

# Reflection and Improvement: Gender Culture of Chinese Textbooks in Elementary School

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**ABSTRACT.** *Individuals and the public's perception of gender is affected by many factors, of which education is a very important factor. Through specific characters and deeds, education conveys certain gender concepts to students to shape certain gender cognition. At the same time, educational practice is also historical, national and regional, which also determines that the characters in the textbook also have these characteristics.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Gender cognition, Chinese textbooks, Elementary school*

## 1. Introduction

Chinese textbooks are official texts used by students in elementary education. The image of characters and the ideological value in the textbooks play an important role in the growth of students, such as socialization and individualization. For elementary school students, their gender cognition has gradually developed along with their continuous education process. In order to find out the relationship between gender cognition and education, the author takes the elementary school Chinese textbooks from volume 1 to volume 12 as the research materials, focused on the figure illustrations in the teaching material, the text content of the text, etc. , to study the gender frequency, gender role and characteristics of the characters in the two living environments of the family life and society life, finally summarize the gender connotation of the characters in the teaching materials. The research and analysis situation is introduced as follows.

## 2. Overall Situation

### 2.1 Sample Situation and Research Methods

Statistical result shows that there are a total of 454 texts in the 12 textbooks, including 93 optional texts; and there are 654 character illustrations simultaneously.

During the statistical process, the figures of characters, such as cartoon pictures inlaid on the cover, back cover, title page of the textbooks of lower grades, animal illustrations and landscape illustrations would not be counted; multiple pictures of the same character in the same text are counted only once. The gender definition method in the character illustration is mainly carried out from two aspects: the analysis conclusion of the text content and the character's clothing (hair accessories, clothing), and the obscure images in the illustration or the pictures that cannot be defined by the above two methods are not counted. The gender definition of the characters involved in the text starts with the specific gender definition words in the text content. If there is no clear description, it is defined from the text matching pictures. Neither descriptions in texts nor matching pictures occur, no statistics will be made.

## ***2.2 Gender Profile of Character Illustrations***

For the 654 illustrations, male characters appeared 1033 times, and female characters appeared 687 times comparatively. There are 70 illustrations of family life. Male characters such as father and grandfather appeared 36 times and 11 times respectively; female characters such as mother and grandmother appeared 38 times and 11 times respectively; little boys and little girls appeared 44 times and 35 times respectively. In addition, there are 17 illustrations involving teachers, of which male teachers appear 7 times and female teachers 10 times. There are 8 illustrations involving doctors and nurses, and all doctors are male. The characters without certain gender definition words in the text appear just as male in the accompanying pictures.

## ***2.3 Analysis of Gender Characteristics***

### ***2.3.1 Gender Characteristics for Male***

According to the analysis of the text content, the male are more rational and knowledgeable, often defined as enterprising men, who have the qualities of wisdom, perseverance, and courage,

### ***2.3.2 Gender Characteristics for Female***

According to the analysis of the text content, the female often shows love, tolerance, considerate, and showing concern for vulnerable groups.

### ***2.3.3 Gender Characteristics for Both Male and Female***

At the same time, both male and female have good qualities of patriotism, integrity, kindness, teaching children, caring children and filial piety.

### **3. Analysis Conclusion**

It can be concluded from the above analysis of character illustrations and text content, the role status and character image of the male and female in family and social life are completely different.

#### ***3.1 Gender Characteristics in Family Life***

##### ***3.1.1 Male Image -- a Stern, Intelligent and Responsible Man***

The male in the family have been defined as strict, profound quality. In the textbooks, most incidents involving fathers and children or educating children occurred outside of family life. Fathers often take their children out of family life, go out to explore nature, or interact with people. Certain events can reflect the father's integrity, responsibility, knowledge, strictness and other qualities.

