Review Article

Theoretical Review on the Dilemma of Chinese Preschoolers Cultural Identity According to Cultural Ethics

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A B S T R A C T

The preschooler's cultural identity is viewed as not only the foundation of the national identity and cultural security but also the educational goal of cultivating the modern Chinese citizen with cultural confidence. The current study examined the cultural identity of children aged 5 years, based on their own self-portraits. Thirty Children are asked to draw their self-portraits and were then asked to answer some questions focusing on their cultural identity. Among these children, one half with upper class family background were from a public kindergarten school located in the center of the city and the other half whose parents are from the floating population came from a private kindergarten located in a village. The two kindergarten schools located in Guangzhou carried out a curriculum characterized by Chinese traditional culture and they can therefore represent both ends of the Chinese kindergarten: high quality public kindergarten and inclusive private kindergarten. Qualitative analysis revealed that there were differences between the kids from the two kindergarten and migrant children in the city and they showed low cultural awareness especially about their mother's cultures. Also children looked down upon their own playing culture under the adult's cultural hegemony. These phenomena reflected disharmony of the three cultural levels which directly impacted the children's cultural identity. To cultivate Chinese citizens with cultural confidence for the future, China needs to change the cultural ecology that belittles the childhood culture and its indigenous culture, to attach importance to children's culture and children's subjectivity in cultural identity, to be rooted in the children's cultural origin and indigenous culture, and to transform the kindergarten curriculum according to the game spirit so as to provide the children with the early-stage environment that is in line with their learning interest, motivation and experience.

Keywords: PreschoolChildren, Cultural Identity, Cultural Ecology, Cultural Ethics

Introduction

The national identity and social identity of a person are based on a common culture. According to Calhoun, Craig (1994) cultural identity has become a political and

historical topic.[1] Cultural identity here refers to the social and psychological process when the individual internalizes the cultural community that he or she belongs to and its corresponding culture, obtains the sense of belonging from them, and then acquires, maintains and innovates their own culture. For Shilian Chen et al. (2008) it is also a kind of social identity that indicates the path and process of the individual's obtaining "we-feeling" of their cultural community.[2] While Vandenbroeck, Michel (2000) admitted even young children can probably understand their own ethnic groups and cultural identity,[3] Qian Peng (2017) pointed out that the children's cultural identity is significant for both, the individual development and social development.[4] It thus follows that to construct the children's cultural identity these have been included into the goals of the preschool children's education in many countries and regions. For instance, The Interim Outline of the Kindergarten Nursing and Teaching Activity Curriculum issued in Taiwan in August 2012, China mentions "the construction of the preschool children's cultural identity" and argues that the cultural identity is the key content that should be learnt by preschool children "Preschool children should be allowed to start from their own culture, tolerate and respect other cultures and identify their values and importance".[5] Another example is The Early Learning Standard(4th Edition) issued by Wisconsin in 2013 which stipulates that preschool children should learn "to identify themselves as members of some specific culture, community or ethnic group and such kind of identity conforms to a larger world view".

Domestic studies on children's culture mainly focuses on such topics as children's cultural needs, cultural competence development and cultural education assistance.[6] The search on CNKI by the keyword "cultural identity" in July, 2017 resulted in 3,118 documents and only a few of them directly touch upon the children's early-stage cultural identity. Some study holds that the picture book influences the children's cultural identity and the excessive introduction of western picture books is undermining the influence of traditional culture on preschool children and impacting the children's lifestyle and cultural identity.[7] Until now, such theories about cultural identity have been put forward as the Individual Development View, Social Identity Theory, Cultural Adaption View and Ideology View, which have revealed the psychological mechanism of preschool children's cultural identity to some extent.[8] However, the cultural mechanism and the countermeasures confronted by the preschool children's cultural identity still need more studies.

The Cultural Mechanism of Preschool Children's Cultural Identity

The age, sex, race, nationality etc belong to the preschool children's category of self definition. This self not only represents what the child is allowed to do but is also an important way to define an identity. The study indicates that preschool children may also exhibit a "false identity" with cultural bias, for example, African American preschool children seldom associate the positive traits with black Americans or African Americans.[9] Then how do pre-school children produce their cultural identity? It can be explained to some extent by the combination of the ecosystem theory and the social, cultural and historical theory of human development and the influence of cultural environment.

