of the mother. If we would like understand the evolution of a man then maternity, of course, is an important research area” [9].

The data in the table clearly demonstrate the close interaction between mother and child during the perinatal period and modern approaches in the field of study are

Table 1: Comparative characteristics of the old and new concepts in embryology

New concept	Old concept
1. Development from complex to more complex: from primary cell (zygote) to complex organism. The primary cell contains genetic information about: - the morphological structure of the organism, - in holographic plan - gradual structure of the organism, - functional processes ensuring structure of the organism, - gradual launching of the functions as the formation of organs of the child, - <i>emotional and psychological structure of a person and its features, inherited from the parents and grandparents...</i>	1. Development from complex to more complex: from primary cell (zygote) to complex organism. The primary cell contains genetic information about morphological structure of the organism.
2. Functioning of all organs and systems of the organism occurs simultaneously to their structuring long before their full maturing	2. Functioning of organs and systems of the organism begins after birth with the first breath of a newborn child
3. Tactile, pain, hearing and visual sensitivity, as well as orientation appear and develop gradually long before the birth	3. Tactile, pain, hearing and visual sensitivity, as well as orientation appear and develop gradually after birth
4. <i>Emotional perception, prenatal memory and consciousness of the fetus appear in early prenatal period</i>	4. Emotional perception, prenatal memory and consciousness of the fetus are not considered
5. The umbilical cord is not single interaction between mother and child	5. The umbilical cord is single interaction between mother and child
6. Oxygen, proteins, water and other necessary products, biologically active substances (BAS) are delivered to the child by blood through the vessels in the umbilical cord and amniotic fluids through the extraembryonic membranes	6. Oxygen, proteins, water and other necessary products, BAS are delivered to a child, the blood only through the vessels of the umbilical cord
7. Metabolic products income from the child to the mother through the vessels of the umbilical cord and amniotic fluids through the extraembryonic membranes	7. Metabolic products income from the child to the mother through the vessels of the umbilical cord
8. <i>Emotional-psychological interaction between mother and child is realized though neuropeptides and other BAS delivered by the blood through the vessels of the umbilical cord</i>	8. There is no emotional-psychological interaction between mother and unborn child

Table 2: Characteristics of social behavior of unwanted children and their mother

Women with unwanted pregnancy (Brekhman and Lapochkina, 1998)	Unwanted children (Matejcek, 1980; Zakharov, 1994; Janus, 1997)
- <i>Emotional dissatisfaction related with particular situation and harmful self-esteem.</i>	- Lower cheerfulness, higher resentment, crying.
- <i>Hypersensitivity to external stimuli, anxiety, distress.</i>	- Children "nervousness", latent depression.
- <i>Depressive reactions.</i>	- Lower self-esteem.
- High self-control with a tendency to lie.	- Lack of self-confidence, in the abilities and possibilities, the strong dependence.
- Fear, mistrust.	- High demand for recognition: often through criminal, entailed by asocial tendencies - ambition, revenge, spite, envy.
- Difficult social adaptation.	- Low development of affection and sympathy, the emotional "blindness", even "deafness".
- Problems of interpersonal relationships, a strong sense of guilt, passivity contiguous with psychological masochism.	- In parenthood - detachment in raising of the children and caring about them.
- Infantile form of interpersonal relationships and the features of emotional immaturity.	- Absence of mutual understanding of the expected children, stinging, nastiness, irony.
- The need to overcome the limits, intention to get rid of anxiety by hiding it behind of evident confidence and independence.	- High intellect.
- Uncertainty in the possible success.	- Neuroses.
- <i>Emotional instability and fast shift of attention.</i>	- Often a manifestation of psychopathic traits.

extremely different from the previous concepts in medicine and psychology. Therefore, in present, we believe that the problem of *gender (sexual) social adaptation of the child during the perinatal period* is very important and the deep study will solve numerous problems of modern psychology and pedagogy.

Thus, *gender (sex) social adaptation of the child* at the present stage has different interpretations

(like the variety of "gender" definitions). This indicates insufficient investigation and substantiation of the topic. In our opinion, the significance of the perinatal period for the social adaptation of the child is hardly considered in pedagogical and psychological science. That is the basis for both educational process and social adaptation of the child including identification with particular gender and belonging to a certain culture, nation, religion, etc.

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