
BLOCK II

APPROACHES TO PSYCHOLOGY OF GENDER



UNIT 5 EVOLUTIONARY; BIOLOGICAL; AND PSYCHOBIOLOGICAL APPROACHES TO GENDER DEVELOPMENT*

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After having read this Unit, you will be able to:

- Learn about the field of psychology of gender from a historical perspective and its status in India;
- Explain the importance of multiple approaches in examining the psychology of gender; and
- Appreciate the nuanced approaches of the Evolutionary, Biological and Psychobiological approach and related concepts in the study of psychology of gender.

5.0 INTRODUCTION

After gaining the foundational understanding of concepts such as gender, sex, gender identity, sexuality, gender prejudice, gender

Food for Thought!!

What makes a woman a woman and what makes a man a man?

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discrimination, and other relevant terms in the previous units, we now turn our attention to developing insights into the approaches to psychology of gender. They can be referred to perspectives or theories that help us understand the differences that we observe in different genders with the help of important psychological theories. Approaches or theories are useful to explain the variations we witness within and between human behaviour and in this context, gender.

It is important to note the distinction between a theory and a law. Theories are propositions that may or may not be backed by empirical evidence. In natural sciences like Physics or Chemistry, there are laws that explain a phenomenon, like gravity, in ways that remain constant and predictable (for instance, Newton's Laws of Motion, Boyle's Law of Thermodynamics). Whereas in social sciences that involve humans, theories are more appropriate because of the dynamism of human behaviour. This results largely from the interactive nature of human behaviour both with various social elements like community, nation, war, poverty, discrimination, crimes, gender, caste, class, etc. Therefore, a critical mind is required to navigate the role of theories in explaining and predicting human behaviour. In other words, we need to understand that not every theory is true (across different situations) and not all theories can neatly describe every behaviour. More often than not, theories are backed up with empirical evidence that does explain and describe human behaviour, yet not always.

Over the years, there has been a growing interest in the areas of gender, sex and sexualities that expanded psychologists' understanding of human behaviour, especially when it came to explaining gender inequities and inequalities. One can think, would a woman and man respond differently to loss of job or would there be a variation in the attitudes of men and women towards gender-based violence? If your answer is yes to both the questions, then you are urged to read on.

Box 5.1 Activity 1
Try this out!!

- Pick one day and start noting down the activities that you carry out in the entire day. Can you identify any tasks that you think you did because of your sex?
- Swap your daily tasks with a member of the opposite sex in your family or workplace (if possible). Observe and record how you and others around you felt about it.
- Walk into automobile showroom (cars or motorbikes) with the member of the opposite sex accompanying you. Observe the ways in which the salesperson behaves with you and the person with you. Did you notice any differences?

5.1 HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF 'PSYCHOLOGY OF GENDER'

Prior to learning about the perspectives, it is important to understand how the field of psychology of gender came to have a bearing on the discipline itself. History of psychology of gender as a field within the discipline of Psychology, can be subdivided into three distinct phases. In the first phase, critics of the discipline of psychology began to question the 'androcentric bias' or male-centered nature of the discipline of psychology that sparked the intellectual curiosity of psychologists, especially women, in the later phases. The researchers in this discipline were largely men, the research participants were men i.e. male psychologists studied men and produced knowledge that was inferred from men (white, middle

** Please note that the psychological perspectives are discussed in binary terms that is women and men, and female and male. The multiplicity of gender identities and sexualities have not been discussed here.*

class, heterosexual) and applied to the larger population including women. However, the results from very few studies on women were limited to women only due to the assumptions that women and their concerns were less important

Food for Thought!!

Can you think of common idioms/ phrases used to describe men and women in our society? For example, 'mard ko dard nahi hota' (men do not feel any pain); 'ladkighar ki izzat hotihai' (the honor of the family lies with the girl).

(Unger & Crawford, 1992). Establishment of this imposed male normative resulted in the flawed assumptions about women and resulted in a male bias that looked down upon women as inferior. The traits, and behaviors of men became the gold standard against which women's behaviour were seen and measured. In this process, women were marginalized in the professional spaces as well as omitted as research participants as the feminine traits carried a negative connotation. For example, men who easily cry are ridiculed as being effeminate (womanly), which is used in a derisive tone, something that is undesirable in a man.

Works of psychologists like Sigmund Freud, G. Stanley Hall, Edwin G. Boring, focussed on the male experiences largely and even went to the extent of applying the same perspectives on to women. For example, Sigmund Freud, in his famous Psychoanalytic theory, wrote about Oedipus complex from a male perspective yet applied a similar framework to women. Hall (1904) believed that women cannot be held to the same standards of men in terms of morality and intellectual work and it would be harmful to women to do so! Boring (1951) was of the view that women were unsuitable for powerful jobs and they were biologically lacking the skills to succeed. In fact, Caplan and Caplan (2009) reported the work of researchers in experimental psychology who went to the extent of proving the difference in the brain sizes between men and women as the reason behind women's inferior intellectual capacity. This was later disproved. In no way, the androcentric bias was removed from the discipline and it continued in a different forms.

Since the late 1800s, women struggled to enter those hallowed halls of academia, and were routinely subjected to rejection and/or discrimination, on the basis of their sex, marital status and motherhood. Despite the barriers, in 1894, Margaret Floy Washburn in the United States of America became the first woman to earn a doctorate degree in Psychology. In the early 1900s, concerted efforts were made by women psychologists like Helen Thompson Woolley and Leta Stetter Hollingworth

who conducted research studies to negate the assumptions related to female inferiority due to their biology (for example, a view that women's menstrual cycle made them too emotional unstable and

Food for Thought!!

In what ways do women's marital status and motherhood impact their professional lives? Do you think it still happens in contemporary times?

unfit for leadership positions). Neo-Freudians like Karen Horney (pronounced 'horn-eye') and Clara Thompson emphasized on the role of cultural, social and environmental factors in women's psychological development and less reliance on the biology. Another prominent feature of this phase is the nature of barriers that women psychologists faced despite earning their academic qualifications. They were routinely employed as teachers and not encouraged to conduct research. Women psychologists whose husbands were in the same discipline as academicians were discouraged to work in the same institutions, citing reasons of nepotism. Psychologist Sandra Lipsitz Bem, founder of the famous Gender Schema Theory (to be discussed in Unit 7), was only hired at Stanford University because the university wanted to hire her husband, also a psychologist. He was

offered tenure (like a permanent position) but she was denied because her work in the area of gender was not considered as mainstream psychology. The male centric position of and within the discipline began to change, albeit slowly with gender gaining a foothold within Psychology.

In the second phase, which Yoder (2003) labels as 'compensatory phase' that began in the late 1960s and early 70s, women were acknowledged as 'psychologists' and also as subjects of scientific psychological inquiries. That turned on a spotlight on issues concerned with women and the focus of the discipline began to steer towards gender. The second-wave feminist movement in the USA during the period brought into sharp focus the social, political and economic inequities between women and men. Social scientists began to explore the root causes for such inequities that gave scope for Psychology to bring women's issues into its fold. Though not viewed as mainstream, the Association for Women in Psychology was established in 1969, followed by the American Psychological Association of Division 35, Division of the Psychology of Women in 1973. Several academic works emerged during the second phase like the journals *Quarterly* and *Sex Roles*, in the mid-1970s, followed by the journal *Women and Therapy* in 1982. Many colleges started offering courses in the psychology of women or gender and further strengthened the women's cause in the discipline (Etaugh & Bridges 2013). Psychology came under the lens with an intense focus on the stereotypical thinking and sex bias within the discipline, which have been summarized by Kahn and Jean (1983):

"There was widespread agreement about psychology's fault: that women were infrequently studied; that theories were constructed from a male-as-normative viewpoint and that women's behaviour was explained as deviation from the male standard; that the stereotype of women was considered an accurate portrayal of women's behaviour; that women who fulfilled the dictates of the gender stereotypes were viewed as healthy and happy; that differences in the behaviours of women and men were attributed to differences in anatomy and physiology; and that the social context which often shapes behaviour was ignored in the case of women."
[pg. 660]

Psychologists began to examine the long-established theories, concepts, methods and started conducting research with the focus on women, as participants, with their issues and concerns in the forefront. Naomi Weisstein (1968), in one of the sharpest criticisms of the discipline, argued that psychology had no knowledge on women, of women and by women. Furthermore, psychologists like Sigmund Freud, Erik Erikson had propagated and reinforced stereotypical assumptions about women through their theories. Because of such flawed understanding of women and their behaviour, social contexts were ignored and the stereotypical behaviour was wrongly attributed to biology that justified women's subordinate status.

As the field continued to expand, researchers began to examine the explanations for women's lower status, and deficits within a social framework, pushing for a shift away from the biological viewpoint. Sexism in interpersonal relationships was one of the areas that feminist researchers started to focus upon, besides looking at social and cultural factors behind shortage of women in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics). As the social understanding grew, women's issues came to be seen as gender issues. Psychological theorization and research now moved into focusing on gender instead of women, almost as if the word 'women' was a reminder of the lower status that biology accorded to them and excluded the social and cultural factors (Crawford & Marecek, 1989).

Gender came to be conceptualized as a verb (performing one's gender) rather than using it as noun (identifying category). This helped to further understand the social dynamics between men and women in different contexts. In other words, researchers looked at how one 'performs gender' instead of leaving it just as an attribute. The second phase marked by self-reflection to look inwards within the academic community of psychology and outwards to the larger society, set the stage for the transformational phase.

The third phase continued to be crucial as the transformation of the discipline to include research related to women and gender, started taking roots. Women came out of the shadows and claimed their rightful positions in the academic spaces. Psychology of gender was gradually accepted as a legitimate field of study that included challenging earlier assumptions about human behaviour, developing theories, and methodological designs. As a result, fresh insights began to develop about existing paradigms with the application of the newly-found knowledge (Worrell & Etaugh, 1994). By 2012, Etaugh and Worrell, listed several principles that highlighted the role of gender in theorization, research, publications, and every aspect of the scientific process in a systematic fashion. They also emphasized on recognizing gender as an analytical category and the ways in which it structures social interactions. The number of publications on the topic of psychology of gender has grown, and journals are attentive to the quality of the publications. Alice Eagly and her colleagues (Eagly et al., 2012) published an exhaustive piece of work, analysing 50 years of research in psychology of women and gender from the years 1960-2009, a classic for the scholars interested in the topic. They noted a sharp increase in research in the related areas of gender, women and psychology. Articles on gender began to appear in the journals of core areas of psychology such as developmental psychology, personality psychology, social psychology, sport psychology, psychological and physical disorders, industrial and organizational psychology, and military psychology. With the ongoing third wave of feminist movement, intersectionalities have paved the way for recognizing the heterogeneity of women's experiences. In the western context, race and ethnicity are in the forefront, whereas in India, caste, religion, class can be considered as intersecting with gender that produces differential experiences and behaviour. The kind of research that took place over the decades reflected the ecosystem of the times. Eagly et al. (2012) note that in the late 1970s (during second wave feminist movement), many articles on gender stereotypes and attitudes were published and also in the area of work-family attitudes which was coloured by the increased participation of women in the workforce. As the topic gained momentum, it was included in introductory psychology books and later also in developmental psychology texts (Etaugh & Bridges, 2013).

5.1.1 Psychology of Gender – Status in India

Similar to the western countries, in Indian context the trajectory followed the model wherein the social, political and cultural realities of the times was reflected in the nature of work in the field of psychology of gender. The shift in the trend began in the 1970s against the backdrop of women's movements that started with the question of marginalized status of women in the larger discourse of post-independence development in the country. The engagement with issues of violence against women, gender inequities in education, livelihood, health care and political representation resulted in several changes at legal and policy level (Desai, 1988; Gandhi & Shah, 1992; Kumar, 1993). In the 1990s, women's studies as a subject of study, came up which was labelled as the 'academic arm' of women's movements (Desai, 2002). The Indian scholars identified similar issues

of invisibility of women as researchers, study participants, and the complicity of organization in perpetuating gender inequities and inequalities. This provided an impetus to revisit the existing structures to examine the factors that contributed to women's subordination and the ways in which those could be addressed, highlighting on transformative and emancipatory agenda (Sharma, 2003).

Within social sciences, unlike other disciplines (like sociology), the scope of psychological research did not extend to women's issues substantively (Bharat, 2001; Vindhya, Sudhakar, & Rao, 1988), yet there was a growing recognition of the role of psychology in gender and vice-versa (Vindhya, 2007). The Indian Council of Social Science Research called for a survey of research in psychology and focus included gender as well (Bharat, 2001; Pandey, 2001). However, mainstream psychological research on gender lacked the critical perspective that women's studies brought with itself (Vindhya, 2007). The academic interest in the issues of women was overshadowed by the larger nationalistic concerns such as communalism, and casteism, with the attention of the governmental regimes on developing the nation in the years following independence. The 1980s saw a limited number of research studies that were focussed on three major areas – work-family linkages, women's mental health, and violence against women. In the 1990s to early 2000s, the scope widened to include intersecting areas like reproductive and mental health (pregnancy, menopause), developmental psychology and life events (aging, marriage, widowhood), and gender bias (Vindhya, 2007). In the present scenario, with the growing recognition of the impact of gender constructs on psychology is gaining momentum, especially in academia.

5.1.2 The Path from History to Present

The historical account presented earlier, creates a base for contextualizing the psychological theories that helps us understand and explain the differences between genders. Even though psychology as a discipline has emphasized more on individual behaviour, and was slow on adopting gender as an analytical category, the last few decades both globally and locally has seen an increase in research in this area. Tracing the milestones in the development of the field of psychology of gender emphasizes on the need to produce knowledge with the objective of recognizing the sources of gender inequities and inequalities. When combined with intensive research, this knowledge can contribute to building practices and policies to address gender issues in the long term.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What are the differences between a theory and a law?

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- 2) What the salient features of the three phases in the evolution of the field of Psychology of Gender?

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3) What is the status of the field of Psychology of Gender in India?

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5.2 APPROACHES OF PSYCHOLOGY OF GENDER

The entire discourse on the differences between women and men is, to a large extent, stems from the narrative that woman are different from man, and whether those differences result in differential approach to all possible aspects of life. More importantly, if the apparent differences are innate (biological) or socially constructed (socialization)? Some sections of feminists have rejected the school of thought that considers women and men to be different (due to biology) and articulated the demand for gender equality by adopting the sameness stance i.e. women and men are equal and hence whatever rights are afforded to men, the same must be given to women. Diverging from this thought, another section of feminists believes that by denying the innate biological differences and adopting the forced masculine approach to life, is ultimately denying women to live their lives on their own terms and that goes against the very struggle of gender equality. Hence, the focus is to acknowledge the differences whether biological or socially constructed and formulate policies, legislations accordingly, that can lead to gender equity and ultimately gender equality.

