

CHAPTER TWO



THEORIES OF GENDER

Traditional Gender Characteristics

- **Submissive-passive**
- **Dependent**
- **Emotional**
- **Receptive**
- **Intuitive-**
- **Timid(lacking confidence)**
- **Passive**
- **Sensitive**

- **Dominant**
- **Independent**
- **Rational**
- **Assertive**
- **Analytical**
- **Brave**
- **Active**
- **Insensitive**

THEORIES OF GENDER



- Theories of gender focus on four different levels of explanation to show behavior of women and men.
- GROUP-LEVEL FACTORS:
 - Group level process include biological & cultural evolution.
 - The level considers as we are a member of a group (either biological groups or a cultural group or ethnic group, religious group).



❑ PAST BIOLOGICAL & SOCIO-ENV'TAL FACTORS:

- This level attempts to explain your gender-related behavior in terms of the past events that **affect you.**
- **Past influence of biological factors** (the genes you were born, parental hormones) and



- **Past societal-environmental factors** (parental rearing or the way your parents treated you when you were young, peer influences, media influences etc) may influence your current behavior as a man or woman.



❑ CURRENT BIOLOGICAL & SOCIAL-ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:

- This focus on current events that influence your gender-related behavior.
- ✓ **Current Biological factors** - for example, the way your brain cells are organized right now, your current level of testosterone(a male hormone)



- and oestrogen (a female hormone), and the setting you are now in may affect your current gender related behavior.
- ✓ **Current social-env'tal factors:** as an individual, a person you are with (girl friend or boy friend) can influence your behavior here-and-now, not in the past.



❑ TRAITS RESIDING WITHIN THE INDIVIDUAL:

- **This analysis your behavior in terms of your traits, intelligence, cognitive abilities and dispositions- factors that reside within you.**

BIOLOGICAL THEORY



- **Biological theories of gender argued that, there are some **innate** differences between male and female, and that we may- to some extent be born masculine or feminine.**
- **The biological basis of sex differences is obvious for physical traits.**



WOMEN

- **Produce ova**
- **Give birth & lactate (produce milk)**
- **Their body produce more estrogen(female hormone)**
- **Have bigger hip & breast more body fat**
- **Women typically have less body hair than men do**

MEN

- **Produce sperm**
- **Do not**
- **Men's body produce more androgen(male hormone)**
- **Men have broader shoulder & more muscle mass than women do**



- **Therefore, these difference mold their behavior.**

EVOLUTIONARY THEORY



- **This theory use Darwin's theory of evolution as an organizing framework.**
- **The basic assumptions of Darwin's (1859) original theory of evolution are simple:**
 - **The traits of all living things show variation**



- **Traits can be passed from generation to generation (principle of inheritance or heredity).**
- **Natural selection is the “**Filter**” that determines which traits are passed from generation and to generation.**

The principle of natural selection Darwin’s theory proposes that: it is the organism’s env’t that selects which traits are passed from generation to generation.



- According to Edward O. Wilson (1975, 1978), Hominid women were responsible for **bearing**, **nursing**, & **caring for children**, they evolved to be more nurturing.
- And because men were responsible for hunting and fighting, they evolved more aggressiveness & better visual-spatial ability.



- **Generally, evolutionary theory , describes how traits are selected based on their adaptiveness in particular environments.**
- **Evolutionary theory of gender proposes that, because of difference between male and female reproduction, men and women evolved to have somewhat different reproductive strategies and physical & behavioral traits.**

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY



- **Biological theories entertain the possibility that some differences between men and women may be *innate*. In contrast, social learning theories argue that the differences are *learned*.**
- **According to the theorists such as Albert Bandura & Walter Mischel (1999, 1966), the differing behaviors of women and men can best be explained in terms of well-understood principle of learning such as:**



- **Classical conditioning**
- **Operant conditioning**
- **Modeling**

❑ **Classical conditioning:**

According to Walter Michael (1966), classical conditioning helps explain why “labels like ‘sissy’ ‘pansy’ ‘tough’ or ‘sweet’ acquire d/t values for the two sexes.



- **The word sissy is usually used to ridicule a boy, and because it is associated with events that trigger shame & disgust, it becomes a very unpleasant label for most boys.**
- **A boy will not want to loathing in him. Boys often are unwilling to engage in “girlish” activities such as playing with dolls, playing house & “dress up”.**



- **According to Michael, this may be because boys are conditioned to have horrible feeling about some such activities.**

□ **Operant conditioning:**

This kind of conditioning occurs when voluntarily (consciously controlled & chosen) behaviors are molded by rewards and punishment.