The Cultural Environment Provides a Framework for the Preschool Children's Cultural Cognition

From the perspective of cultural studies, identity is utterly social and cultural and the resources that produce our identity plans have their historical and cultural features. They rely on the power formed by the environment, from which the cultural competence at the specific cultural background can be derived. Cultural environment concerns the different cultural resources that we have access to.[10]

According to the ecosystem theory of human development, the cultural system affecting the preschool children's development can be divided into the micro cultural system, medium cultural system and macro cultural system based on the ways of influence, if the preschool children are at the center of the cultural system. It can also be said that culture can be divided into two levels: the macro and distal level and the micro and proximal level. The distal level involves the social-cultural-historical moment when the preschool children develop themselves. Some specific cultural, historical and social mechanisms provide the children with the already existing values, beliefs, rules, and likelihood and unlikelihood. If time can flow back, a preschool child living in the middle ages cannot understand the preschool children's lifestyle in the 21st century and a child in the new era of China may not understand the foot-binding custom for women in ancient China. Likewise, a preschool child in South Korea who is used to asking for the teacher's permission before doing anything often asks his teacher "Can I……?" at the very start of his life in the USA. Then he or she may encounter the cultural conflict when the teacher says "you can do anything you want". The proximal level includes the interactions between the preschool children and the environment, the materials, parents, fellows, teachers and other important persons. The distal cultural environment exerts the direct influence on the preschool children through the proximal cultural environment. By analyzing the cultural identity of the "vulnerable groups", such as the left-behind children in rural areas and the migrant children in urban areas, the scholars have specifically demonstrated the influential factors of the individual's cultural identity: the family and the society.

Before children enter kindergarten, the family culture

constitutes the basic content and mechanism of the action of the preschool children's cultural identity, including family lifestyle, interpersonal relationships, eating habits, consumption habits and family structure. After children enter the kindergarten, the family and kindergarten will provide things of importance as the basic framework and content of children's cultural identity and get them subtly internalized as the children's thinking mode and action habit in such ways as the course curriculum, educational interaction, model demonstration, teaching activities, habit training and reward and punishment. The result of the cultural identity is that it regulates the basic framework of children's thinking and action, for example, "I am a boy", and so "I" feel comfortable and at ease by dressing like a boy. In this way, the preliminary studying hard may become a conscious habit that is naturally manifested in later life. The movies children watch, the books they read, the games they play, the materials they operate, the clothes they wear, and the evaluation standards about "whether they are good or not" around them internalize the essence of the culture. For example, the characters depicted in movies or books express some cultural orientation, like the collectivism, spirit of freedom, or certain social emotions about certain roles, such as the selfless policemen, the hardworking and brave farmers, and the tender and family-oriented mothers, and so on. Of course, in the various cultural resources that young children can access, perhaps some roles are "absent". Through the "dialogue" with the text and the characters in it, the preschool children understand and recognize some cultural elements, which results in the development of the cultural cultivation or cultural rationality. The "rationality" herein refers to the way children think about problems.

In short, the cultural environment corresponds to the cultural identity. That is to say, the cultural environment under specific historical conditions constitutes the possibility of the preschool children's cultural identity, and the specific cultural environment provides certain conditions, possibilities or limitations for children's cultural identity. In a sense, cultural identity corresponds to the children's language, way of thinking and acting, interpersonal relationships and so on. The cultural environment decides the meaning framework of the preschool children's cultural identity. Different cultural environments will vest different cultural concepts and different understandings of the same concept in children. Take a 5-year-old girl's definition of how men and women interact as an example. She said, "That uncle is a pervert, because he only hugged me, a girl, when there are so many people (there)". Culturally, the girl repels the "pervert", because it is not a good role. However, her understanding of the "pervert" is based on the significance of the gender in her cultural environment, in spite of her inaccurate understanding.