Taking this debate forward, contemporary psychologists now think that the similarities and differences can be placed on a continuum, instead of dichotomous entities of feminine and masculine behaviour. With this understanding came the realization of idea that a woman can exhibit both feminine and masculine traits and behaviours and a man, masculine and feminine traits and behaviours. In other words, the femininity and masculinity are now understood as overlapping distributions of traits and behaviours across the population. Psychologists are increasingly interested to explore the contexts in which these differences, sameness and overlaps evolve and manifest as well. The origins of such interactions often included distal origins and proximal factors that figure in theoretical approaches and refine our understanding of the psychology of gender.

The simplistic categorization of individuals by and into their biological sexes is fundamental to almost all cultures and has a profound impact on the lives of people. The complex interaction of psychology and gender determines how people view themselves, what meaning they derive out from their lives, and how the society responds to them. However, one must remember that gender is more than just the biological sex and therefore, it is necessary for us to take the aid of several psychological perspectives in order to capture the essence and expanse of gender in the context of human psyche.

Box 5.2 Activity 2

*Differentiate between the words that you think are associated with male or female: NURSE, TRUCK DRIVER, CHEF, PINK, COOKING, GYM, DIETING, SCIENTIST, GLITTER, ARCHITECT, BEAUTY, GRACE, COMPETITIVENESS, SENTIMENTAL, BRAVE, RESCUING, HONOUR, ANGER, SOFT

*Is there a pattern that you can find here? Why do you think those patterns exist?

*Did you find any words that can be associated with both male and female? Why is it the case?

Let us now delve into the various psychological perspectives (Figure 5.1), namely the Evolutionary, Biological and Psychobiological, along with Psychoanalytical and Cognitive approaches that throw light on how psychological theories explain gender construction, acquisition of gender traits, gender differences, etc. These approaches also guide us to comprehend the pervasiveness of gender in human experiences (example, inter/intrapersonal relationships, work, mental health, parenthood). Because of the multiplicity of perspectives, it is helpful and necessary to adopt more than one approach to understand the causal factors behind a particular phenomenon and the ways it affects our comprehension of sex differences.

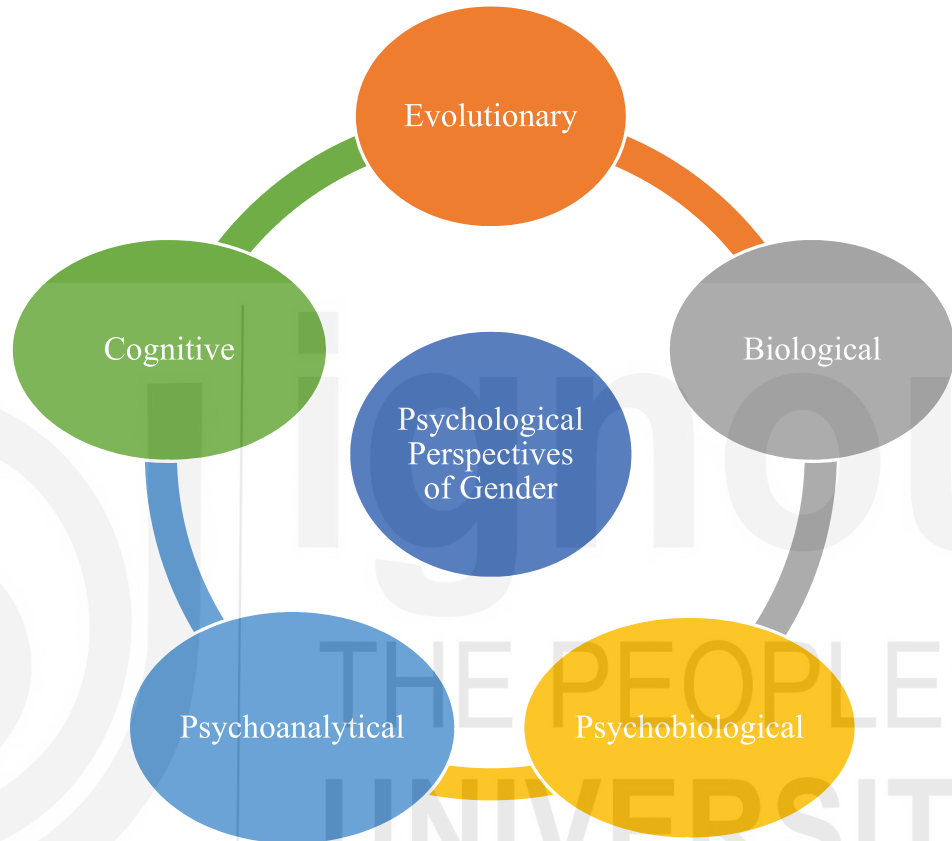


Figure 5.1 Approaches to Psychology of Gender

5.2.1 Evolutionary Approach to Gender

This approach to understand gender differences as rooted in evolution, must be preceded by an introduction to the field of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology. The theory of Sociobiology was initially proposed by E.O. Wilson (1975), a Harvard biologist. In his book *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis*, Wilson borrowed from Charles Darwin's theory of evolution and theorized that social behaviours exhibited by members of the two genders are the product of natural selection (example women as caring, empathetic and men as aggressive, protective). Through the process of natural selection, the fittest animals (including humans) survive, reproduce and pass on their healthy genes to the next generation. Genes that contribute to humans' adaptive characteristics (traits and behaviour) in the environment occur more frequently and strengthen over the generations, leading to high survival rate of the offspring. An individual with relative a greater number of such genes to pass on, which ensures greater survival of its offspring has a high evolutionary fitness than someone with genes that produce poor or maladaptive characteristics and hence occur less frequently, and are weeded out eventually.

Taking the basic idea of sociobiology forward, it is understood that gender differences in social behaviours can be explained by assumptions of 'natural selection', refined over millions of years. Consequently, the typical traits and behaviours that we see in women and men serve a crucial adaptive role in the survival of human race. For instance, women's higher level of empathy increases the quality of caregiving towards their offspring, increasing their chances of survival. In the same vein, men's high level of aggression supports their protective behaviour to safeguard their families.

Evolutionary psychology can be understood to be an advanced version of sociobiology, proposed by psychologist David Buss and others (Buss, 1995; Buss & Schmitt, 1993; Geary, 2010; Tobby & Cosmides, 1992). Like sociobiology explains social behaviour, evolutionary psychology contends that the highly complex psychological mechanisms in humans are the result of evolution through natural selection and these mechanisms have helped engender human race. The beauty of evolutionary psychology lies in its approach to explain behaviour that have underlying psychological adaptation mechanisms as a result of evolutionary processes (Buss, 2009). For instance, group behaviour, mating behaviour, leadership, etc. Buss (2009) also describes as a metatheory that combines the various fields of psychology. Modern evolutionary psychology framework is used in almost all branches of psychology such as cognitive, developmental, clinical, and more. Evolutionary psychologists' study human traits and behaviours through the lens of evolution. In this context, Buss and Schmitt (1993) proposed sexual strategies theory that explains sexual behaviour of genders on the basis of evolved psychological mechanisms and the psychological gender differences.

Now let us see how these ideas of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology apply to human behaviour, especially those typical to specific genders. One of the areas of great interest to sociobiologists is that of parental investment, which is understood as behaviours and practices for the offspring, performed by the parent that increase and ensure the offspring's chances of survival. However, the parent also pays a price to afford the 'investment' (Trivers, 1972). Now the question arises, which of the gender (male or female) has a greater parental investment? Yes, females have a much larger parental investment than compared to males. You might wonder, why does that happen? Well, biologically, the female invests one of her eggs (ovum in singular and ova in plural) and the male, his sperm. Now, the eggs in females are much more precious in comparison to sperms in males. The first reason being that a female produces one egg per month (ovulation) while the male can produce as much as 200 million of sperms within a time as short as 48 hours (Malm et al., 2004). So, at the time of conception, the female has invested more by contributing her precious egg while the man has merely given a sperm out of millions and hence has invested little. Besides that, females (particularly in mammals) carry the fertilized egg for a long time (9 months in humans) known as gestation. This process places a human female body under tremendous pressure as she makes an enormous investment of her bodily resources (like energy derived from food) throughout the entire gestation period and that necessitates drastic physiological and psychological changes (example, prolonged hormonal changes that help the female lactate, expand the uterus to accommodate the foetus). After the female gives birth, she invests her time and energy nursing the new born (in case of mammals). Now one can think why females have greater parental investment than males. In this scenario, it makes more 'evolutionary sense' when the rearing of the offspring is seen as an adaptive behaviour exhibited by the female, wherein a female with more parental investment, wants her genes to survive and hence continues to care for the offspring. In the case of a male, who

has invested relatively less than the female, his strategy would be to impregnate as many females as possible (particularly those who can care for the offspring in a healthy way) to ensure the survival and propagation of his genes.

It is no different for humans.

First, greater parental investment can explain why women provide childcare and therefore makes sense as an adaptive behaviour to care for the offspring. Secondly,

because maternity is always certain (i.e. the woman is sure when the foetus she is carrying is hers and hence, has her genes) and paternity is not. In other words, a man does not have that advantage of knowing if the child is his and carry his genes. So, one can see how evolutionary approach explains gender roles in the context of childcare.

Food for Thought!!

- Do you think the ‘sexual double standard’ exists in the contemporary times?
- If yes, can you think of few examples?

Extending the scope of sexual strategies theory, sociobiologists have employed the parental investment concept to explain the sexual double standard that allows promiscuous behaviour of men (seeking sexual relations with more than one woman) and at the same time, women are encouraged to be selective about whom they have sex with (Barash, 1982). In fact, they are punished for their promiscuous behaviour. That also explains the control exerted on women’s sexuality by various behaviours and practices which promotes monogamy, especially in women. From an adaptive point of view, because a woman’s egg is more valuable (due to the limited numbers), she has to be careful about the male genes that mix with her female genes.

Other than parental investment, Darwin had proposed another evolutionary mechanism sexual selection that contributes to gender differences in the context of mating behaviour. Similar to natural selection, this process of sexual selection refers to processes by which members of gender groups behave in certain ways to find members from the opposite group to mate. It lays down two processes to further explain this: (1) First, members of the male group compete amongst themselves to gain the mating privileges with the females i.e. they fight and, (2) Second, members of female group act on preferences for certain members of the male group and then select mating partners from the preferred ones i.e. they choose. Now how does the sexual selection mechanism explain gender differences? The first process of sexual selection mechanism can explain the large physique of males in almost every species and also the higher levels of aggressive behaviour found in males. In other words, it justifies aggression as being an adaptive behaviour on the part of males to compete for the attention of females. Since females are the choosers, males have to present themselves as attractive for them. For example, the plumage in male birds like peacock, are colourful to attract the females.

In the backdrop of concepts like parental investment, sexual selection, and sexual strategies theory, men’s and women’s distinct mating behaviours are explained. For men with lesser parental investment, the evolutionary strategy likely to be adopted by them would be to impregnate as many women as possible to ensure their genes perpetuate and therefore are more likely to engage in short-term mating. Whereas, in case of women who have greater parental investment, are more interested in long-term mating to ensure the long-term commitment of a man who can provide resources that would increase the odds of survival of the offspring as well as the woman’s. For the strategies to work in such a scenario, men have to find women who are healthy and fertile, and can provide certainty

of paternity; women have to look out for men who are willing to commit, support and can provide resources. These assumptions can then explain the adaptive psychological mechanisms that have evolved in case of men who seek young sexual partners (fertile) and women who seek long-term relationships with men having (or acquire in the future) resources such as wealth, status, power, intelligence, etc. A study by Buss (1989) on mate preferences in 37 cultures around the world, confirmed these theoretical assumptions. One of the major criticisms of the evolutionary approach is its reductionist nature. The explanation of certain behaviour and the respective gender differences seen is only in terms of genes which can be too simplistic to an extent.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What is the basic premise of the psychological approaches to gender?
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- 2) List the five approaches to the psychology of gender. Why do we need to study the approaches?
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- 3) How are the fields of sociobiology and evolutionary psychology connected?
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- 4) What does the sexual strategies theory propose?
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5.2.2 Biological Approach

This approach is one of the most widely cited when it comes to gender differences in behaviour among human beings. More often than not, people confuse between sex and gender on account of biology. It is important to remember that while sex refers to the biological differences, gender is about the social and cultural differences that are witnessed as part of the gender identity. The biological approach states that there is no difference between the concepts of sex and gender. Hence, the behavioural differences that we observe between a woman and a man can then be explained in terms of biology (refer to the Food for Thought box in the Introduction section and reflect on your responses!!). In other words, biological rationalization suffices for the differences between masculinity and femininity. For example, the belief that woman is expected to be the caregiver while a man

to be the bread winner. The importance given to sex differences has led to certain implicit assumptions and ideology about gender roles and behaviour. Now, let us understand more about the biological differences that springs from sex and how that leads to labelling of social behaviour as rooted in biology. The premise of biological approach is on sex that can be defined as a status of 'separateness' (Bermant & Davidson, 1974). To explain further, it refers to the incompleteness of individual members of species and that the members of the species must mate with the member of the opposite sex in order to ensure the perpetuity of its genes. It also indicates a certain degree of complementarity to the nature of sex i.e. a female complements a male and vice-versa. This leads to an understanding that sex is equivalent to reproduction.

The biological approach encompasses the understanding of gender from a biological standpoint i.e. through discussing the role of genes, and hormones. Do the XY and XX chromosomes determine the differences between men and women? Can the sex hormones like testosterone, estrogen, progesterone explain the gender differences? These are the questions that we will try to find answers for in the next few sections.

5.2.2.1 The Genetics of Gender

A basic understanding of genetics is required before we delve into the role of genes in gender. Normally, a human body contains 23 pairs of chromosomes, and each pair is packed with innumerable genes (biochemical units) carrying cache of hereditary information that is absolutely critical for human development. Each pair of chromosomes determine specific aspects of human development.

It is important to note here that the first 22 pairs of chromosomes are known as 'autosomes' and the 23rd pair that is the 'sex-chromosome' determines the biological sex (male or female). Represented by the letters X and Y, the male sex is understood by XY pairing of chromosomes, while the female sex is explained by the presence of XX pair of chromosomes. The 22 pairs of autosomes are same for men and women. Thus, the differences that is seen between men and women can be explained by the 23rd pair of sex-chromosomes and the genes located in those chromosomes. In turn, the genetic material in those genes, determine the sex-linked traits, XX pair for women and XY pair for men.



