Research on Psychological Androgyny and Its Educational Strategies in Female Education

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Abstract: The development of the society proposes new requirements for the gender role of the female i.e. the formation of psychological androgyny. The psychological research shows that an individual with psychological androgyny has more favorable psychological quality, and has more flexibility and stronger adaptability on social role to playing with psychological health level obviously higher than other gender role stereotype. The females in our country are constrained by the feudal thought “man is superior to woman” for a long time, which have to some extent lost the excellent psychological qualities of the male and tend to be psychologically lopsided, and it therefore should cultivate the ideal psychological mode of androgyny in female education. In order to fully understand and develop advantages of psychological androgyny of the female in female education, the article adopts literature study methods, survey research methods and other methods to systematically study the importance of psychological androgyny in female education, the factors of the psychological androgyny and its education strategy. The conclusions are: psychological androgyny imposes impact on traditional social sense of humanism. Influencing factors of psychological androgyny of the female include innate heredity orientation as the biological basis for formation, and social factor is main reason for increase of psychological androgyny trend. Meanwhile, based on its influencing factors, androgyny education is proposed with a well-defined objective in mind to improve the psychological quality of the female and make for the development of female potentials.

Keywords: Androgyny, Personality, Education, Strategy, Research

1 Introduction

In China, due to impacts from traditional culture, when the female are being educated, the families, schools or society is too much concerned about the gender differences, and it is regarded that the girls should be like girls, who will be warned by their parents and be laughed at by other people if they have the male psychological characteristics. Such an educational concept has seriously hindered the development of the female. Many data in recent years show that although some countries and regions, in theory, has promulgated corresponding policies to stress the importance of psychological androgyny, what are mostly discussed by researchers are the concept of psychological androgyny, advantages and influencing factors, but how to carry out the education of it is rarely talked about, which make many people mistake the psychological androgyny education. For example, some people think that the psychological androgyny education means to raise the girls just like raising boys; some think that the psychological androgyny education should be implemented. However, it is affected by the gender stereotype effect when it is going on, and some hints of the genders will be given in teaching contents, teaching methods and some specific activities. Therefore, in order to develop potentials of the female, it is pressing to provide psychological androgyny education to the female, correctly understand the phenomenon of psychological androgyny of the female and strengthen the research on its factors and educational countermeasures.

2 Text
2.1 Overview of psychological androgyny

The psychological androgyny plays an irreplaceable role in shaping and exploring inner qualities and potentials of human being. Since the concept of gender role androgyny was proposed by the western psychological circle, many psychologists have made a lot of researches. Fromm has ever pointed out that every human being had two characteristics. One of them in compliance with their personality is only weighting more than the other. The psychological androgyny was a concept initially proposed in 1964 by Rossil who regarded that the psychological androgyny means an individual has the traditional male and female characteristics simultaneously, and the psychological androgyny is the best suitable gender role mode\[1\]. The phenomenon of psychological androgyny is correlative to gender role identity and identity.

An American psychologist did an investigation, whose findings show an interesting phenomenon that the girls who are too feminine are lopsided in intelligence, physical strength and personality in general and have lower IQ and EQ. The specific display is that their general academic records is not ideal or tend to go overboard on one or some subjects, is lack of imagination and creative power and cannot cope with the environment easily. According to Bohm’s gender theory, the gender tendency can be classified into four aspects: masculine, feminine, androgyny and undifferentiated. The psychological androgyny is the most ideal gender mode, which combines the advantages of the male and the female. The individual with psychological androgyny could do better than the typical individuals (the masculine and the feminine) under various conditions, have more good psychological qualities and are more advantageous in such aspects as self-esteem, self-evaluation, popularity and adaptability compared with other types; the female with androgyny has more flexibility and adaptation in their in play of their social role and their psychological health level is obviously higher than the other gender role\[2\]; furthermore, it is more possible for them to achieve success under all kinds of condition. Such females have the interests, abilities and hobbies of the female and the male, and just as described with such words as “quiet like a lady, behave like a gentleman” and “have a firm character behind a gentle appearance”, they are of the advantages of psychological features of the male and the female, and thus form the ideal psychological gender role as a female. As a result, the psychological androgyny education should be strengthened in the female education.