The Educational Interaction Directly Shapes the

Preschool Children's Cultural Identity

A large number of studies indicate that the construction of the cultural identity can be realized through the realistic or historical interactions between the subject and the language, textbooks, museums, music, food, community and the surrounding people. The content of cultural identity involves cultural symbols, cultural beliefs, ideological patterns and behavioral norms. In general, the society with the value conflict, in particular, needs to strengthen the national identity and nationalism through the representatives of the collective memory and the past.[12] Wei Yonggang & Chen Shilian take the children of Nakhi ethnic group as an example and point out that the family, teachers and media are the basic ways of children's national cultural cognition. Another scholar, based on the case and theoretical analysis, states that the children's cultural identity is constructed through the social-cultural activities in different contexts such as the school, family and community. Among them, the parents' values or the children's own experience directly influence the children's perception and identification of a certain culture.[14] According to Dong Li et al.,[14] the demographic indicators, cultural differences, and the social support from parents and companions are the main factors affecting the construction of the individual's cultural identity.[15] With the advent of the globalized era and the intensification of cultural conflicts, the school education among many influencing factors, will play an indispensable role in the prevention and resolution of cultural conflicts by shaping the citizenship, because the influential citizenship helps meet the individual and collective needs and address cultural differences in the sustainable human environmental interaction in a peaceful and constructive manner.[16]

Attaching importance to the role of the school in the construction of preschool children's cultural identity is related to the productive power in the modern educational space. According to Thomas S. Popkewitz, an American scholar, the mechanism of culture/identity is the productive power in educational space. The so-called productive power in school space is the force directly "acted" on the teachers and students through the knowledge conveyed by the curriculum, teaching and teacher's practice under the premise that the individual has the freedom to choose. This kind of force, with the microscopic form and ubiquitous influence, provides a set of rules and standards for the teachers and students to act at school.[17] It is because of this force that children consciously accept the culturally endowed expectations and identity, form some kind of reasoning, and produce the corresponding sense of cultural belonging.

Take the kindergarten games as an example. The desks and chairs that can be freely linked or parted, the materials that can be freely picked and placed and the games

autonomously planned internalize the cultural appeal for freedom and self-discipline; a large number of fine adult works stored or posted in the children's activity room deliver the cultural orientation to the preschool children that they should imitate and worship the adults; children are provided with the primitive and simple materials and allowed to show their own works during the process of the games, which embodies the cultural orientation of equality and respect for personality. In some kindergartens, in addition to the activity area, a small tent is also placed in the activity room, and children are allowed to go into the tent to think about something, do something or nothing at all if they don't want to participate in any regional activities. This material culture reflects teachers' respect for the preschool children's needs.

Lin & Reifel (3-27 in Charpter 7) pointed out that the game is, for the preschool children, the "social laboratory" that can train future citizens, because in the game, the children "test" the social role and are thus endowed with the cultural characteristics. For example, the preschool children make sugarcane out of the clay and peel them before pretending to sell them; When playing the role of doctors, the playmates are told how to be polite. Peer interaction in children's games reflects the unique cultural significance. In other words, the preschool children would express the cultural elements that they consider important in some way. Take the preschool children's self-portraits as an example. They express the children's expectations for themselves, the ideal selves, or some emotions or feelings. Through the self-portraits, children can express anything that they deem important or meaningful. The typical urban children's self-portraits show their ideal images of boys and girls: girls are generally portrayed as "princesses" with long hair and skirts, who may wear their crowns and carry their purses gracefully. In these self-portraits, the cars, jewelry, flowers and others that children attach importance to are around them. The typical rural children's self-portraits will display something they consider important as well, such as the pet dog, vegetable garden and so on. It is the educational interaction that provides the children with the opportunity to reproduce the cultural identity and enables them to form a solid cultural identity.

The Cultural Confidence Builds the Emotional Foundation for the Preschool Children's Cultural Identity

Whether children have the affective identification of a certain culture, especially the original culture, is related to whether the preschool children obtain the positive cultural emotion while exposed to the culture or showing their cognition of the culture. With the advancement of globalization, urbanization and modernization, whether children are culturally confident while exposed to other

cultures in addition to the mother tongue and indigenous culture directly affects whether they identify or reject their own cultural background. For example, if the preschool children are expected to learn Mandarin without despising their mother tongue, and to be exposed to western festivals without neglecting Chinese traditional festivals, it is important to help them gain confidence in their mother tongue and Chinese traditional culture. It is worrying that children's second language acquisition may affect their identification of the local culture, but the study shows that children's preference for local culture/ language or foreign culture/language is not mainly decided by the culture they are exposed to or the language they acquire but related to their interests, textbook, language competence and corresponding experience. For example, are the children confident or do they feel nervous or cheerful in the language learning process?[19]