The 23 Pairs of Human Chromosomes

Source: Commons.wikimedia.org (Under CC SA license of WikiCommons)

Research on genetics, especially the Human Genome Project, has revealed the role of the genes contained in the Y chromosome of the male sex. The Y chromosome has a Sex-determining Region Y gene (known as SRY gene)

In 1992, The International Olympic Committee did not allow women athletes with SRY genes to participate under female category!!

that directs the development of the gonads during the prenatal period in foetus to form testes, that in turn is responsible for secreting testosterone, the male sex hormone. If the embryo has no Y chromosome, the SRY gene is absent, and hence, the gonads will develop as ovaries. In some cases, the SRY gene is missing from the Y chromosome, or remains inactivated, the foetus is born as a girl, assumes feminine gender but the 23rd pair of chromosomes is expressed as XY.

According to Wizemann and Pardue (2001), the female chromosome or the X chromosome contains far a greater number of genes (around 1000 to 2000) than the Y chromosome (less than 50 genes) and is responsible for the growth and development of cells. It also contains genes that determine the development of the ovaries during the prenatal period. In other words, the double X chromosomes that is seen in female explains the greater number of genes than in the male. However, the role of both the X chromosomes in the female is not the same and also, the role of X chromosome in the male is different from that of the female. In fact, in females, one X chromosome is inactivated or silenced (known as X-chromosome inactivation) in the foetuses so as to compensate for the extra genes present in the XX pair of chromosome and only one X chromosome functions (Okamoto et al., 2004; Percec et al., 2002). However, the inactivation is seen sometimes in cells from the mother's X chromosome (female) and at times from the father's X chromosome (male).

5.2.2.2 The Effect of Atypical Chromosomes

Studying the atypical chromosome pairing, scientists are able to determine the extent to which our gender behaviour is genetically determines. One of the ways to do that is to compare the developmental trajectory (physical, cognitive, social) of individuals with atypical and typical chromosomes.

- a) Turner's Syndrome: is a condition in which women have only one X chromosome in the 23rd pair of chromosomes, and the other one is missing completely or partially. It is denoted by XO. Individuals in this condition develop an external appearance that is female but the ovaries are not developed. It can cause multiple medical and developmental issues (like heart abnormalities, kidney defects, slowed growth, short height, no prominent sexual changes during puberty, short menstrual cycles (if any), inability to conceive due to fertility problems among other complications).
- b) Klinefelter's syndrome: is a condition in which male foetus has an extra Y chromosome in the 23rd pair (denoted as XXY). The individual with this syndrome, appear as male physically, but due to the extra X chromosome, they have under-developed genitals, especially the testes, that leads to low production of testosterone, absent or delayed puberty and in some cases, even incomplete puberty. It may cause reduced musculature, reduced body and facial hair and developed breast tissue. It also leads to lower sperm count that causes infertility in

Food for Thought!

Do you think the individuals with Turner's syndrome or Klinefelter's syndrome would be treated differently in the society?
If yes, why is that the case?

individuals with this syndrome. They appear to be shy, and sensitive, low sex drive, poor in social skills, and many other symptoms.

5.2.2.3 The Role of Epigenetics

Epigenetics refers to the variations in gene expressions caused by factors other than DNA (Deoxy-Ribonucleic-Acid) (Bird, 2007; Salk & Hyde, 2012). The expression of genes does not happen at the mere presence of the genetic material. For example, women do not start their menstrual cycle until they reach a certain age, despite the presence of ovaries in the body. Epigenetics draws attention to the role of environmental factors that can cause changes in the gene expression. The word 'epigenetics' was coined by C.H. Waddington (1957) to imply the sum of different observable physical characteristics (phenotype) despite have same hereditary information (genotype). These differences can be explained by environmental factors present during the developmental stages that impacts the genotype to such an extent which produces variations in the phenotype. Although establishing a cause-and-effect relationship to showcase the impact of environmental factors on genetic material is difficult, especially in the case of gender and sex, scientists are trying to understand the nuanced relationship they share (Cortes, Cisternas & Forger, 2019). Essentially, the argument that is being made is that the individuals have are exposed to different experiences based on their gender and that some such experiences cause epigenetic changes (ibid). Salk and Hyde (2012) are optimistic when they state that genes are not destiny and that environment can modify (for better or worse) the effects of genes over the lifetime.

5.2.2.4 Role of Hormones

Hormones are chemical substances secreted, by various endocrine glands in the body, directly into the bloodstream and affecting different target organs throughout. It is important to note here that same sex hormones are found in both men and women, however, they differ in the levels present and the effects they have on the bodily systems. We have endocrine glands such as the gonads (ovaries and testes), pituitary gland, thyroid, and adrenal glands.

The gonads are responsible for the secretion of sex hormones testosterone, estrogen, and progesterone. 'Male sex' hormones are called as androgens, and testosterone is one such hormone.

Dutee Chand from India was banned for a year by International Athletics Federation in 2014 for having higher testosterone (male sex hormone) level than permissible. After an appeal, she was allowed to compete.

Typically, it is believed that testosterone is secreted by testes while the 'female sex' hormones – estrogen and progesterone, are produced by the ovaries. However, it is crucial to note here that the 'male sex' hormone is also found in females and vice-versa. In females the testosterone is produced by the adrenal gland and ovaries and is found in extreme low levels (Janowsky et al., 1998). Hence it is technically incorrect to label testosterone as male sex hormones and estrogen and progesterone as female sex hormones!

The effect of hormones on gender can happen at two levels – prenatal stage and during and after puberty (adulthood). The organizing effects seen due to hormonal secretions at prenatal stage produce relatively permanent changes while the activating effects at the later stage leads to activation or deactivation of particular behaviours.

- a) **Organizing Effects:** Before the effects of hormones at the prenatal level is discussed, we first must understand how the sex of the foetus is formed i.e. prenatal sex determination. As discussed under the genetics section, the presence of XX pair of chromosomes determines the female sex while the XY pair makes it male sex. However, it is important to note that the gonads of the foetus are same for the first six weeks of development which means until then the foetus cannot be identified as male or female sex i.e. anatomically and physiologically the development is identical. At around sixth week, the sex chromosomes start orchestrating the gender differences. The SRY gene present in the Y chromosome synthesizes testis-determining factor (TDF) which in turn causes the gonads to turn into testes. In the absence of the SRY gene the gonads start turning into ovaries. Following this, the gonads start the secretion of sex hormones and the foetus development happens according to the levels of sex hormones present. In male foetus, testes produce enough amount of testosterone that a penis forms while in female foetus, the presence of estrogen is critical for the development of female sexual organs (Fausto-Sterling, 1992). The question that arises now is that does the different hormonal environment within the womb affect later behaviour of individuals? One must proceed with caution here as most of the experiments to study the organizing effects of exposure to sex hormones on behaviour, have been conducted on animals. In a study (Phoenix et al., 1959) on the female guinea pigs who were exposed to testosterone prenatally, exhibited masculinized sexual behaviour, and did not show any female sexual behaviour and also had masculinized genitals in their adulthood. The conclusion drawn from the study was that the presence of testosterone at the prenatal stage affects the brain structure as well as the reproductive system. In humans, the effects are seen in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation and sex-typical play behaviour in children (though the last one is also affected by environmental factors like socialization) (Hines & Collaer, 1993; Hines, 2020). When exposed to testosterone in adulthood the female guinea pigs exhibited “masculinized sexual behaviour” (of mounting) even then, having an activating effect. Harris and Levine (1965), conducted an experiment on male rats by removing the testes (castration) at birth and injecting female sex hormones in adulthood. This resulted in the male rats developing “female sexual behaviour” (responded to the mating attempts of the other male rats). The absence of testosterone at the early developmental stage was understood to be a critical factor in the “feminized” sexual behaviour. In the context of aggressive behaviour, exposure to testosterone increased the fighting behaviour of female mice (Beatty, 1992; Edwards, 1969) and similar behaviour was also seen in female rhesus monkey (Young et al., 1964).

Since it would be highly unethical to conduct these kinds of experiments on humans, researchers have studied the naturally occurring conditions where the sex hormones are present at abnormal levels. One such condition is the Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia (CAH) which is a rare genetic condition that causes the adrenal glands to produce excessive amounts of androgens at around 12th week of pregnancy. Individuals with XX pair of chromosomes, when born with this condition are seen to be different from the non-CAH sisters, and were more likely to exhibit tendency towards male-typical play behaviour (stereotypical male toys for play, etc.), although the effects are not pronounced like in the case of animals.

b) **Activating Effects:**

The most prominent activating effect of sex hormones in adulthood is seen in women through their menstrual cycle. At each stage of the menstrual cycle, the hormonal level fluctuates and produces different effects on the body. Also, the levels of sex hormones are different for men and women, that produces differential impact on sexual and aggressive behaviour. For instance, in human's testosterone has significant impact on libido (sexual desire) (Bancroft & Graham, 2011; Everitt & Bancroft, 1991). The absence of testes did decrease the libido in men but not in all cases. Androgens also have an effect on the libido of women and in fact if the adrenal glands and ovaries are removed, the sexual desire goes extinct in women. Low levels of androgen are also associated with decreased sexual desire (Guay & Jacobson, 2002). If the adrenal glands are there but ovaries are absent (surgically removed for health reasons), administration of testosterone can increase the libido in such cases (Shifren et al., 2000). Hypothalamus is one such brain structure that shows gender differences, responding to the sex hormones. Similar to the way that sex hormones in the foetus produce changes in the sexual organs, they affect the hypothalamus too. The hypothalamus has certain cells that are understood to contain estrogen receptors (Choi et al., 2001). When testosterone is present, these receptors become insensitive to estrogen and in case estrogen is present, their sensitivity is heightened to presence of estrogen. This is important for biological systems like the hypothalamus-pituitary-gonad feedback pathway that activates the menstrual cycle in women and production of pituitary hormones in men.

The sex hormones have organizing and activating effects as seen in research studies on animals as well as humans. To understand the role of sex hormones on the gender development, we need to evolve a complex model that can capture the bidirectional nature of the hormone-behaviour relationship, rather than just accepting that it's only the biology that determines behaviour!

Food for thought!

Individuals with XX pair of chromosomes and the CAH condition are born with masculinized genitals that are undifferentiated, labelled as an intersex condition and are often ostracized by the society. Why do you think that happens? What effects does it have on the individuals living with such a condition?

5.2.3 Psychobiological Approach

Psychobiological approach or biological psychology is a branch of neuroscience that studies psychological processes like intelligence, emotion, etc. using the principles of biological framework. The field is otherwise known as behavioural biology, behavioural neuroscience, or biopsychology. Since time immemorial, the gender differences that we witness, and experience have often been attributed to biological differences. As explained in the earlier section, the between men and women on account of chromosomes, epigenetics and hormones can produce organizing and activating effects. These effects have also been discussed in the context of sexual behaviour and aggression. In this section, we turn our attention towards the biological basis of certain psychological constructs and try to examine if there are any gender differences that can be explained by biology.

5.2.3.1 Gender and Intelligence

The debate began with the discovery that men possess bigger brains than women and that it caused women to have low levels of intelligence. The theory was discredited when it was understood that the size of the brains was proportional

to the size of the body. Since men have a bigger body, their brains are bigger. In 1992, two scientists on their own, revived the big brains-more intelligence hypothesis and reported that men's brains were more in volume and weight than women's and that accounted for the gender difference in intelligence (Ankney, 1992; Rushton, 1992). The question then arises: does bigger brain size equate to more intelligence? The answer is no. In a meta-analytical study by Marwha et al., 2017, it was confirmed that men's brains volume is 11.5% more than women's which is the same in the context of body size and that there is zero evidence so far to state any correlation between brain size and intelligence.

5.2.3.2 Gender and Mental Abilities

The two hemispheres of brain – the left and right, are responsible for different functionalities. Left hemisphere controls the language and verbal tasks while the right hemisphere is specialized for spatial stimuli. The supposed differences between men and women in their verbal, spatial or linguistic abilities was attributed to this feature of lateralization. However, studies have found no gender differences in these aspects (Voyer, 1996; Sommer et al., 2008), except for mental rotation, a skill under spatial ability that is important for engineering field and that can be improve with training. In fact, the size of corpus callosum increases for women in their 50s whereas in men it increases till their 30s after which, starts to decline. Moreover, studies have found no gender differences in other parts of the brain like the amygdala (Marwha et al., 2017), hippocampus (Tan et al., 2016), corpus callosum (Fausto-Sterling, 2000; Bishop & Wahlsten, 1997).

One of the most common stereotypes thrown around is regarding the mathematical ability of boys and girls. It is widely believed that boys possess better mathematical skills than girls. The stereotype has been soundly refuted with meta-analytical studies by Hyde et al. (2008), Lindberg et al. (2010), Else-Quest et al. (2010). The gender inequality that we see in the number of girl students opting for mathematics is largely due to social factors that lead to under representation of women in the field of mathematics (Ceci & Williams, 2010). As the fields where mathematical skills are required are largely dominated by men, women lack the space to exhibit and hone their mathematical skills.

5.2.2.4 Gender and Mental Illness

Gender and sex differences in mental illnesses are studied quite extensively. With respect to studying the causal factors of mental illnesses like depression, schizophrenia, or mood disorders have offered intriguing explanations that could possibly outline the gender differences. Mental illnesses have largely depended on medical model to explain the causal factors. Gender differences exist in the context of prevalence, symptomatology, risk factors and influencing factors and prognosis (Riecher-Rössler, 2010). The medical model posits that women are biologically more vulnerable to certain illnesses, especially depression. Women have a higher lifetime prevalence of mood or anxiety disorders in comparison to men and also susceptible to late onset of schizophrenia (Riecher-Rössler, 2010, 2016; Boyd et al., 2015; Seedat et al., 2009; Wittchen et al., 2011). Kuehner (2016) lists factors such as “the influence of sex hormones, women's blunted hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis response to stress, girls' and women's lower self-esteem and higher tendency for body shame and rumination, higher rates of interpersonal stressors, experienced violence, childhood sexual abuse, and—on a societal level—lack of gender equality and discrimination”. She points that the listed risk factors are prevalent in women than in men and hence can explain the higher prevalence rate of depression.

In case of anxiety, and trauma, and stress related disorders, similar gender gap is also found that can be explained by biological factors to a certain extent. Li and colleagues (2016) focussed on the possible role of sex hormones oestradiol and progesterone in this context. Fluctuations in the level of the hormones for almost larger part of their lives (menstrual cycle), these sex hormones may affect the functionality of neurotransmitters, neurosteroids, and also interfere with the cognitive and behavioural aspects, and that might explain the gender gap.