2.2 Significance of research on psychological androgyny of the female

2.2.1 The psychological androgyny of the female imposing impacts on traditional social sense of humanism

It is held traditionally that the gender role structure of human being is a single dimension consisting of the male traits and the female traits, and the psychology of an individual with typical gender role develops healthier. The females in our country are especially constrained by the feudal thought “man is superior to woman” for a long time, which have to some extent lost the excellent psychological qualities of the male and tend to be psychologically lopsided. Meanwhile, the human beings with “psychological androgyny” will be undoubtedly growing up accompanied by disputes and censure of the general public\[3\]. As regarded by the researchers engaged in psychological androgyny theory, the personality characters of the male and the female can be traditionally integrated in an individual, and many personality traits owned by the male and the female respectively that are bound to old culture are substantively the gender characteristics shared by the two genders\[4\]. However, the Chinese traditional feudal thought stressed that the female should observe “the three obediences and the four virtues”, “Innocence is the virtue for women”, etc, and claimed that the female should develop unisexually. Hence, the psychological androgyny of the female imposes impacts on the traditional social sense of humanism.

2.2.2 The psychological androgyny of the female is the tendency of social development

In the historical cultures of the countries worldwide, the events or pictures describing a women dressing like a man were recorded as far as from ancient times, where there are few negative opinions. Such a kind of heritance gaining tacit consent also has influence on the people’s views on the psychological
androgyny. The male-like dressing for a female is considered as the symbol of being valiant and heroic in bearing and even praised and encouraged highly, which is closely in connection with the suppression and bound of the female’s rights. A Research of Female Undergraduates’ Sexual Psychology from East China Normal University given to the female undergraduates from grades 1-4 from 10 colleges and universities such as Fudan University, Shanghai Jiaotong University and East China Normal University shows that almost one third of the girls have qualities of the male like being of “independent, adventurous, more competitive and ambitious” and have gender role of androgyny, 16% higher than findings of the similar research given to the female undergraduates born after 1970 in 1988. In the campus of university, the academic advantages of female students have become a topic concerned. According to statistics, from 1999 to 2006, the 560 top examinees for higher education include more than 50% female examinees. Some experts through analysis regards that the academic advantages of the female students should be related to their increasingly obvious psychological state of androgyny. Nowadays, it is hard for females in China to find a job, which also promotes the development of the female’s androgyny. Therefore, the working women with androgyny will not only show a psychological tendency in all occasions but also attach importance to consistency between their expressions and the environment; in work, they are strict, behaving like a respectful boss and leader; in life, they are tender and exquisite, behaving like a good wife and mother. Consequently, the androgyny of the female is gradually accepted by the society, which also reflects the tendency of social development.

2.3 Factors influencing the androgyny formation of the female

The research on reasons of androgyny has been conducted for a long time in western society. The reasons for androgyny formation are complicated and various. Here, this article is to analyze psychologically the factors influencing the androgyny formation of the female:

2.3.1 Biological basis

Jung Carl Gustav, a Swedish psychologist, held that the male and the female have their different social and biological destinies and every one has a kind of unconscious (or less consciousness) personality of the opposite gender. When stating the “primordial image”, Gustav mentioned the male’s primordial image and the female’s primordial image, namely “anima” and “animus”, where anima refers the female traits the male has and animus refers to the male traits the female has. He uses these two terms to explain that human being has its innate physiological and psychological characteristics of androgyny. Anima and animus is the complex of androgyny, i.e. it is one of the subjective reasons for androgyny formation. This lays a biological basis for androgyny formation.

2.3.2 Social factors

The major reason leading to strengthening of androgyny tendency is the social factors. The gender is innate whereas the gender role is gradually developing in the later life and study. The social factors play an important role in androgyny formation. The social factors mainly include:

① Cultural factor. By virtue of impacts from Chinese traditional feudal culture, there is a universal gender role stereotype in people’s minds and they think the female should be sensitive, tender, emotive, passive, obedient, etc. To date, under the cultural background that the male and female are impartial, such stereotype is being neutralized and the androgyny is also being recognized and accepted by the people. Also, in the analytical research on Chinese and foreign androgynies, psychologists found that the androgyny in our country tends to be weaker than the countries like America that claim individuation, and autonomy and diversity of personality. From the vertical and horizontal comparisons, it can be found that the cultural factor has impact on the androgyny.