Furthermore, the preschool children's cultural confidence stems from the confidence of the cultural groups in their own culture. In general, the society with the value conflict, in particular, needs to strengthen the national identity and nationalism through the representatives of the collective memory and the past. However, it is important to note that, as the cultural exchanges take place, the cultural conflicts may augment sometimes and some social groups may become anxious while expanding the connotations of citizenship. This kind of anxiety may evolve into attempts to "shut oneself in", or narrow the concept of citizenship or "national identity", or raise the citizens' "identity threshold".[21] It means that not only the national identity should be emphasized but also the international understanding be enhanced in the requirements of the student development literacy. In the process of globalization and modernization, China has not only strengthened the communication with other cultures and promoted the modern transformation of the culture, but also suffered from the erosion of other cultures, especially the western culture, which intensified the cultural conflict and the sense of "cultural homelessness". At the same time, with the social development, China has strengthened its cultural confidence in recent years and has begun to reflect on the national identity crisis caused by blind westernization. The spirit of cultural confidence needs to be conveyed to the preschool children in the way that tolerates cultural differences.

The Plight of Chinese Preschool Children's Cultural Identity

Preschool children's cultural identity involves two basic elements: cultural cognition and cultural emotion. The ideal cultural environment should realize the consistency between the individual interest and motivation and the opportunity to actively develop the identity. If the early-

stage environment limits the possibility of the individual's pursuit of interests, memory and experience, then it will also limit the formation of children's firm identity. However, it also needs attention that the early-stage environment is not a monolithic whole, since the macro-environment, medium-environment, and micro-environment where the preschool children live are culturally different, which constitute the realistic cultural environment that the preschool children's cultural identity has to face. For example, when the games are introduced to the school curricula, the schools in Japan emphasize that the children can become better members of the community and learn the group morality through games while the schools in the USA emphasize that those preschool children should develop their personality through games. Lancy (3-27 in Chapter 7) argued that the cultural differences support or limit the games in several ways and provide a social framework for the construction of the preschool children's cultural identity, for instance, some cultures underscore cooperation while some others underscore competition. It means that the migrant children or mobile children probably face the enormous cultural changes or even feel the intense cultural conflicts, let alone that the world where today's children live is a complicated and chaotic one where the information culture, network culture and social culture and the real world and unreal world co-exist, which can bring on preschool children's cultural conflicts and plight anytime and anywhere.

Cultural Conflicts Bring Preschool Children the Confusion about Cultural Cognition

"Who am I"? Preschool children reveal their cultural understanding through the dressing up, selection of tools, game preference and TV programs preference. For instance, according to some cultures, some boy who dresses like a girl may feel uneasy and surprised at other boys also dressing like girls. Such kind of easiness or uneasiness is the result of the preschool children's gender identity. As a matter of fact, gender is no longer the absolute biological concept but is influenced by the cultural environment. It is the expression and outcome of preschool children's cultural identity.

The ideal environment for cultural identity means that such various cultural influences as the teachers' educational expectation, concept of values, and norms are similar and that the role model and educational content of the social authority are consistent. However, the preschool children today live in a rather complex world where diverse cultures co-exist or conflict against each other and the divergence of the schools, families and communication media in terms of the concept of values and norm requirements will probably cause the trouble of the preschool children's cultural identity.

Take the preschool children's attitude toward the games as an example. Can "I", as a "game lover", be culturally accepted? The preschool children's hesitation about games just demonstrates their understanding of their culturally endowed identity. In an open class, the teacher asked the preschool children "what do you like to do on holidays?" Some answered the question with "watching TV" and "playing games" and some others said that they liked "studying hard". The teacher on the spot smiled with understanding. Such an interesting scene shows that "studying hard" is the cultural expectation, according to the children's understanding, which can help produce the sense of cultural belonging by distinguishing themselves from others. Obviously, this positioning of the cultural "self" forms the place where "the power unavoidably oppresses the subject".[23] The preschool children, due to the oppression of some power, intentionally or unintentionally cater to the culture. Of course, there is still a large number of preschool children who do not have the similar cultural identity but are confused about cultural cognition.