Notions like ‘men are good at maths while women have a talent for literature’, ‘men are rational while women are emotional’, etc. stand refuted, thanks to the field of neuroscience that has advanced to such an extent that scientific evidence can be produced to back up the statement that no such differences between male and female brains! In fact, a feminist neuroscientist Daphna Joel and her colleagues (2015) conducted large scale studies on human brain and they discovered that we have something called gender mosaic. It means that all of us have brains that are female-leaning, male-leaning or intermediate, depending on the size and volume of brain regions. There are no female or male brains!!

In many instances, the supposed gender differences across many aspects of human behaviour or psychological processes are due to gender stereotypes that continue to perpetuate. These stereotypes are imbibed in almost all cultures that look down at woman as an inadequate version of man. However, that is not the case. Throughout the approaches discussed so far, the gender differences can be explained through a variety of ways and interestingly, all the approaches have an underlying complex interplay of biology, social factors and psychology that manifest as hardened differences between men and women. In the coming Unit, we will discuss the psychological and cognitive approach that will further strengthen the argument that biology is not destiny and sex does not equate to gender.

Check Your Progress 4

- 1) What is the basic premise of psychobiological approach to gender?

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- 2) Is there any relationship between gender and mental illness?

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- 3) Is bigger brain size associated with more intelligence? Explain.

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5.3 SUMMARY

To sum up what we have learnt in this unit, here is a quick recap:

- The field of psychology of gender evolved over a history of psychology of gender as a field within the discipline of Psychology, can be subdivided into three distinct phases.

- In Indian context, the trajectory followed the model wherein the social, political and cultural realities of the times was reflected in the nature of work in the field of psychology of gender.
- Gender is more than just the biological sex and therefore, we use multiple approaches to understand gender. There are five approaches – Evolutionary, Biological, Psychobiology, Psychoanalytic and Cognitive. Some approaches have multiple theories to explain diverse viewpoints embedded within.
- Evolutionary approach analyses gender from socio-biology and evolutionary psychology perspective and proposes that gendered behaviour is a result of underlying evolutionary mechanisms that can explain mating behaviour of men and women; emphasizes on processes like sexual selection and parental investment.
- The biological approach encompasses the understanding of gender from a biological standpoint i.e. through discussing the role of genes and hormones and the kind of effects they have on gender. The 23rd pair of sex chromosomes decide the sex of the foetus, along with the secretion of appropriate hormones that determine the development of genitalia
- Psychobiological approach includes the role of biology in psychological processes. Men's brains volume is 11.5% more than women's which is the same in the context of body size and that there is zero evidence so far to state any correlation between brain size and intelligence; studies have found no gender differences in verbal, spatial and linguistic abilities except for mental rotation, a skill under spatial ability; unequal number of girl students opting for mathematics is largely due to social factors that lead to under representation of women in the field of mathematics and not because of lack of ability.

5.4 KEYWORDS

Sexual Strategies Theory Proposes that complex mechanisms form the basis of selection of sexual partners that increases the chances of survival of the member of the species through mating.

Parental Investment Behaviours adopted by parents that increase the chances of survival of their offspring.

Sexual Double Standard Notion that allows for differential standards of sexual behaviour by males and females wherein promiscuity in males is tolerated but disapproved in females.

Sexual Selection Darwin's proposition about processes by which members of species select their mates for reproduction. Males compete with each other to gain mating privileges with females and females select on the ability of the males to provide resources and protection.

Evolutionary Fitness Relative number of genes that the member of a species passes down.

Natural Selection Darwin's proposition of a process that ensures the species of fittest animals survive by reproducing and passing down their genes.

Sex-determining Region Y Gene Known as SRY gene, directs the development of the gonads during the prenatal period in foetus to form testes, that in turn is responsible for secreting testosterone, the male sex hormone.

5.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Trace the trajectory of the evolution of the field of psychology of gender over the years.
- 2) What is importance of perspectives in any field of study?
- 3) How does the evolutionary approach discuss the gender behaviour in selection of sexual partner? Does it apply in the contemporary times?
- 4) Explain gender differences from the biological approach by discussing the role of chromosomes, and hormones.
- 5) How are the gender differences in intelligence, abilities (verbal, spatial, linguistic and mathematics) explained?
- 6) How does the psychobiology approach explain the differences between women and men in the context of mental illnesses?

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UNIT 6 PSYCHOANALYTICAL AND COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO GENDER DEVELOPMENT*

Structure

- 6.0 Introduction
- 6.1 Psychoanalytical Approach
 - 6.1.1 Psychoanalytic Theorists
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After having read this Unit, you will be able to:

- Gain understanding of psychoanalytic perspectives on gender differences from the theorizations by Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney, Helene Deutsch and Nancy Chodorow, along with its criticisms;
- Explain cognitive approach on development of gender, gender roles and differences through the Gender Identity Development Theory, Gender Schema Theories, Social Learning Theory, Social Cognitive Learning Theory, and Moral Development Theory; and
- Appreciate the strengths and limitations of the approaches to explain the process of gender development.

6.0 INTRODUCTION

The previous unit introduced the evolutionary, biological and psychobiological approach to understand the construction of gender, gender roles and gender differences. In this unit, we expand our understanding by learning about psychoanalytical approach and cognitive approach to gender. Both the approaches encompass multiple viewpoints from certain theoretical standpoints. The psychoanalytical approach emphasizes on the role of unconscious desires in producing gender differences in personality, and behaviours. On the other hand, cognitive approach brings into focus the influence of cognitive processes on the

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gender. The importance of these approaches is reflected in the articulations of various theorists on the psychological gender differences that helps us to trace the sources of gender discrimination and inequalities.

6.1 PSYCHOANALYTICAL APPROACH

Touted as one of the most cited approaches, the psychoanalytic approach presents a fascinating understanding of human psyche. It has been used to analyse psychopathological behaviours, self, sexuality, gender, art, films, language, etc. The psychoanalytical approach makes an important contribution to further our understanding on gender. The theories proposed by Sigmund Freud, Karen Horney, Helene Deutsch, and Nancy Chodorow are important to understand the evolution and application of framework to understand the construction of gender differences.

6.1.1 Psychoanalytic Theorists

Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), popularly known as the Father of Psychology, was a neurologist from Vienna, Austria. He is famous as the founder of Psychoanalysis, a clinical method for treating mental illnesses, also known as psychopathology. In the Psychoanalytic theory, Freud proposed that human psyche is composed of conscious, preconscious and the unconscious parts and they determine human behaviour that can be categorized as normative and psychopathological (Freud, 1933/48). The structure can be compared to that of an iceberg, a chunk of which remains submerged in water as the unconscious, the part which is visible is the conscious and the portion that keeps bobbing up and down, can be labelled as the preconscious. Freud's theorization of the origins of psychopathology can be considered as one of the first scholarly work on gender differences.

Karen Horney (1885-1952) was a psychoanalytical theorist herself and a believer of Freud's theory. Considered as one of the foremost neo-Freudians, her work on revising Freudian thought and using feminist lens to critique his theory. She was a social psychological theorist and her work underscored the importance of cultural and social influences. Her critique of Freud's psychosexual theory of development cemented her position as a feminist, especially for her feminine psychology.

Helene Deutsch (1884-1982), a student and later, colleague of Freud, was a Polish - American psychoanalyst, one of the first to specialize in women. She founded the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute. In 1925, she published a book on the psychology of women, the first psychoanalyst to do so. Twenty-odd years later, she published her two-volume work with the title Psychology of Women in which she detailed the psychological development of women from childhood, through puberty to adolescence in Volume 1 and motherhood in the second volume, focusing on various aspects of it.

Nancy Chodorow (b. 1944) is a sociologist and a humanistic psychoanalytic sociologist in addition to being a psychoanalytic feminist. Her seminal work on the 'reproduction of mothering' is critical to understand the influence of intrapsychic structures (id, ego, superego) in the formation of gendered personality.

** Please note that the psychological perspectives are discussed in binary terms that is women and men, and female and male. The multiplicity of gender identities and sexualities have not been discussed here.*

6.1.2 Theory of Psychosexual Development and Gender

The psychoanalytical approach emerges from Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory that lays a great emphasis on early childhood experiences (especially the first five years of life) and its impact on personality of an individual. Freud proposed that the developmental conflicts within the psyche and their resolution determine the personality and can manifest as dysfunctions in later life if the conflict lingers. The internal conflicts happen, according to Freud, at subconscious level without the awareness of the individual.

To emphasize the criticality of early childhood experiences, Freud proposed the theory of Psychosexual Development. This theory explicates the personality development through different stages with each stage focussed on a particular erogenous zone (like lips, mouth, anal region, genitals) and the pleasure that the child derives from stimulating those sensitive body parts (Table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Psychosexual Theory of Development

Birth to 12 months	1 to 3 years	3 to 6 years	6 onwards until puberty	Puberty onward
Oral Stage	Anal Stage	Phallic Stage	Latency	Genital
Pleasure centers on sucking	Pleasure is derived from elimination of faeces	Pleasure is focussed on genitals	Focus is on repression of sexual desires	Focus on sexual urges and pleasure derived from outside the family
Erogenous zone: Lips and Mouth	Erogenous zone: Anal region	Erogenous zones: Genitals	None; sexual feelings are inactive	Continues

As one can see from Table 6.1, in oral stage the infant derives pleasure from sucking and stimulating the erogenous zones of lips and mouth, while in the anal stage the pleasure is focused from the process of defecation and other stages follow. According to Freud, the first two stages i.e. oral and anal are similar for boys and girls. It is in the phallic stage that the manifestation of developmental characteristics starts to differ between boys and girls as the source of pleasure is focussed on genitals. Freud further explains that during this third stage, boys experience Oedipus complex, and desire the mother and develop an intense attachment to her. The boy sees the father as a rival and a competition that comes in the way of gaining the mother's affections. However, the realization of the father being more powerful exists and will retaliate by castrating him, the boy experiences castration anxiety.

According to Freud, to cope with the heightened anxiety, the boy represses his desires for his mother and starts to identify with the father. The adoption of the traits, values, and ethics of the figure (represented by the father), the boy comes to acquire the masculine characteristics align with his gender.

Food for thought!

Think of few masculine characteristics that the boy will adopt from the father and feminine characteristics that the girl will adopt from mother.

Girls experience the phallic stage in two ways. Freud says that girls experience penis envy which comes with the realization that she has no penis which boys have. That the envy that is experienced is a negative emotion as the girl considers this as a limitation and deficit and hence, develops Electra complex. This is marked

by intense desire or attraction towards the father and girl considers the mother to be the opponent here, someone who is being the father's centre of attention. According to Freud, the deep attraction towards father persists in the form of maternal urges. Similar to the way the boy adopts masculine characteristics, the girls imbibe the feminine traits.

Fixation at the phallic stage can happen if the boy never resolves the Oedipus complex and Freud explains that the resolution is important for the boy to acquire appropriate gender identity and mature superego. Freud also points out the apparent disadvantage girls have in comparison to boys because according to him, the Electra complex is never fully resolved and persists in girls as lifelong feelings of inferiority, jealousy and strong maternal desires, creating an immature superego. Ultimately, Freud's theory proposes that the feminine traits that we see in women develop from feelings of moral inferiority that is rooted in penis envy.

6.1.3 Criticism of Psychoanalytic Theory

One of the widely held criticism of psychoanalytic theory is the lack of any empirical evidence i.e. the concepts that Freud proposes cannot be scientifically evaluated. In other words, the entire premise of the psychoanalytic theory that is based on unconscious (Oedipus or Electra complex) cannot be empirically tested (observed, measured, verified), making it impossible to establish its validity or even falsify. Secondly, Freud seems to have committed the error of overgeneralization which refers to the tendency of applying the observed characteristics in a small sample to a larger population without any scientific grounding. Freud's clients were mainly women who could be said to suffer from the ailments that he reported. However, the diagnosis of those women does not describe typical, larger population of women. Third criticism emerges from Freud's heavy dependence on biology and neglecting the role of culture and society in the construction of gender identity. His focus on the presence of penis in boys and absence in girls, seemingly explains the gender differences without acknowledging the powerful impact of cultural forces. In other words, biology assumes more significance and wields more power over the social and sex gains more supremacy over gender. The fourth criticism comes from the feminists, labelling Freud's theory as phallocentric, meaning the theory is phallus-centered. By positing that lack of penis makes women morally inferior to men, Freud has placed man as the norm and woman, a deviation from the norm, as an inadequate version of the man.

6.1.4 Womb Envy, Feminine Core, and Mothering

The psychoanalytic approach to gender is incomplete without mentioning the works of Karen Horney and Nancy Chodorow. Karen Horney (1932) was one of the sturdy supporters of Freud's concepts of penis envy and castration anxiety. However, over the years she criticised his theory by citing his theory to be phallocentric. In fact, she turned it around, proposing that it is the boy that envies the girl's reproductive potential (by the virtue of possession of a womb) and hence it's the boy that experiences womb envy (Horney, 1967). If anything, the overt masculine traits are the manifestations of the man's tendency to overcompensate for this lack of womb. Her construct of womb envy is said to be one of the earliest articulations of feminist psychology.

Helene Deutsch, a psychoanalyst herself, researched on psychology of women extensively. Trained and inspired by Freud, her work on women's psyche was considered to be an extension of her mentor's postulations on female development

that stopped at the phallic stage with the Electra complex. Helene goes beyond the phallic stage and focusses on the critical aspects of the prepuberty period, when the transition from girlhood to womanhood happens. Through the second volume of *Psychology of Women*, she stresses on the importance of this transition that prepares girls for their impending motherhood. Similar to Freud's dependence on anatomy, she too states that women must develop their 'feminine core', apart from traits of narcissism, masochism and passivity rooted in their anatomical structure, ultimately being the source of the desire of motherhood. She further posits that women only become active and live their true lives once they attain motherhood (Deutsch, 1944). Until then, the feminine psyche is characterised as passive and receptive. The prominent limitation of Helene's approach to psychology of women is, similar to Freud, that she links women's psyche to the anatomy (for instance, women's passivity as part of her traits that are anatomical) and glosses over the fact that cultural factors socialize women into becoming passive. Secondly, her theoretical assumption that women's lives are active only when they become mothers is sexist and portrays women waiting to fulfil their 'biological destiny'.

Nancy Chodorow (1978) also worked extensively on the construct of mothering (performing the maternal acts like child-rearing, nurturing, etc.) and ways that traditions around it are established. Merging psychological and feminist perspective, Chodorow studied women as mothers and impact of culture on that. The mothering role that women play affects the daughter and the son differently. The daughter learns to subscribe to the role of the caregiver and reproduces 'mothering'. Whereas the boy comes to expect women to always be the caregiver and nurturer. This is important in the context of the influence it exerts on attitudes and sense of self that the daughter and the son develop over time. Chodorow makes an interesting observation here, stating that the mother-daughter relationship is asserted to be much intense than that of a mother-son. Furthermore, while the daughter grows to take on the role of a mother herself, the son grows to repress that attachment in order to establish the masculine identity, by adopting traits that are non-feminine. Hence, the distance in the maternal attachment that the son brings by denying it, sets the stage for negative appraisal of women and devaluation of the role that they play, i.e. the mothering role that is taken for granted (Chodorow, 2013). Additionally, fathers are traditionally absent in their role of caregiving, masculine identity is deemed to be more ideal for the son. While

Food for thought!