- **Social learning theorists argue that boys and girls are systematically rewarded and punished for different kinds of behaviors throughout their lives.**



❑ Modeling:

Finally, children learn to behave as boys or girls by observing & imitating the behaviors of others. Children learn to be male or female by imitating same-sex parents , siblings, friends, and media figures.

COGNITIVE THEORIES OF GENDER



- **Social learning theories portray the learning of gender as a rather passive process.**
- **Girls & boys behave as conditioning, rewards and social models dictate.**

For human being, however, gender is “In the mind” as well as in the environment.



- According cognitive theory of gender, becoming male or female is not just a matter of genes , hormones, and social conditioning. It also depends on how **we view ourselves**.
- **For example:** Children identify their sex by age 2 and 3 & they understand that people come into two varieties , male and female. At the same time, children understand the difference b/n male and female.



- **Therefore** , they categorize themselves as male or female.
- **Social learning** theory argues for a different sequence: “**I want rewards, I’m rewarded for doing boy things, therefore I want to be a boy**” But it is not rewards that make the boy masculine, according to cognitive theory.



- Rather it is identifying oneself as male that make masculine activities rewarding.
- **Cognitive theory** assumes this sequence : ‘I’m a boy, therefore I want to do boy things, therefore the opportunity to do boy things...is rewarding.’

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL THEORIES OF GENDER



- According to this theory, the current setting is a major cause of our behavior.
- **Gender stereotypes & beliefs** also have an important role in many social psychological theories of gender.
- Stereotype is “pictures” that we carry around in our heads about social groups.



- **And it is probabilistic beliefs that we hold about groups of people.**
- **It is oversimplification of reality and it may cause us to overestimate the differences between groups and to underestimate the variability within groups.**
- **Stereotypes may distort our perception.**



- People hold strong stereotypes about the **personality traits & roles** possessed by men women.
- In most cultures , women & men occupy quite d/t roles.
- For exa: women are more responsible for child rearing, foraging and domestic duties.
- Men are more responsible for hunting, fishing, and in modern society , producing income.



- These role therefore, determine and people's stereotypes about women and men .
- Generally, **social psychological theories of gender** emphasize the power of the social setting to create sex differences and **focus on gender stereotypes , their cause and consequence.**

FUNCTIONALISM



- **Functionalism is the view that society consist of institutions that serve vital purposes for people.**
- **Functionalist perspective sees society as a complex system whose parts work together to promote solidarity & stability.**
- **Functionalism addresses society as a whole in terms of the function of its constituent elements namely: norm, customs, traditions, and institutions**



- **According to Herbert Spenser, these parts of society as “organs” that work toward the proper functioning of the “body” as whole.**
- **Functionalist perspective of gender inequality was articulated in the 1940s and 1950s and largely developed by Talcot Parsons.**



- **This theory suggests that gender inequalities exist as an efficient way to create a division of labor.**
- **The division of labor(women take care of the home while men provide family) to maximize resources and efficiency. Therefore, according structural functionalist perspective, gender like other social institutions, contributes to the maintain social order by providing & ensuring the stability of society as a whole.**

CONFLICT THEORY



- **Social conflict is the struggle between two parties for valued resource, power & status.**
- **Conflict theories draw attention to power differences , such as gender, class & race conflict, and contrast historically dominant ideologies.**





- **It is therefore, a macro level analysis of society that sees society as an arena of inequality that generates conflict and social change.**
- **Conflict theory look at how “social patterns” can cause some people in society to be dominant, and others to be oppressed.**



- **Conflict theory of gender argued that, gender is best understood as men attempting to maintain power & privilege to the detriment of women.**
- **Conflict b/n the two groups caused things like the women's suffrage mov't & was responsible for social change.**
- **Thus, men become dominant group and women become subordinate group.**

SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM



- Symbolic interaction , also known as **interactionism**.
- This theory emphasis on micro-scale social interaction to provide subjective meaning in human behavior, the social process and pragmatism.
- Theory sees society as the product of the every day intervention of individuals.



- **People interact in countless settings using symbolic communications.**
- **According to gender interactionists, gender stratification exists because people act toward each other on the basis of the meanings they have for each other, & that meanings are derived from social interaction.**



- **Therefore, masculinity & femininity characteristics & practices are socially constructed, reproduced, reinforced through daily interaction. Thus, gender is the result of human interaction.**

FEMINISM AND ITS BRANCHES



- **FEMINISM:**
- **Is a collection of movements aimed at defining, establishing, and defending equal political, economic, and social rights for women.**
- **The theory focuses on how gender inequality shapes social life.**



- **This approach shows how sexuality both reflects patterns of social inequality and helps to perpetuate them.**
- **Feminism, from a social conflict perspective, focuses on gender inequality and links sexuality to the domination of women by men.**