Preschool children's confusion about the cultural cognition is related to cultural conflicts that children contact and understand. It is found that the parents' work and survival pressure and their attitude toward and belief in games affects their recognition of, importance attached to and participation in children's games and their expectation and support for these games, and such kind of parents' understanding can be explained to some extent by the culture that they belong to. For instance, the parents in South Korea upholding the spirit of the Korean culture seldom participate in children's games, because the Korean culture underscores children's academic goals. On the contrary, American parents pay more attention to the significance of the children's games and to their own guidance and intervention in children's games. When parents adhere in the culturally-recognized gender stereotype, they often provide girls with dolls, kitchen toys and other game materials that conform to traditional women's roles, but provide boys with toys such as trucks, building blocks, etc.; fathers spend more time playing games with their sons, especially the drastic action games, while mothers more often play quiet games with their daughters. When the family culture is in conflict with the kindergarten culture or other social media in terms of preschool children's cultural identity, the cultural conflict can be expressed through the contradictory identity narrative.

It is also pointed out in numerous studies that the differences between the family and kindergarten in concepts of games can bring huge challenges for carrying out kindergarten

The "migrant children" herein refer to those migrating from one country to another and those migrating from one culture to another culture. For instance, with urbanization, a large number of children migrate from the rural area to the urban area with parents.

games. Revealed by the investigation of 34 middle-class couples, mothers attach more importance to the game values than fathers do and both parents play an active role in understanding games. Early childhood education professionals need to further promote the importance of high quality games and emphasize to all parents, especially those at a lower social status, that games and academic achievements should be consistent. Of course, the conflict between family culture and kindergarten culture also reflects the conflict between traditional culture and modern culture and the conflict among cultures of different social classes. For example, the upper society may regard games as the children's right, or pay attention to the happy childhood; the lower class, out of the life pressure, may emphasize the development of means of livelihood and skills and the preschool children's responsibility for the family; not only the responsibility for themselves but also for the housework and for caring younger siblings.

Cultural Changes Bring about the Crisis of the Preschool Children's Cultural Identity

As a subjective positioning of oneself, "identity" is a kind of emotion for the so called "belonging". According to anthropology, the naturally occurring identity emerges only when one encounters with "the other".[25] The so-called "the other" emerges when we differentiate ourselves from those with different cultural customs and different languages, which results in the difference between "you (you)" and "me (us)". Such kind of encountering with "the other" is not only the cultural encountering among different ethnic groups, different countries and different types, that is, the encountering of heterogeneous cultures, but also reflects the individual's cognition and emotion of such cultural differences. Cultural changes actually refer to the encountering of heterogeneous cultures.

At the macro level, cultural changes refer to the cultural environment changes the individual cultural identity faces which are brought about by the overall social cultural changes following the changes of the society, the history and the times, namely the frequently mentioned "social cultural transformation", such as the transformation of the traditional culture into the modern culture and then the post-modern culture, the quick and convenient penetration of the distant events through the handset electronics into people's daily life, the possible replacement of reading books by video games culture, and the replacement of the relatively closed, stable and unitary culture by the open, changeable and diverse one. In the micro level, cultural changes refer to the cultural changes that directly influence the individual cultural identity, that is, the changes of the cultural environment that the individual is immersed in, such as the change of the rural culture into the urban

culture for the urban mobile children, the "other" culture the rural left-behind children faces that is brought home by their parents; the change of one culture, that is the diverse family culture, into another culture, that is, the standardized kindergarten culture after the children are enrolled to the kindergarten.

Studies reveal that the social cultural transformation may bring about the crisis of the individual's cultural identity. In the traditional social culture, the social role of the child, as a member of a family or group, and the norms and customs that the child should follow seem to be unchanged, and the conservative and closed traditional culture corresponds to the fixation and stability of the children's cultural identity. In the modern social culture, the culture undergoes rapid changes and the cultural diversity and complexity is enhanced, which makes the individual subject to many different or even contradictory roles and fall into the confusion and probably crisis of the cultural identity.

In fact, the crisis of preschool children's cultural identity not only stems from the social culture changes but also their micro-cultural environment changes, for example, the change from one culture to another may also bring about the difficulties of the individual's cultural identity. Slaughter & Dombrowski point out that when the migrant children enter a new culture, the cultural continuity or interruption will affect their sociability and pretend play. In the face of new cultural elements or cultural environment, especially when obvious differences exist between the previous cultural environment and later cultural environment in some important cultural norms, behavior habits, daily process and other aspects, preschool children will likely fall into the plight of cultural identity. When the migrant children come to the city with their parents, they may not be able to understand the differences in cultural requirements. For instance, it is impolite to look straight at others and respectful to keep the head lower while others are speaking in one culture; however, in another culture, it is polite to look attentively at the other's eyes. The failure to understand this difference may result in their cultural maladaptation. This kind of maladaptation is often ignored or misunderstood by teachers, and children of this kind are often labeled as "special children", "rude" or "impolite".