Gender Division of Labour is the delegation of different tasks between males and females based on their sex. For e.g. a woman by her virtue of ability to give birth must be the caregiver and nurturer whereas a man should be the provider and protector because of their physical strength. (See Activity 2 in Unit 5).

Chodorow's theory does explain the gender division of labour, she also argues that the penis envy is not due to the lack of penis but it is attributed to the superior position that it affords men in the society as the more valued member of the species. She further adds that the only way to attach more value can be attached to mothering when men equally participate in child rearing and take on the role of the caregiver as much as a woman does. Chodorow's theory suffers from the same flaw as that of Freud's, meaning it is based on clinical excerpts of people seeking psychotherapy and as such cannot be generalized to the larger population. Also, Chodorow's theory does not delve into the factors such as race, or class, making 'mothering' a monolithic construct which implies experiences of all women as mothers, and all mother-child relationships are same, while also overlooking the existence of multiple sexual orientations, apart from heterosexuality.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) List the major psychoanalytic theorists who studied gender.
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- 2) What is the basic premise of psychosexual theory of development?
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- 3) According to Freud, how does Oedipus complex in boys and Electra complex in girls manifest?
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- 4) List the criticisms presented by Karen Horney, and Nancy Chodorow about Freud's theorization of gender.
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.....
.....
- 5) How do Helene Deutsch and Nancy Chodorow approach the construct of 'mothering'?
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6.2 COGNITIVE APPROACH

The word 'cognition' refers to the set of mental processes such as attention, learning, memory, problem-solving, decision making, reasoning, comprehension, speech, etc. The cognitive approach explains human behaviour as a result of these mental processes and not due to any other factors like genetics or external forces. It equates the workings of a human mind to that of a computer. The origins of cognitive approach are unclear but it is majorly attributed to the book by Ulric Neisser entitled *Cognitive Psychology*, published in 1967.

Situating gender in the cognitive psychology framework requires us to forego our earlier understanding that gender development is due to unconscious desires, biological factors or evolutionary responses. Because cognitive approach is set upon the premise of mental processes that explains human behaviour, then one must study the construct of gender as a cognitive concept and not biologically or behaviourally determined.

Cognitive approach will help us to understand gender identity development, gender schemata, and moral development in women and men. Further, the adoption of cognitive approach by social learning theorists will also be explored.

6.2.1 Gender Identity Development Theory

Lawrence Kohlberg, an American psychologist proposed the gender identity development theory (1966) (also known as cognitive-developmental theory) by looking at gender development from the framework of cognitive principles. Kohlberg's theory adopts cognitive principles as integral to gender identity development and theorizes gender identity development as stage theory.

Kohlberg's theory explains the cognitive processes of gender identity development beginning at around the age of three and continues till the child grows to understand at around seven years of age, that sex is fixed and cannot be changed. He argues that children cannot comprehend gender roles until they learn that sex is constant and remains the same for lifelong. Kohlberg further explicates his theory by categorizing the process into three stages: Gender Labelling (by age 3), Gender Stability (by age 5) and Gender Constancy (by age 7).

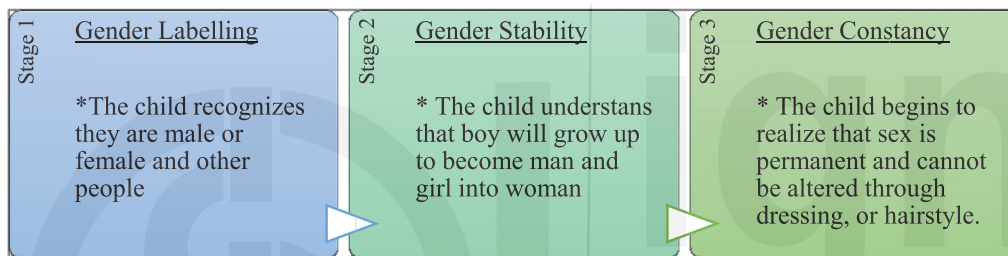


Figure 6.2 Gender Identity Development Theory

Explaining further, in the Gender Labelling stage, even though the child can label people as male or female, the idea that it cannot be changed does not exist yet. Similarly, in the second stage of Gender Stability, the child realises that boys become fathers and girls become mothers as they grow up. However, the lack of realization about the gender permanency persists. In the final Gender Constancy stage, the child acquires knowledge of the finality of the sex and begins to understand their roles as member of their respective sex. As the sense of constancy sets in, the child tends to seek same sex models to learn and adopt gender-stereotypical behaviours, similar to describes as gender conservation that Piaget uses.

The important contribution of Kohlberg's theory was revisiting the construct of gender from a purely cognitive perspective by emphasizing on the role of cognitive processes in comprehending gender. Being a descriptive theory (it describes a phenomenon but it does not tell us the 'why' behind it), studies have been conducted to prove the validity of Kohlberg's theory. A study by Damon (1977), supported the gender identity development theory by asking children of varying age groups about a boy (named George in the study) who liked to play with dolls but his parents considered it to be inappropriate. Four-year-old children reported that it is okay for George to play with dolls, 6-year-old children thought it was wrong and finally the 9-year-olds accepted that while it is fine, but unusual for the boy George to play with dolls. Kuhn and colleagues (1978) also found out the gender ideas exists at a very young age, as young as 3 years. Essentially, Kohlberg's theory maintains that learning of gender roles is, to quite an extent, self-motivated as the children interact with their social environment and is selective about the behaviours that are gender appropriate.

One of the main contentions against Kohlberg's theory is the lack of consideration of children's language skills. Children at a younger age may well experience these stages much earlier than what Kohlberg theorized but are perhaps unable to articulate because of their limited language skills. Another drawback of Kohlberg's theory is that it does not take into account how children reconcile the ideas of changes in gender over time.

6.2.2 Gender Schema Theories

Gender schema theories focusses on the ways in which children form ideas about gender and process information on gender. Schemata (plural of schema) can be described as knowledge structures or patterns of thought that help us attend to, perceive and comprehend information on objects or phenomena around us, helping us to make sense of the world. It is important to note that schemata are prone to change that may happen over time due to dynamic social experiences and cultural differences. According to the schema theories of gender, once the child identifies themselves as a boy or a girl, they are motivated to align their own gender behaviour with the normative gender schemata. Shaping of attitudes and behaviour are a result of the application of gender schemata. This happens by cognitively responding to gender-consistent information that ultimately shapes the child's behaviour of conforming to gender schemata (refer Figure 6.2).

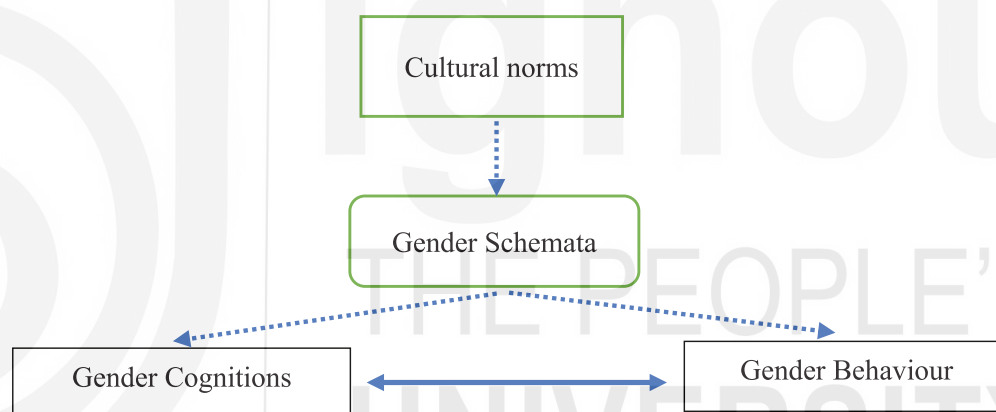


Figure 6.2 Gender Schemata linking gender cognitions to gender behaviour

Sandra Bem, a psychologist, introduced her famous Gender Schema theory by positing that children learn gender by creating gender schemata based on the cultural norms that they are exposed to. Gender schemata are the result of the children's learning of gender-specific characteristics that are coloured by cultural norms and standards. These schemata enable people to use the same cultural lenses to appraise their own sex-specific behaviour, further influencing their sense of self (Vinney, 2021). Influenced by the cognitive revolution of the 1960s, Bem believed that the earlier theories (psychoanalytic, biological, etc.) were limited in their approach by not considering the influence of social and cultural norms on children's cognitive development that consequently impact the gender understanding.

The Gender Schema theory by Bem (1981), deviates from the Kohlberg's theory by explaining gender development as a process theory rather than a stage theory. Bem notes that cultural forces influence the way people acquire, process and utilize information regarding gender appropriate behaviours and attitudes and hence specific content of the gender schemata may vary across cultures. For instance, gender schemata of women from western culture will be different from those in

eastern cultures, let us say, in the context of interpersonal relationships. Moreover, cultures also play an important role by making people aware of the consequences of conforming or violating the gender norms which further reinforces the gender-stereotypical behaviour (example, women who exhibit leadership qualities are called as 'bossy' while men are respected for the very same characteristics). This is further explained in the Social Cognitive Learning theory.

Taking her theory forward, Bem (1994) proposed four gender categories.

- i) Sex-typed individuals – identify with their gender and apply the corresponding gender schemata to their cognition.
- ii) Cross-sex typed individuals – apply gender schemata of the opposite gender to process information.
- iii) Androgynous individuals – utilize gender schemata of both the genders to process information i.e. both feminine and masculine thinking is appropriated.
- iv) Undifferentiated individuals – are not aligned to any gender schemata and may find it difficult to process information based on any gender schema.

Sandra Bem's another important contribution to the gender development discourse is the creation of a questionnaire, famously known as Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI, 1974). The questionnaire contains 60 words that can be categorized as masculine, feminine or gender-neutral. The noteworthy feature of this inventory lies in the fact that the inventory does not ask individuals to identify themselves with a particular category. Rather, it asks for a rating to match the given words to their own traits. By doing so, Bem clearly positions gender on a continuum instead of treating it as a binary of male or female. An individual can rank high in one category and low in another or high in both, even low in both. The BSRI continues to be one of the most widely used psychological assessment tools globally.

Martin and Halverson (1981) proposed their own version of gender schema theory. According to them, children possess two types of gender-schemata – first is 'superordinate schema' that is used to classify generic objects and traits around them into female and male categories; second is the 'own-sex schema' that helps them to learn about their own sex. These two schemata together influence the cognitive processes that allows children to not only understand their own gender characteristics, but it also helps them to interpret the objects/ phenomena/ behaviours around them as similar or different to their gender. This kind of categorization leads to children identifying with individuals of same gender as members of in-group and people of a different gender, as out-group. Once a child acquires gender identity, the child is more likely to adopt the characteristics, traits, attitudes of the in-group by responding to the relevant information about the same. Though the gender-schemata by and large remain constant through adolescence and adulthood, and keeps influencing the processing of information relevant to the gendered self (Priess & Hyde, 2011).

Gender-schema theory portrays children as active processor of information, yet it fails to explain when and why one's gender schema may not match one's behaviour always, neglecting the role of one's agency in determining their behaviour. Secondly, it does not take into account the biology or the social in its description of gender development. Finally, because schemata are one's own generalized frameworks of knowledge used to interpret information, it can cause errors in the perception of events.

6.2.3 Social Learning Theory

As one of the most accepted theoretical perspectives on processes of human development, social learning theory (Bandura & Walters, 1963) attempts

to explain it with concepts of learning such as reinforcement, punishment, imitation and observational learning. Instead of focussing on unconscious desires or cognitive processes, the social learning theory looked at overt behaviours that is learnt. Following that, it can be inferred that the gender differences seen in children's behaviours results from learning. In other words, behaviours are learnt according to the rewards or punishments that is associated with them. Gender appropriate behaviours are reinforced by rewarding the children while inappropriate behaviours are punished or not rewarded. Borrowing Bandura's principles of operant conditioning, rewards and punishments are used as instruments to facilitate the learning of gender-appropriate behaviours. For instance, boys are rewarded when they display aggression, while girls are rewarded when they display submissiveness and obedience. Children then tend to repeat the behaviours that are rewarded and hence, those behaviours are reinforced.

Modelling (imitation) and observational learning are two more mechanisms that Social Learning Theory uses to explain gender differences in behaviour. Modelling simply means, children imitate the behaviour of models (parents, siblings, teachers, peers, other adults etc.) around them. Observational learning is a bit more complex process wherein children observe, and learn the behaviour which they may or may not display following the learning.

Social learning theory makes use of these mechanisms – reinforcement, punishment, modelling and observational learning to explain the ways children learn gender-appropriate behaviours (also called as gender-typing) and gender roles as well. Through observational learning, children also learn of behaviours that may not be acted upon immediately, but later it can be used to perform gender roles. For instance, the way a girl learns to cradle a baby after observing her mother do it and later does it for her own baby.

Bandura and his colleagues (1961) own experiment involving bobo doll is a classic research study that provides evidence in support of social learning theory on how children learn aggression after seeing other people (models) behave aggressively towards the bobo dolls. In 1963, Bandura extended the original study and found that children exhibited aggressive behaviour through modelling regardless of the representation of the model (live, movie version of the model, or a cartoon model) and their mode of aggression. A variation of the same experiment of 1961 by Bandura (1965)

on imitation, showed that children are less likely to exhibit aggressive behaviour when they saw the model punished for that behaviour than those who watched the model rewarded for aggressive behaviour or those who neither received any reward nor punishment. Based on the findings of such studies, Bandura posits that children consider possible consequences of the behaviour being modelled or observed. Having immense applicative value, the social learning theory is one of the most popular and widely used framework to understand gender and psychological constructs like aggression, cooperation, social interaction, etc.

Reflect!

Think of female and male characters in television shows and popular films in India. Do the characters depict such differences between men and women?

Food for thought!

From television or social media, select six advertisements (3 for men's products and 3 for women's products). Analyze how gender roles are portrayed in the ads using the social learning theory.