② Family factor. Family is the first location for socialization of children while parents are the first contact persons of the children. In a family, the teaching methods, values, family background, etc. play an important role in socialization of children. Based on Social Learning Theory, imitation and observational learning play a fundamental role in gender role taking of children, and they often imitate their parents of the same gender. If the parent has the factors of androgyny, his/her children are more likely to show the same characteristics, which is more obvious in the female; secondly, the gender role
taking of children is also related to the people who are mainly raising them; in China, mother is the
person mainly raising her child (children); and thus the female characteristics have more impacts on the
children.

2.3.3 School education School education plays a leading role in androgyny formation of students,
especially the teacher’s gender concept that plays an important role in psychological development of
students. The students tend to have the characteristics of their teachers. If a teacher suffers serious
impacts from the feudal thought, claims “the girl should be like a girl” and does not have the concept
that the female should develop the androgyny, so his/her speech acts will lead the students to a one-way
development, which is certain to affect the androgyny development of the female students. Especially
after the children go to school, their personality structure starts to change and the roles of parents are
being gradually replaced by the teacher. A research indicates that the female teachers in primary schools,
middle schools and senior high schools respectively account for 78%, 71% and 67% in proportion. This
phenomenon will surely enable the female students to have the feminine characteristics, lack of models
of masculine ones relatively and affect their androgyny development. In particular of the primary school
stage, the pupils will imitate their teachers more. Therefore, the school education plays a leading role in
androgyny development of the female.

2.4 Androgyny education of the female and its strategies

2.4.1 Androgyny education of the female

The so-called “androgyny education” refers to a new educational concept after abandoning of the
traditional and absolute “unisex education”. The designer of “androgyny education” for the female
regards that as to the education for girls, too strict and absolute gender stereotyping (i.e. cultivate the
girls’ feminine qualities such as tenderness and meticulousness) is only to set limits on all-round and
healthy development of the girls in intelligence and personality.

The rapid development of the society and increasingly fierce competition also make the androgyny
education become more and more pressing. As the androgyny will bring a lot of advantages, the social
development requires that the female cannot be bound to unisexuality any more, but should have
androgyny. Therefore, in a society where it is difficult for the female to find a job, the psychological
androgyny of the female is an inevitable trend in compliance with the role development in a new era and
the androgyny is also imperative.

2.4.2 Strategies of androgyny education

On the basis of the above factors having impact on the androgyny, we hold that the strategies for
androgyny education are summed up as follows:

2.4.2.1 Androgyny education combining the family, school and society etc

Androgyny is gradually formed in a certain social environment. Gender role education is a social task.
To strengthen the androgyny education requires joint efforts of the entire society. Create an environment
conducive to the androgyny development of students in the family, school and society and form a
combined force of education.

Traditional family education always values the children’s gender role identity education in terms of
promotion of the children’s gender role. Since there exist big psychological and behavioral differences
between the male and the female, parents always establish gender role norms based on the society and
raise the kids according to their genders, and they often raise different expectations and requirements in
accordance with their children’s genders. Based on the proposals by American scholars in family
education of androgyny, we regard that the family education of androgyny for female should notice:
firstly, encourage the girls to learn from their opposite gender; the girls should develop their own
“gender” advantages while paying attention to learning from their opposite gender, learning the boys’
being resolute, steadfast and outgoing, overcoming the weakness in their personality and promoting the
all-around development physically and mentally and perfection of personality; secondly, the fathers
should often communicate with their daughters and set an example in male characteristics for them;
thirdly, increase opportunities to contact with the boys. The girls’ learning from the opposite gender
should be realized through natural contact, and thus opportunities for common communication and
playing should be provided to them; fourthly, do not distinguish the gender characteristics too much; many characters or behavioral characteristics (such as zealous and active, independent, firm and indomitable, responsible, understanding, selfless and kind-hearted etc.) should be owned by both the male and the female, which should not be considered as the patents of one gender; parents should not differentiate the genders too clearly in raising their daughters, and instead accept both of them, which is the right important part of “androgyne education”; fifthly, let nature take its course; must let it be and do not push them to do what they do not like when encouraging the girls to learn from the opposite gender, or else it will be counterproductive; learning too much will make them become a “tomboy”, which is naturally not the real “androgyne education”.