In other words, when children come into the "foreign culture" from the "original" culture, they definitely face the issue of cultural adaptation, which may lead to two outcomes: the children deny the original cultural identity and then construct a new cultural identity or they fall into the plight of cultural identity and doubt the original culture. For example, if a preschool child whose mother tongue is Cantonese enters a kindergarten that emphasizes Mandarin as the standard language, his or her first reaction

at hearing his mother tongue back at home would be that "it (Cantonese) is a kind of Baby's language", showing his repulsion of the original culture.

Cultural Hegemony Brings about the Preschool Children's Hesitation about the Cultural Identity

The concept of hegemony refers to the process that the ruling group of the society unites to form a camp for unified movement and maintains their leadership of the ruled. One of the most important factors implied by this concept is that the power camp does not rely on coersion politics but on the principle of winning the consent before sending the password, which is achieved by forming an ideological protective umbrella. When the fringe culture and hegemonic culture meet, for example, when the white-centered culture and other cultures meet, does the white-centered culture have the final authority to judge whether the past, present and future experience of the African Americans, American Indians and other people is "legitimate"? Likewise, does the adults' culture, urban culture or the middle class culture have the power to judge whether the children's culture, rural culture or other class culture is "legitimate"?

The cultural hegemony in preschool education is reflected in the attitude of the dominant culture toward other cultures: such as the urban culture or standard culture ignoring the diversity of the migrant children's original culture; the family culture giving way to the kindergarten culture because of the superiority of the latter over the former; the adults' culture superior to children's culture and thus ignoring it, or the children's culture needing to be transformed by the adults' culture. The western world interprets "children" as the weak who are passive and should follow the adults' guidance, which has become the "globalized" and "standardized" interpretation. In recent years, with the study of the relationship between the subjectivity and identity, the children's culture and children's subjectivity in the formation of cultural identity have drawn great attention.

Chinese Migrant Children's Education Development Report (2016), the first blue paper in mainland China on migrant children, has been issued in recent days. The report reveals that the actual need of migrant children for the pre-school education is easily overlooked in urban development, and as a result, that "children can go to the kindergarten" and that "they can go to a good one" have received widespread attention. The previous studies on the migrant children's education focus on these issues. The social identity and cultural identity of migrant children have not drawn enough attention, and migrant children and their family culture are often regarded as "vulnerable groups" that need to be transformed. For example, the study suggests that migrant children do better than urban children in language preparation and various corresponding items

except in the awareness of Chinese character structure. It is a mainstream quality evaluation thinking mode. Then what kind of cultural information is conveyed through similar assessment and thinking mode and how does it influence preschool children's cultural identity? What if we evaluate the urban children by the field that the migrant children (it can also be other "vulnerable" children, like the rural children) are good at? When Lu Xun, spending his childhood in the city, returned to the countryside, he would probably suffer a big failure if he is compared with Runtu growing up in the rural area in terms of the rural life skills. Such similar thinking mode has become the teachers unconsciousness underlying their daily behaviors and ideology, characteristic with the "hegemony" of the dominant culture. The direct impact of the cultural hegemony on children's "cultural self" is that preschool children may be less confident or suspicious of their own culture and cultural origins, giving rise to their confusion and hesitation about cultural identity.

In conclusion young children construct their cultural identity in the system of culture. The interactions between the adult's and the young generation's culture, urban and rural culture, the teacher's and the parent's culture, directly or indirectly affect young children's cultural identity. While these interactions between different cultures don't follow cultural ethic, namely, the former suppress the later, young children maybe can't form cultural confidence and consistent cultural identity.

To Construct the Cultural Ecology of the Preschool Children's Cultural Identity

How do we seek common ground while preserving differences and how do we pursue harmonious development among different cultures so as to form a harmonious and ecological cultural environment directly impacting the preschool children which can construct a firm cultural identity?