##### ***3.1.2 Female Image -- a Fraternity, Delicate and Almighty Women***

Female in the family mostly defined as fraternity and kindness. Compared with family men, women are more often described as having poor physique and need to be taken care of, and grandmothers are more often described or defined as recuperating at home or passing away in the picture. In the family life, mothers play the role of bond, and have been given more heavier family tasks. From the character illustrations and the analysis of the text content, we could draw the conclusions that the mothers not only have to go to work, but also do housework, such as go shopping, wash clothes, and take care of the elderly. They also have to shoulder the important task of educating their children.

#### ***3.2 Gender Characteristics in Social Life***

##### ***3.2.1 Male Image -- a Wise, Firm and Enterprising Man***

The men in social life are described as mature, wise, and enterprising. Among male characters in the textbook, the born leaders, fictional characters, teachers and soldiers accounted for two-thirds of the texts. Men often appear as models and typical images in texts, which inspire or influence others. The types of occupations involved in multiple fields and stratum, which are various. Currently, the textbooks have been selected some outstanding and famous male scientists to show different good qualities. There are also adult males with disabilities in the textbooks, and whose descriptions are physically disabled but strong-willed.

##### ***3.2.2 Female Image -- a Benevolent, Kind-Hearted and Dependent Women***

There are many descriptions of mothers in the textbooks, but few descriptions of women in social life. From the few descriptions, most of the women have been described as kind. From the character illustrations, statistical analysis shows that the

status of women in family life or social life is important. In addition, women are more engaged in small, simple, quiet activities.

### ***3.3 Gender Characteristics for Kids***

In the description of textbooks for kids' gender characteristics, the boys have been described constantly as wit, justice, and brave, while girls have been described as sensible, considerate, and caring. At the same time, the textbooks also have some texts in which both boys and girls are described as having the characteristics of patriotism, honesty, kindness, and filial piety.

The children in the textbooks are not much different in age from elementary school students, and their gender qualities have a greater impact on elementary school students, and their role models are stronger. There are certain differences in the description of the gender characteristics of boys and girls. Male children show more characteristics such as bravery and justice.

## **4. Some Thoughts**

Gender cognition is more affected by acquired nature. Textbook editors should pay more attention to the neglected hidden gender culture in the textbooks, and construct a comprehensive and developing gender cognition for men and women.

### ***4.1 Striving to Maintain Gender Balance and Create Comprehensive Images of Both Male and Female***

It is necessary to make sure that the characters in textbooks can reflect the characteristics and images of both genders. In this case, the pupils can finally fully understand the gender differences between male and female, and then form a correct gender understanding, and finally show appropriate gender behaviors. Therefore, in the selection of texts and figures, we should pay attention to the proportion of female characters in the textbooks, and the gender characteristics of male and female characters should be more objective and comprehensive. In addition, the professional role of the character's gender should be consistent with the social reality, avoiding the artificial gender bias.

### ***4.2 Respecting the Gender Differences between Male and Female, and Shaping the Developing Relationship between Men and Women***

There are mainly physiological and psychological differences between male and female. And gender culture is the key to determine gender differences. Therefore, gender and culture are the obvious characteristics. In the selection of characters in textbooks and the gender characteristics attached to them, attention should be paid to cultural vicissitude and cultural differences so as to avoid gender cultural cognitive conflicts.

#### ***4.3 Enriching the Characters of Male and Female, and Showing the Original Nature Connotation of Gender Characters***

The characters which have been selected in the textbook should impart certain values and influence children to shape specific qualities. Therefore, the characters have roles and are valuable. Education is an activity of cultivating people, which needs the quality guidance of classic images, but also needs the influence of original characters. The selected characters should provide a typical role for the majority of children to in the surrounding, and shape a continuous, complete male or female role, so that the role model has more practical significance.

#### **5. Conclusion**

In a word, Chinese teaching materials are highly ideological and infectious, which is an important channel for students to understand the social characteristics of men and women. Especially in primary school, the gender culture they accept in this period will have a profound impact on their life. Therefore, schools and relevant departments should combine the reality and the situation of students, and continuously enhance their gender education from the primary school stage.

#### **References**

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