6.2.4 Social Cognitive Theory

The social cognitive theory of gender development improves upon the gender schema theory and utilizes the social learning theory to present the complexities of gender role development by specifying on the combined influence of social processes, cognitive factors and behaviour. Bussey and Bandura (1999) proposed this theory, emphasizing the need to account for the cognitive factors in socially learnt behaviour. As an extension of the social learning theory by Bandura (1986), social cognitive theory or cognitive social learning theory brings together the concepts like reinforcement, punishment, modelling (from learning) and cognitive processes (like attention, self-regulation, etc.) to explain gender development. The theory posits that children pay attention (cognitive process) to relevant behaviours and gender is one of the tools that they use to decide if a behaviour is worthy of their attention. Once children establish gender identity, they pay more attention to the same-gender behaviours which also helps them to guide their own behaviour (Bussey & Bandura, 1992). However, this self-regulated behaviour is initiated when children shift from away from external rewards (i.e. in the form of social validation when children conform to gender norms) to internalization of such standards of behaviour. As gender awareness increases and self-regulation strengthens, children establish their own internal gender norms that they, in turn, use to monitor and regulate their own behaviour.

Reflect!

Can you think of any of your childhood experiences where you were rewarded or punished in accordance to the prevalent gender norms?

Apart from self-regulation, self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977) also plays a role in gendered behaviour and refers to the confidence we repose in our abilities to achieve or accomplish a goal. The concept is particularly important because it affects the kind of goals individuals set for themselves, the amount of time and effort they spend on achieving the goals and the persistence they show in the face of challenges. Now, one must remember that self-efficacy beliefs can vary, in the sense that one might be extremely confident in their native language and hence can deliver a public speech confidently, but may find it difficult to perform the same task in a foreign language.

So, the question in front of us is how are self-efficacy and gender development connected? Well, children tend to adopt behaviours related to strong self-efficacy by modelling behaviours of same-sex members. Girls will imitate the behaviours of women when they see women being successful at a task (for example, cooking) and hence will have more confidence in their ability to cook. A boy will look up to his father skills of car driving and learn to project confidence in his own driving abilities. The concept of self-efficacy is helpful specially to analyse gendered nature of certain occupations. One of the biggest strengths of the social cognitive learning theory is its notion that behaviour is learnt (not discounting the role of society and self) which is followed by a belief that it can be unlearned. In other words, children can learn different gendered norms, roles and behaviours if the society and media provide appropriate gender role models.

6.2.5 Moral Development Theory

Another important theory to explain gender differences is the moral development theory by Lawrence Kohlberg (1958; 1984) and Carol Gilligan (1977, 1982) who is an American psychologist, feminist and a major critic of Kohlberg's theory. As the name suggest, this theory describes our understanding of morality evolves from childhood through adolescence and how to we solve moral dilemmas.

Kohlberg articulated this stage theory of moral development by posing a moral dilemma to children and adults, followed by several questions. Inspired from Piaget's usage of stories to elicit responses, Kohlberg presented a story and was interested to learn reasons behind the kind of answers given by the children and adults participating in the study.

Box 6.1 Lawrence Kohlberg's story with a moral dilemma

A woman is severely ill, almost on death bed and according to the doctor, only one particular medicine might save her. The husband is desperate to save his wife's life. The druggist/chemist charges a lot of money for the drug as it is rare. The husband tried every possible means to borrow money from people but he could collect only half the amount required to buy the medicine. He pleads to the druggist/chemist to sell him the medicine at a lower price or grant him some extra time to pay for the medicine later. The druggist/chemist refuses and wants to make money of it. Now, the husband plans to steal the medicine from the store.

The participants are asked a set of questions followed by the presentation of this dilemma such as whether the man should steal the medicine or not, and why he should or should not. Kohlberg was more keen to study the rationalization behind the given responses than the actual response of participants supporting or criticising the man's decision to steal. Based on his research, Kohlberg deduced that people go through three levels during their course of moral development over time, with each level divided into two stages.

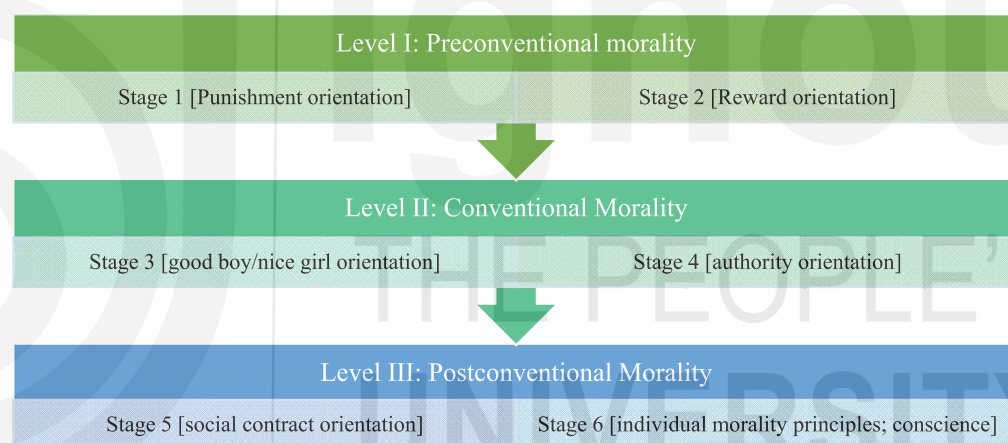


Figure 6.3 Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development

According to Kohlberg's theory, in Stage 1 and 2 is reflected in the moral reasonings of extremely young children like pre-schoolers (up to age 6) and that the dilemma is solved on the basis of simple logic of avoiding punishment and earning rewards. In Level II of conventional morality, children (usually from 7 to 11 years) decide on their morality by considering approval/ disapproval of the others (like parents, teachers) and as they move from stage 3 to 4, there is a higher degree of conformity to society's rules, and avoid censure by authorities. In the stage 5 of the last level of postconventional morality, individuals (from 11 years onwards), understand the significance of existing societal rules and conform to same unless there are better means to resolve a dilemma. In the final stage 6, a person acquires a stable sense of self-defined ethical principles that determines their moral reasoning, accepting that complexities in morality exist wherein every action cannot be labelled as either good or bad.

According to Kohlberg, gender differences is seen in moral development of boys and girls. He reports that most men can reach up to stage 4 whereas the highest level of moral development that women can possibly attain is that of stage 3. In other words, women have a less developed sense of morality in comparison to men.

Carol Giligan critiques Kohlberg's theory and proposed her own theorization of moral reasoning. In her book *In a Different Voice*, Giligan criticises Kohlberg's theory of being androcentric – that it is from a male's point of view with a male protagonist in the story which women and girls will find it difficult to relate. Secondly, the entire set of participants were men and as such one commits the error of overgeneralization if the evidence based on men is applied to women as well! Giligan also criticised Kohlberg's theory by stating his theory itself falls short of capturing the expanse of women's moral development. Going further, her feminist critique of Kohlberg's theory motivated her to put forth a revised version of his theory but from a woman's viewpoint.

The basic premise of Giligan's theory is the understanding that the process of moral reasoning for women is different than that of men. While men use a justice perspective (people are independent entities; individuals rights need to be protected) to reason with moral dilemmas, women apply a care perspective (people are interdependent; relational; community needs to be protected) to reason. Simply put, Giligan remarks that women's concerns of morality are just from a different standpoint and not inferior or immature the way Kohlberg posited.

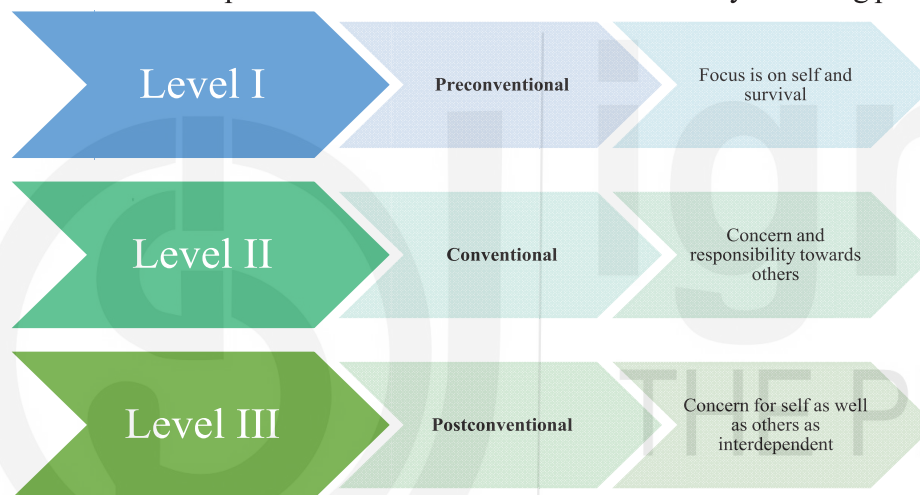


Figure 6.4 Carol Giligan's Model of Moral Development of Women

Giligan's theory is an important contribution to feminist understanding of women's moral development. Indeed, her theory is considered to be a striking example of a comprehensive response to an androcentric theory (Kohlberg's) by critiquing it, reformulating it by including women as the participants in her study and proposing her own developmental model based from the data. Though Giligan herself cites studies in support of her theory (inclusive of her own study on women's viewpoint on abortion, Giligan, 1982 pg. 82), her theory is not entirely explanatory. The exclusivity that Giligan attempts to highlight is removed by the presence of studies that revealed that most people used a mix of justice and care perspective and on an average, men and women score the same on morality levels (Colby et al., 1983; Jaffee & Hyde, 2000; Kohlberg, 1969; Mednick, 1989; Walker, 1984). In conclusion, the gender differences in moral reasoning are not significant enough that warrant an exclusive theorization.

Check Your Progress 2

1) What is the fundamental premise of cognitive approach to study gender?

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2) What is the difference between Social Learning Theory and Social Cognitive Theory in the context of gender?

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3) What were the two theories that Kohlberg proposed to explain gender differences?

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4) What are gender schemata? Explain the two major gender schema theories.

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5) How do women and men acquire moral reasoning? Describe with the help of Kohlberg's and Giligan's theories.

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6.3 SUMMARY

To sum up what we have learnt in this unit, here is a quick recap:

- Psychoanalytical approach utilizes the theorizations of unconscious desires and their manifestations as the source of gender differences. Freud's psychosexual theory of development explicates the personality development through five different stages: oral, anal, phallic, latency, and genital, initiating from birth. Gender differences emerge at the phallic stage (at around 3 years of age) when boys experience Oedipus complex and castration anxiety, which if resolved properly, results in generation of masculine traits. Similarly, girls go through Electra complex and penis envy. Attempts at resolution of the complex leads to adoption of feminine traits.
- Freud explains that the resolution is important for the boy to acquire appropriate gender identity and mature superego, associated with masculine traits. Freud also points out the apparent disadvantage girls have in comparison to boys because according to him, the Electra complex is never fully resolved and persists in girls as lifelong feelings of inferiority, jealousy and strong maternal desires, creating an immature superego, associated with feminine traits. Ultimately, Freud's theory proposes that the feminine traits that we see in women develop from feelings of moral inferiority that is rooted in penis envy.
- Freud's theory is criticised for its lack of empirical evidence, overgeneralization aspect, dependence on biology while discounting the role of culture and society in construction of gender identity, and finally, the phallocentric

orientation it takes by attributing gender differences to the presence or absence of penis.

- Karen Horney rebuttal of Freud's theory appears in her theorization of a complex which she labelled it as womb envy which boys experience due to their lack of a womb. The presence of masculine traits is the tendency of men to overcompensate for the lack of a womb.
- Helene Deutsch extended Freud's theory beyond phallic stage and labelled the transition from prepubescent to womanhood as a preparatory phase for motherhood which is their biological destiny. She believed women should develop their feminine core and other traits of narcissism, masochism, and passivity (crucial for motherhood) that is rooted in anatomical structure. She stated that motherhood only make the women's lives active, otherwise, women are anatomically passive.
- Nancy Chodorow, merged the psychological and feminist perspective and studied women as mothers and impact of culture on that. The daughter learns to subscribe to the role of the caregiver and reproduces 'mothering'. Whereas the boy comes to learn that women always to be the caregiver and nurturer. This impacts the formation of gender identity, girl as feminine and boy as masculine. Her theory is criticised for analysing 'motherhood' as a monolithic construct.
- Cognitive approach is set upon the premise of mental processes that explains human behaviour, then one must study the construct of gender as a cognitive concept and not biologically or behaviourally determined.
- Kohlberg's theory of gender identity development explains the cognitive processes of gender identity development beginning at around the age of three and continues. Kohlberg further explicates his theory by categorizing the process into three stages: Gender Labelling (by age 3), Gender Stability (by age 5) and Gender Constancy (by age 7).
- Kohlberg's theory maintains that learning of gender roles is self-motivated as the children interact with their social environment and become selective about the behaviours that are gender appropriate.
- According to the Schema theories of gender, once the child identifies themselves as a boy or a girl, they are motivated to align their own gender behaviour with the normative gender schemata. Shaping of attitudes and behaviour are a result of the application of gender schemata.
- Sandra Bem maintains that gender schemata are the result of the children's learning of gender-specific characteristics that are coloured by cultural norms and standards. These schemata enable people to use the same cultural lenses to appraise their own sex-specific behaviour, further influencing their sense of self. Bem (1994) proposed four gender categories – sex-typed, cross-sex types, androgynous, and undifferentiated.
- Marvin and Halverson (1981) proposed that children possess two types of gender-schemata – first is 'superordinate schema' that is used to classify generic objects and traits around them into female and male categories; second is the 'own-sex schema' that helps them to learn about their own sex.
- This kind of categorization leads to children identifying with individuals of same gender as members of in-group and people of a different gender, as out-group. Accordingly, the child is more likely to adopt the characteristics, traits, attitudes of the in-group by responding to the relevant information about the same.

- Social learning theory makes use of the mechanisms of operant conditioning – reinforcement, punishment, and modelling and observational learning to explain the ways children learn gender-appropriate behaviours (also called as gender-typing) and gender roles as well.
- Gender appropriate behaviours are reinforced by rewarding the children while inappropriate behaviours are punished or not rewarded. Through observational learning, children also learn of behaviours that may not be acted upon immediately, but later it can be used to perform gender roles.
- As an extension of the social learning theory social cognitive theory or cognitive social learning theory brings together the concepts like reinforcement, punishment, modelling (from learning) and cognitive processes (like attention, self-regulation, etc.) to explain gender development. The theory posits that children pay attention (cognitive process) to relevant behaviours and gender is one of the tools that they use to decide if a behaviour is worthy of their attention. Once children establish gender identity, they pay more attention to the same-gender behaviours which also helps them to guide their own behaviour, which leads to internalization of gender appropriate behaviours.
- Kohlberg's theory posits that there exist gender differences in the way moral dilemmas are reasoned. The three levels with two stages each (1 to 6) describes how we acquire moral reasoning. According to Kohlberg, gender differences attributed to the view that women can reach up to stage 3 at best, whereas most men attain stage 4.
- Giligan criticises Kohlberg's theory of being androcentric, overgeneralized, and deficit in capturing the expanse of women's moral development. She differentiated that men's moral reasoning operates from a justice perspective while for women, it is grounded in justice perspective, from a relational approach. Studies reveal that no significant differences exist in moral reasoning between men and women. Furthermore, most people use a mix of both care and justice perspective in moral reasoning.