As for school education, the school managers and teachers should at first set up the right gender concept and then positively change the great impacts on the androgyne formation of the students from traditional teaching methods and curricula. The Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010) officially passed by the State Council in 2001 expressly points out that incorporate a gender perspective into teacher training programs during the reform of curricula, teaching contents and teaching methods. Prudently choose and process teaching materials and readings and choose some materials reflecting diversity of gender role to be incorporated. In the meantime, break the limits of traditional gender stereotyping concept through colorful activities and let the female students come to realize step by step that: the female students should pay attention to learning from the opposite gender and overcome their own weakness in personality on the basis of developing their gender advantages. Moreover, as seen from the structure of teaching staff in primary and middle schools and kindergartens in China, the female teachers are more than male teachers in proportion; the working features of the teacher is its demonstrative function; the male teachers’ behaviors have less influence; such state does not facilitate the androgyne education; therefore, in terms of construction of teaching staff, the balance of structure of the male and female teachers should be taken into consideration.

As for social culture, China has been affected by the feudal thought “Man is superior to woman” for a thousand years, which has bound the people’s concept and penetrated into all fields of the society. Especially in a modern society with rapid development of information, the mass media also play an extremely important role in gender role formation of the students. The females we see from all media are mostly depicted as being tender, weak and shy and a party getting help and being hurt, which will enlarge the deviation for the female to understand the gender role. Accordingly, we should call on the mass media to pay attention to the common points of the two genders in publication to let the people realize that there is no difference between the male and the female. The female can also have the excellent characteristics of the male besides their own ones, and the ability to create success. Therefore, only provide “androgyne education” to the female through the family, school and society from all perspectives and aspects and form the combined force of education can fully develop the female’s potentials, promote their all-around development and form the psychological characteristics of androgyne.

2.4.2.2 Combination of androgyne education for the female and gender-based education

The teaching staff should learn the successful experience of gender education from other countries and make use of teaching materials and their speech acts to spread equal gender concept, ensure the healthy and balanced psychological development of the female students, and promote the social development of harmony between two genders[3]. Meanwhile, based on the above research, the factors impacting the androgyne include the innate biological basis and later factors such as family, school and companion. The androgyne education also requires the combinations of family education, school education and social education, and androgyne and gender-based education to improve the psychological qualities of the whole people.

“Gender-based education” mainly means that the education should actively shape and develop the healthy gender psychology characteristics of every individual, and perfect and improve the overall psychological health level of different individuals aiming at the objective differences for psychological development of two genders and their reasons in accordance with objective requirements of education
and ideal health personality standards. “Gender-based education” is proposed mainly for psychological differences of the two genders while androgyny education is to narrow the personality differences between the two genders, and thus the two do not conflict with each other. On the contrary, to carry out the androgyny education with acknowledgement of the gender differences of the two genders is just the ideal gender education mode for there are physiological and psychological differences between the male and the female. For example, in characters, the female is more patient and meticulous while the male is more careless and bold; in recognition, there exists no big difference in intelligence between the male and female in physiology and psychology, gender differences and androgyny should be combined with more emphasis. Talking about the “androgyny education” without considering “gender-based education” may lead to gender identity deviation or integration of gender identity, which is not the final result of gender education. Therefore, the ideal female education mode is the combination of “androgyny education” and “gender-based education”.

3 Conclusion

The androgyny development of the female plays a very important role in their career, life, etc. The androgyny as an ideal gender role mode is gradually being accepted by more and more people. Through study on importance and factors of androgyny of the female, we make conclusions that the androgyny of the female has its perfection not owned by other gender modes. The formation reasons of androgyny of the female include innate biological basis and other later factors such as family, school and society. The androgyny education of the female also needs to start from family, school and some other social factors, and combine androgyny and gender-based education to improve the psychological qualities of the female.

References