To Emphasize the Initiative of the Preschool Children's Cultural Identity

According to the traditional concept, children are vulnerable, let alone able to construct the culture or influence the social culture in their unique way. However, in recent years, scholars have pointed out that the preschool children have their own unique culture and this culture affects human culture in some ways. For example, they play games in the way of cultural reflection.[32] Sutton Smith criticized that in has become a trend that the game is simply understood as a function of other more important cultural processes and that the trend underestimates the autonomy of the game culture. The underestimation makes it difficult for us to understand the main functions of the game: i.e to enjoy the game. For the game players, the most important and typical identity is the role of playing the game. Players

are willing to participate in social games because the game makes them part of the common social dream.[32]

The game is not only to help the preschool children form order and role consciousness, learn to obey the social order, but also provides them with an opportunity to break the inequality of social class and order and to express their views on the hierarchy and inequality. Therefore, the game is not only a reflection of social reality but may also create some kind of chaos so that a new understanding and new world can be achieved.[33] The children also form the peer culture while playing the game which is different from the culture of the adults. It can thus be said that the children's culture embodies the freedom and ease, and waits for being excavated and studied. Children approach those with the same culture and distinguish themselves from "others" with cultural differences, during which, their cultural identity is affected by the environment and also manifests a certain degree of initiative.

Ridgway et al.[17-19] (2015) pointed out that any child lives and experiences a daily life in a specific social and cultural context. If the imaginary situation is provided for the children's culture, then children can display their positive experience through the game and imagination, although this pretend and play vary greatly. Both academic research and educational guidance require us to shift from adults' perspective to children's perspective (i.e, switch our attention from the hegemony of the adult culture to the meaning of children's culture). The latter may involve: how children understand everyday ideas and convert them into new knowledge; that children have their own initiative and daily work flow; to understand children's communication, participation and attribution in the game; to understand how children construct the identity of the cultural context in the game; to respect the children's freedom to choose what to play and whoever to play with.[34] Conversely, if children's game opportunities are subject to the adults' themes and ideas, then their ability to develop the identity based on their own experience, interest and motivation is restricted; if the early-stage educational environment limits the children's pursuit of the personal interests, memory and experience, it will also potentially limit the possibility for children to form a firm identity.[35]

To be Rooted in the Preschool Children's Individualized Family Culture

The localized resource is the breakthrough of the study of children's socialization.[36] The local cultural resources which are often paid attention to are national cultural resources, such as the national customs, clothing, food, festivals and so on. In fact, the family is the direct undertaker of the localized resources. Family education is a process of cultural inheritance, and family culture directly affects how children get to know the cultural "self" and what kind of

cultural "self" they will display. It provides children with the historical background knowledge about the society they live in, as well as specific acts, habits, traditions and mother tongue.[37]

When the example or authoritative image of the children's "cultural self" that they can imitate is created by the family, kindergarten, society and mass media together, strengthening the mutual cooperation is increasingly becoming the active choice of the kindergarten and family to tackle the education problem together. Cultural bias is a learnt stereotype and people often excessively mistaken that all members of a culture or country will act or think in the same way. The result is that when encountering others with different cultural backgrounds, people often judge them with the presupposed bias and ignore their individual thoughts and behaviors. Schmidt (1998) put forward the "cultural understanding and communication model". This model, based on Vygotsky's social and cultural views and multicultural educational views, holds that teachers, members of the dominant groups, must have an in-depth understanding of the background and culture of the students from vulnerable families, so as to effectively provide the cultural response or culture-related teaching and bridge different cultural systems. The following three steps of A, B and C can be taken to improve the understanding of one's own culture, the other's culture and cultural differences. (1) A---Autobiography: carefully review and reconstruct one's own experience in the family, school, religion, habit, etc. in the past by writing an autobiography to avoid taking everything for granted and make oneself a person able to accept new things. (2) B---Biography: talk to people of different cultures through the interview, Network real time communication, e-mails and other ways or write the biography for them to deeply understand their culture and values. (3) C---Cross-cultural analysis: comparatively analyze the differences between oneself and others of different cultures, then analyze one's own views on the differences, and develop strategies to promote the respect and appreciation for other cultures.

The courses and day management in the kindergarten should promote family participation, respect the diversity of the family culture, help the children understand the cultural differences, cultivate their cultural awareness, and strengthen their cultural confidence.

To Establish the Playing Spirit in the Kindergarten Curriculum

Seen from the social and historical perspective, the game has long been regarded as an important way for children to participate in social life and the way that promotes children's socialization. Plato argued that the game can get children ready for the future participation in social life. Since then, scholars have expanded the utilitarian purpose

of the game, emphasizing the role of the game in conveying the social cultural ideology and recognizing the possibility to challenge or maintain social norms through the game. For example, Rousseau held that children should play the natural game to get rid of the bad influence of society. Dewey pointed out that the school is a small society, and the game is an important form for children to participate in social activities. Take the Kepuli Village in Libya, Africa as an example: the game there is always the center of the children's daily life and socialization. Through role playing activities, such as the hunting and fighting, hide and seek, stones throwing and other games for boys, children can practice the adults' role and acquire the role norms and understand social customs and power relations and so on.