6.4 KEYWORDS

Androcentric From a male perspective; centering around the male point of view.

Psychoanalytic Theory Propounded by Freud, the theory describes the structure of personality consisting of id, ego and superego. Additionally, the theory posits that human behaviour is determined by the conscious, subconscious and unconscious desires in the development of personality.

Psychosexual Theory of Development Freud's theory that describes the development of personality through five stages – oral, anal, phallic and genital from birth onwards, each focussing on a particular erogenous zone. Each stage is characterised with an intrapsychic conflict that is to be resolved for the development of a healthy personality.

Gender Identity Development Theory Kohlberg's theory that explains the process of gender identity development applying the principles of cognitive development.

Schemata Can be described as knowledge structures or patterns of thought that help us attend to, perceive and comprehend information on objects or phenomena around us, helping us to make sense of the world.

Social Learning Theory Explains the process of learning through the systems of reinforcement, punishment, imitation and observational learning.

Self-efficacy The belief that one has in their own capabilities to achieve a goal.

6.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) How does psychoanalytic approach explain gender differences? What are the criticisms?
- 2) What is role of cultural norms in the formation of gender identity?
- 3) What are the different theories under cognitive approach that describe gender differences?
- 4) What are the differences between social learning theory and social cognitive theory in the context of gender development?
- 5) How does moral development occur in children? Discuss with the help of Lawrence Kohlberg's and Carol Giligan's theories.
- 6) If you had to propose a theory of your own on gender development, which approach/es would you consider and why?

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UNIT 7 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY AND SOCIAL ROLE THEORY*

Structure

- 7.0 Introduction
- 7.1 Social Learning Theory
- 7.2 Role of Socialization Agents
 - 7.2.1 Socialization Agents within the Family
 - 7.2.2 Socialization Agents outside the Family
- 7.3 Social Role Theory
 - 7.3.1 Development of Gender Role Beliefs
 - 7.3.2 Social Roles in Different Settings
 - 7.3.3 Influence of Gender Roles on Behavior
- 7.4 Summary
- 7.5 Key Words
- 7.6 Review Questions
- 7.7 References and Further Reading
- 7.8 Additional Online Resources

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After having read this Unit, you will be able to:

- Explain the different perspectives on gender development;
- Discuss social learning theory with respect to gender development; and
- Elucidate the way in which social role theory explains gender development.

7.0 INTRODUCTION

There are many theories that explain gender development. Although the assumptions underlying each theory may be different, they all offer insight into how people acquire gendered beliefs and behaviors. These include the development of gender identity, gender preferences, gender roles, and gender-based stereotypes and prejudices. While the Evolutionary, Biological, and Psychobiological Approaches have been discussed in Unit 4 and Unit 5 covered the Psychoanalytic and Cognitive Approaches, this Unit will explain the Social Learning Theory and Social Role Theory of gender development.

7.1 SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY

The social learning theory of gender development emphasizes the ways in which external factors, such as socialization agents (e.g., parents, peers, teachers, and the media), shape children's gender development (Bosson, Vandello, & Buckner, 2018). The theory was first applied to gender development by Walter Mischel (1966); rooted in the behaviorist tradition, this theory suggests that people pick up gender-related beliefs and behaviors right from infancy, by watching and imitating models and on the basis of the consequences of their actions in the form of reinforcement and punishment provided by others.

Thus, first, the theory focuses on the principles of observation and imitation. Children actively observe and imitate the behaviours of others around them. Such people are referred to as models. The terms modeling or observational learning, is thus defined as “the tendency for a person to reproduce the actions, attitudes, and emotional responses exhibited by real-life or symbolic models” (Mischel, 1966, pg. 57). These models can be anybody in the child’s vicinity – their parents, teachers, siblings, etc. Even the images portrayed on television serve as important models.

To understand observational learning, its roots can be traced back to the famous “Bobo doll” experiments conducted by Albert Bandura and his colleagues (e.g., Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1963). These studies included two groups of nursery-school children. One group of children were exposed to an adult engaging in aggressive actions against a large inflated Bobo doll. The adult model was shown as hitting the doll, sitting on it, insulting it verbally, and repeatedly punched it. The second group of children were exposed to a model who behaved in a non-aggressive manner. This was followed by leaving both groups of children in a room with several toys, including a Bobo doll. As researchers observed the children’s behavior, they noticed that those who had seen the aggressive adult model often imitated this person’s behavior: They also punched the toy, sat on it, and even uttered verbal comments similar to those of the model. In contrast, children in the control group rarely demonstrated such actions.

Thus, children observe people’s behaviour around them and attempt to imitate it. They then focus on the impact this imitation has on others. If others reward their behaviour, then those behaviours are repeated. Furthermore, as keen learners, children also focus on whether the models are rewarded or punished for their behaviour. This also contributes to which behaviours will be replicated. The same understanding is applicable to development of gendered behaviour.



Figure 7.1 The Bobo Doll Experiment

Source: <https://sites.psu.edu/mromeopassion/2020/04/10/the-bobo-doll-experiment/>

In further application of this theory towards developing gendered behaviour, Mischel explained that children acquire gendered behaviour patterns (i.e., sex typing) based on the reinforcement and punishment different behaviours elicit for different sexes. The term reinforcement implies any response following a behaviour that increases the likelihood of the behaviour occurring again. On the contrary, punishment is any response to a behaviour that decreases the likelihood of its recurrence.

Reinforcement and punishment can be both subtle as well as obvious. A small smile or simple praise such as saying “Good girl” or “Good boy” communicates approval of a behaviour, whereas punishment can also be dished out using subtle changes like withdrawal of attention, or more obviously via verbal scolding. In this way, with time children begin to understand which behaviors are approved for their sex and which behaviors are not. For example, while girls’ aggressive responses are often discouraged by the people around them, boys are frequently taught or encouraged to react aggressively. It is communicated to boys that aggression is an important tool which can be employed to maintain one’s social position. In another example, when girls cry, it is not made out to be a big deal, whereas when boys engage in crying, they are often told to toughen up and not to act like girls.

Combining this with observational learning, young boys learn to devalue expression of sadness by crying not only when they are reprimanded for doing so, but also when other boys are subjected to disapproval or ridicule for the same. Gender-related beliefs and preferences, thus, become tied to many social experiences’ children have during these formative years of their lives.

Thus, the processes of observation, imitation, reinforcement, and punishment enables children to start associating certain behaviors with ‘being a boy’ and others with ‘being a girl’. When a child is rewarded for engaging in “boy things or boy behaviour”, they may come to believe that they are a boy (Martin, Ruble, & Szkrybalo, 2002).

7.2 ROLE OF SOCIALIZATION AGENTS

It is important to note that children usually have many socialization agents, serving as sources of rewards and punishments and models to observe and imitate. In this section, major socialization agents, both within the family (parents and siblings) as well as those outside the family (teachers, peers, and the media) are discussed.

7.2.1 Socialization Agents within the Family

Parents - To begin with, parents typically serve as the first major source of socialization for children, teaching gender to children in many ways. First and foremost, they pose as models of expected gender roles and behaviours. For most children, the influence of their parents’ behaviours can be easily identified in children’s behaviour and attitudes. For example, in families where both parents engage in domestic and childcare activities, children tend to hold less traditional gender stereotypes (i.e., widely held and generalized beliefs about characteristics considered to be appropriate for men and women) due to exposure to non-traditional gender behaviours in their home (Deutsch, Servis, & Payne, 2001). Conversely, in families where such activities are mainly the responsibility of the women, children also tend to reflect similar patterns and preferences in their behaviour.

Secondly, parents’ own gender-related attitudes and stereotypes influence their different parenting practices. For instance, if parents believe that physical appearance is more important for women than men, then they are likely to emphasize this when raising their daughters. Similarly, if they believe that men’s careers are more important than women, then they may encourage their son’s educational pursuits more so than their daughters; in fact, they may encourage their daughters more for caregiving roles. Moreover, parents also actively reward and punish children’s sex-typed activities. Ranging from the smallest details such as the colors of a baby’s room, clothing, toys, to bigger issues such as academic

interests, recreational activities, and division of domestic work, parents constantly shape their children's gender-typed beliefs and behaviors (McHale, Crouter, & Whiteman, 2003). It is interesting to note that boys' parents show more rigidity when it comes to their children's cross-sex behaviors compared to girls' parents. Furthermore, among both parents, fathers tend to be less tolerant of female-typed activities in sons than mothers.

Research also highlights specific cultural differences in parents' gender-related child-rearing practices. For example, in cultures such as the WestAsia, and South and East Asia, boys are valued more than girls as they are considered important for carrying on the family's legacy and as crucial economic contributors. On the other hand, girls in such cultures may be viewed as an economic burden. The male bias in such cultures may pave the way for social ills such as female foeticide and infanticide. Such families also devote more resources and opportunities (e.g., nutrition, health care and education) to boys than girls (Rafferty, 2013).

Siblings - Apart from parents, siblings also provide gender-related information. As children spend considerable time with their siblings partaking in diverse activities, having an older brother or an older sister exposes a child to different gender-related activities and behaviours. Siblings also serve as important models after whom children base their own behaviours. Studies show that children with same-sex elder sibling display more traditional sex-typed behaviors than those with cross-sex older siblings (Rust, Golombok, Hines, & Johnston, 2000).

7.2.2 Socialization Agents outside the Family

Teachers As school plays a significant role in the child's development, teachers end up having a potent impact on their gender development. Like parents, teachers also serve as important models of gendered behaviour and end up imparting many of their gendered-attitudes to their pupils. The presence of other students (especially in co-education school settings) makes gendered language, gender related differences and their related stereotypes more salient among the students. For example, if teachers possess the common stereotype that boys are better at certain subjects (such as mathematics and sciences) than girls, they may encourage and give more attention to them than girls. Such stereotypes may also heighten the stereotype threat (i.e., a situation in which there is a negative stereotype about a person's group, making them concerned about being judged or treated negatively on the basis of this stereotype) faced by girls. Taking the same example, if female students are made to feel that they are less likely than their male counterparts to succeed in mathematics, they are likely to feel greater anxiety due to fear of failure during a math test compared to boys. This heightened anxiety may unwittingly lead to self-fulfilling prophecies in the form of lower performance. Thus, the fear of performing poorly may actually lower their performance, thus reinforcing the stereotype. It must be noted that this poor performance is not due to lower aptitude for math, but due to the negative impact of anxiety emanating from the stereotype threat (Spencer, Steele, & Quinn, 1999).

Furthermore, knowledge about stereotypes about one's group can also lead to a feeling of disenchantment from the activities that the stereotype is about. Thus, many girls may lose interest in mathematics, as they come to believe that they would not be suited to the field. Instead, they turn their interest towards other fields which are stereotypically considered to be suitable for them (such as art and language). In this context, the teachers play an important role in ensuring that they treat and encourage all pupils equally.

Peers As the school setting offers significant opportunities for same-sex and cross-sex friendships, peers become another salient socialization agent. Although until they reach puberty, children tend to prefer same-sex friend circles (Fabes, Martin, & Hanish, 2003). Studies show that association with same-sex peers is linked with development of gender-typed play preferences, activity level and even aggression (Martin et al., 2013). Furthermore, same-sex peers reinforce gender-typed behaviour, but also criticize or ridicule cross-gender behaviors. Compared to girls, boys are more easily teased or labelled when they engage in cross-gender behaviors. Not just this, children's peer groups and play activities also promote expression of different emotions for girls and boys. As boys engage in more rough-and-tumble play, they end up expressing more competitive emotions, such as anger, while girls engage in more cooperative play requiring expression of relational emotions, such as nurturance and sympathy (Chaplin & Aldao, 2013).

Media Apart from teachers and peers, exposure to media also serves as an important socialization agent. It is common for children to be exposed to different forms of media from childhood itself; these include television, video games, books, and the internet. In fact, in contemporary times use of the internet has increased drastically during childhood, with many options being catered directly to children (De Almeida, Alves, Delicado, & Carvalho, 2012). When one looks at the breath of media-generated ideas and images available, it is very easy to identify the plethora of gender-related models it provides. Not only does the media promote specific kinds of representation (with complex stories about girls and women being less represented than narratives about boys and men), it also fuels many stereotypes. For instance, in many children's programmes, the male characters are portrayed as having more active and as having leadership roles than female characters, while female characters are depicted as portraying more traditionally, feminine characteristics (e.g., Signorielli, 1990). Even the physical appearance of female characters caters to sexualized and often rigid standards of beauty prevalent in society. Related to this, there has been considerable research on aggression and the role of media (Anderson et al., 2003). For boys, there are many models of aggression prevalent in the media. Popular children's movies, TV shows, and video games consistently depict physically aggressive behaviours being portrayed by protagonists, leading to normalization of such behaviours.

Not just this, gender-related stereotypes also direct the marketing strategies used by various agencies. For instance, J.K. Rowling, author of the famous Harry Potter series was encouraged by her publishers to use her initials instead of her full first and middle name, as her initials masked her gender and made her name sound like a man's name. It was believed this change would encourage more boys to buy her book, as they would have otherwise been deterred from reading a book by a female author (Smith, 2015).

Furthermore, the media also influences children's toy preferences. It is common for media to promote sex-typical toys for children, often marketing toys such as dolls and household items like the kitchen set for girls, and more active and traditionally masculine objects like trucks, cars, weapons, etc. for boys, giving further rise to gender stereotypes (Sweet, 2013).

These influences, of course, are not limited to only childhood, but continue to exert important implications throughout the lifespan. As people age out of childhood and enter adolescence, these factors still govern their day-to-day interactions and reinforce certain behaviors over others. However, it must be noted that the application of social learning theory to gender suggests that as a society's norms change, the behavior of models within that culture also change, thereby changing the way boys and girls behave (Helgeson, 2017).

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What are the basic principles that explain the social learning theories of gender development?

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- 2) What are the major socialization agents outside the family?

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- 3) Define the term stereotype threat.

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7.3 SOCIAL ROLE THEORY

Apart from the social learning theory, another theory which offers insight into the psychology of gender from a social psychological perspective is the social role theory. According to this perspective, social roles and the various role-related processes account for major differences in men's and women's behaviour (Eagly & Wood, 2011). This basically entails that men and women behave differently because of the different roles women and men hold in society (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2002). Thus, as compared to how individuals behave towards each other, this theory emphasizes on the larger societal role structures in shaping people's behaviour.