Broadly speaking, culture and game constitute several kinds of relations, such as the inclusion, crossing and interaction. According to Huizinga, the author of Human: The Gamers, the game, the beginning of culture, promotes the emergence of culture; seen from another perspective, the game itself is a culture and a sub item of the concept of culture. Therefore, the understanding of the relationship between children's games and children's culture identity can start from the two understandings of the game.

One understanding is that the game itself is a culture. First of all, the material, theme, situation, plot and other aspects of the game carry the "collective memory" of some era, some group or some culture. Mr. Lu Xun's "Village Opera" is the childhood game that only belongs to people at that age in that era, "guerrilla warfare" with the bamboo hat on the head is the game that children were fond of when the film Railway Guerrilla was well received, "catching" fish by building a dam is the popular game among children at the south of the Yangtze River when the TV programs had not become a fashion and electronic games had not emerged. While recalling the childhood games, not only the specific games but also the intrinsic feelings, characters, and situations etc. appear. Memory is selective. The selection of certain memories has much to do with the thinking mode and value norms specified by the culture. In this sense, scholars pointed out that the game is a kind of ideology restricting the behavior and identity and reflecting the way of thinking. Secondly, like the existing music, art and literature of various kinds, the game culture also exists in various kinds in the society. The game itself is culturally independent.

Another understanding is that the game embodies the cultural orientation. Although some of the elements of the game, such as the sociality and imagination of the game, are similar in different cultures, expressive or entertaining games, especially the subject, number and type of the game, may reflect a specific culture.

Based on the above understanding, the game is the basic activity of children's construction of cultural identity. For example, folk traditional games, as a living history, are handed down from generation to generation. These games bear the childhood memory of generations and reflect the childhood of a nation and the concept of childhood. They are a changing and living history related to childhood, and the embodiment of folk culture on the theme of children's culture. Therefore, the games, especially the traditional games, constitute the context and basic activities of children's national cultural identity.

Further, the game experience affects the children's cultural identity. The quality and content of the game experience reflects and shapes children's corresponding cultural identity. For example, the gender difference shown by children in game materials, theme, plot and other aspects shows their extent of acceptance of some cultures with gender difference and the equal and inclusive game experience will help foster their recognition of a just and reasonable social culture. Vivian Paley, who was once a kindergarten teacher, described in the book You Shouldn't Say "You Can't Play" published in 1993 that she realized that her class was flooded with the culture of exclusion. That is, during the playtime, some children did not allow others to play. She then made a class rule "you shouldn't say 'you can't play'", which lead to children's discussion: is this rule fair? Paley pointed out that "some children exclude some others just out of the habit rather than mainly because of the identity of the excluded". In fact, the excluded are not different from others. The reason for making them outsiders is just that they are treated as outsiders. In the book Boys at the Beach: Building Communities through Games published in 2010, Paley concluded that: it is important for all children to find their specific roles in the game script in order to create an inclusive culture in the class. [40]

In short, with the game as the basic activities in the kindergarten and curriculum as an important way to affect the preschool children's cultural identity, the game curriculum should become the basic form of kindergarten curriculum and the kindergarten curriculum construction should strengthen the education reform guided by the game spirit.

The previous studies focus on the role of games in the formation and maintenance of children's cultural identity, the cross-cultural children's cultural identity, gender role play and cultural identity, the understanding of children's role games and cultural identity by the early childhood educators, the relationship between game style and cultural identity, and so on. It is indicated that in these studies that the game provides preschool children with the rudiments of citizen participation and that the racial/cultural identity reflected in the game can predict the preschool children's social understanding, etc. This study only focuses on the cultural mechanism of preschool children's cultural identity and is only the start of the study on preschool children's

cultural identity, since there are still numerous issues waiting for further study, such as, whether cultural identity should be used as an indicator of the preschool education quality, how we deal with the relationship between the construction of preschool children's cultural identity and cultural conflict, and how we cultivate modern Chinese with cultural confidence and international vision in early childhood.

Acknowledgment

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