In most patriarchal societies, the division of labour between men and women depicts a certain type of domain specialization i.e., men are considered to be responsible for domains outside the home, while women are mainly given domestic and caregiving responsibilities. In fact, even when women are employed (as is becoming common in contemporary times), the responsibility of care-activities and household work is largely shouldered by them. In this way, men are able to develop a more agentic disposition, while women are conditioned in ways which are more communal in orientation (Eagly, Wood, & Johannesen-Schmidt, 2004).

In fact, most beliefs regarding sex-differences are rooted in the differentiation between communal and agentic attributes, giving rise to gender role expectations. Communal characteristics are considered to be typical of women, showing concern with the welfare of others. Women are thus expected to be affectionate, sensitive, kind, and nurturing. On the other hand, men are assumed to possess agentic characteristics, involving confidence and assertiveness. Moreover, gender roles also cover beliefs about many other aspects of men and women, such as their skills, abilities, emotional states, physical features, etc. (Deaux & Lewis, 1984). Based on this premise, the same qualities are expected and appreciated in men and women, leading to differences in their status in society.

In this regard, culture also plays an important role. Not all cultures exhibit similar notions about feminine and masculine behaviour. In societies where both men and women take up communal roles (e.g., Japan), both are perceived as equal as being communal is not considered to be a feminine gender stereotype (Steinmetz, Bosak, Szczesny, & Eagly, 2014). Therefore, men's and women's sex differences are not a product of only their biology, but are actively shaped by such social factors. Similarly, as men's and women's roles become more similar over time in certain Western cultures, sex differences have also decreased. Notably, with the advent of globalization, men and women are increasingly being provided with equal access to education and other opportunities, thereby allowing them to take up more similar roles in society. Some common trends in many post-industrial nations include delayed marriage and parenthood for women and their active participation in the workforce (Larson & Wilson, 2004).

7.3.1 Development of Gender Role Beliefs

The social roles men and women play in society are closely linked with the development of gender role beliefs. These beliefs prescribe how men and women should think, feel, and behave. People develop gender role beliefs as they observe male and female behavior and infer that both sexes possess corresponding dispositions. These gender roles are thus internalized by people amidst complex socialization processes and they exhibit them in their own social roles. For example, looking at the daily context, men and women may enact specific social roles, such that the women may take on more household responsibility, while men may focus on tasks which are traditionally defined as masculine in nature. These behaviors, when observed by the children in the family, may become internalized by the children and start to serve as self-standards against which they may shape their behaviour (Eagly & Wood, 2011).

Similarly, parents too, based on their own internalized standards, treat their sons and daughters differently. In many families, gendered division of household work is not just prevalent among the adults, but also among the children. In another example, girls often receive encouragement to express affiliative emotions, (e.g., sympathy and warmth), and to avoid conflict by directing negative emotions inward, as these emotional expressions are consistent with the female gender role. In fact, in many cultures, these social roles men and women occupy are regularly made explicit through various channels of communication. Parents and family members, often regularly emphasize (even to young children) the importance and inevitability of marriage and motherhood for women, actively attempting to shape them for their future family-related responsibilities. On the other hand, young boys are conditioned to take on the role of the family's bread-winner and protector.

7.3.2 Social Roles in Different Settings

Gender roles also play out in many other social contexts. For example, it is common for people to exhibit gendered behaviours with their romantic partners. In romantic relationships, men may act possessive and chivalrous, while women project themselves as caring and warm (Yoder, Hogue, Newman, Metz, & LaVigne, 2002). Moreover, role segregation can also be easily seen in the context of career choices people make. For example, compared to women, men are more likely to occupy leadership roles, military roles, and athletic roles. Whereas, women often choose occupations which focus on relational attributes such as teaching, nursing, etc.

These differences mainly stem from the representations of these roles that people see around. For instance, looking at media representation, one can easily notice a gendered segregation of what jobs people are shown as being engaged in. It is much more common to see men in achievement-oriented roles than women. Such assumptions are also usually shared among people in their broader cultural context, giving rise to gender stereotypes. Think about your own assumptions in this context. Who comes to your mind when you hear the term doctor or engineer or pilot? What about beauticians or secretaries or homemakers? Chances are that, we can quite easily identify the impact of such stereotypical role-expectations in our own thinking.

Furthermore, even when men and women might be playing the same role in the workplace, people hold different expectations from them (for instance, a female boss's assertive behaviour is criticized, while the same is appreciated in male bosses). Researchers have also explored social roles influencing people's political attitudes, such that women are more likely to endorse political candidates who promote social welfare, while men are more likely to endorse conservative candidates (Diekmann & Schneider, 2010).

7.3.3 Influence of Gender Roles on Behaviour

According to Wood and Eagly (2010), gender roles operate vis-a-vis bio-social mechanisms that influence many aspects of behaviour. Biological processes (such as hormonal changes) interact with socio-cultural factors (such as gender identity) to elicit gender-related differences.

Role of Hormonal Processes Research shows that specific social and gender roles played by people are activated by hormonal changes. Wood and Eagly (2010) point out that people experience an activation of such biological processes in response to the socio cultural factors that guide feminine and masculine behaviours within cultures. Brain areas like the medial prefrontal cortex and the ventral anterior cingulate are responsible for social interaction and thus, allow people to respond flexibly to others' expectations and engage in self-regulation. For instance, performance of masculinity is tied to dominant behaviours (like aggression, competition, etc.), requiring higher levels of testosterone (Booth et al., 2006). In contrast, culturally feminine roles (like parental bonding, and nurturance) are linked to higher levels of oxytocin, reduced cortisol and testosterone (Campbell, 2008).

Gender Identities As mentioned earlier, gender role perceptions serve as people's self-standards, paving the way for a gender identity to emerge. The term gender identity refers to the way individuals perceive themselves as male or female (in some cases, people may choose to identify with both or neither). In most societies, the sex assigned to people at birth becomes the basis of how others treat them and what expectations are imposed on them. These expectations coincide with the cultural notions of masculinity and femininity. Thus, the gender identity people develop reflect an internalization of the cultural expectations they are subjected to. These gender identities act as potent forces which guide people's attitudes, behaviour and self-regulatory processes. For example, women who consider themselves feminine are likely to exhibit feminine interests and display traditionally feminine behaviour such as warmth and kindness. Similarly, in order to display masculinity, men may seek opportunities where they may exhibit dominance and assertiveness (Eagly & Wood, 2011).

Influence of Others' Expectations It is crucial to understand that people are the biggest drivers of cultural influences. In most cultures, conforming to gender roles is rewarded, while any deviation from the same receives backlash. These rewards and backlash can be linked from small as well as big consequences. For example, women's success in stereotypically masculine roles may be penalized (Heilman et al., 2004). Similarly, a man might be ridiculed for behaving unassertively (e.g., Anderson et al., 2001). Thus, most people become accustomed to following what is expected from them by others in their cultural context. With time, these expectations also become internalized to form part of people's self-concepts. These gender-stereotypic expectations of masculinity and femininity require men and women to behave differently, pursue different goals, take on different roles and develop different skills and abilities accordingly. Finally, as people start regulating their behaviors as per gender-stereotypic self-concepts, they experience hormonal changes that accompany role performance.

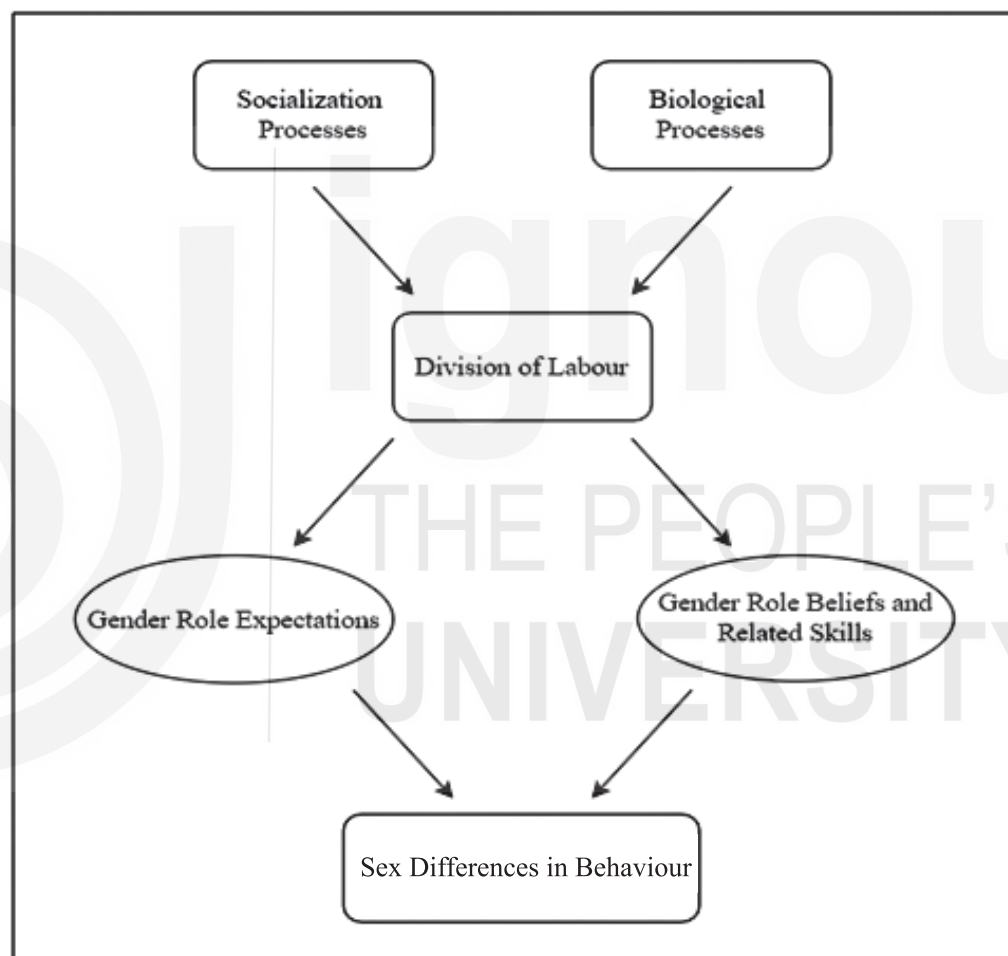


Figure 7.2 The Social Role Theory

Thus, socialization processes and biological mechanisms are linked to division of labour in any society. These influence gender role expectations that people feel the pressure to fulfill, and to the development of gender role beliefs and skills, finally causing sex differences in behaviour.

Therefore, these two perspectives shed light on the dynamic ways in which development of gender takes place. While the social learning theory emphasizes on the role of socialization agents in shaping people's understanding of gender, the social role theory takes cognizance of the various social roles people perform in a society. The way these social roles produce gendered expectations, gender role beliefs and related skills, ultimately produce sex differences in behaviour.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) According to the social role theory, sex-differences are rooted in which type of attributes?

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- 2) Briefly describe how parents shape their children's gender role beliefs.

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- 3) What are the processes linked with the influence of gender roles on behaviors?

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7.4 SUMMARY

To sum up what we have learnt in this unit, here is a quick recap:

- The social learning theory of gender development emphasizes the role of external factors, such as socialization agents (e.g., parents, peers, teachers, and the media) in shaping children's gender development.
- To begin with, the theory focuses on the principles of observation and imitation. Historically, the roots of observational learning can be traced back to the famous "Bobo doll" experiments conducted by Albert Bandura and his colleagues. It was pointed out that children actively observe and reproduce the actions and attitudes of models around them. This premise applied to gender-related beliefs and behaviours as well.
- Apart from observational learning, Mischel explained that children acquire gendered behaviour patterns (i.e., sex typing) based on the reinforcement and punishment different behaviours elicit for different sexes. Such socialization processes inform children which behaviours are approved for their sex and which behaviours are not. Thus, during childhood itself, children develop gender-related beliefs and preferences, and learn to devalue certain behaviours and emotional expressions.
- Many socialization agents play an active role in the development of gendered preferences. To begin with, parents serve as the first models of expected gender roles and behaviours. In families where parents exhibit traditional gender roles, children also mirror the same. Whereas, children tend to hold less traditional gender stereotypes if they are exposed to non-traditional gender behaviours in their home.
- Parents' own gender-related attitudes and stereotypes influence their different parenting practices. Moreover, parents also actively reward and punish children's sex-typed activities. Culture also plays a role in directing parents' child-rearing practices.

- Apart from parents, siblings also serve as important models after whom children base their own behaviours, as children spend considerable time with their siblings partaking in diverse activities. Outside the family, teachers, peers, and media also continually shape children's gendered behaviours.
- Another important theory in this regard is the social role theory. According to this perspective, men and women behave differently because of the different roles women and men hold in society. These roles impact the division of labour between men and women fuelling domain specialization (communal versus agentic). This further influences the emergence of gender role expectations which impact gender development during childhood.
- These social roles also become the basis of gender role beliefs, as people observe male and female behaviour and infer that both sexes possess corresponding dispositions. These gender roles are thus internalized and people exhibit them in their own social roles.
- Gender roles also manifest in certain ways in different social contexts, such as in romantic relationships, career choices, political attitudes, etc.
- Overall, socialization processes and biological mechanisms are linked to division of labour in any society. These influence gender role expectations that people feel the pressure to fulfill, and to the development of gender role beliefs and skills, finally causing sex differences in behaviour.

7.5 KEYWORDS

Social Learning Theory The social learning theory of gender development explains children's gender development through the influence of external factors, such as socialization agents (e.g., parents, peers, teachers, and the media).

Observational Learning Also known as modeling, observational learning indicates the tendency for a person to reproduce the attitudes, emotional responses, and behaviors by observing real or symbolic models.

Reinforcement Any response following a behavior that increases the likelihood of the behavior occurring again.

Punishment Any response to a behavior that decreases the likelihood of its recurrence.

Gender Stereotypes Widely held and generalized views about characteristics considered to be appropriate for men and women.

Stereotype Threat A situation in which a negative stereotype about a person's group makes them concerned about being judged or treated negatively on the basis of that stereotype.

Gender Roles Beliefs that prescribe how men and women should think, feel, and behave.

Gender Identity Representation of oneself on the basis of masculine and feminine attributes. It implies a perception of oneself as male or female (it can also be both or neither).

7.6 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Describe the basic principles of the social learning theory.
- 2) How can the principles of reinforcement and punishment impact children's gendered behaviours?

- 3) What is the role of parenting practices in reinforcing gendered beliefs and behaviours?
- 4) What are the important implications of the media in promoting children's understanding of gender?
- 5) How does social role theory explain the development of gender?
- 6) How are communal and agentic attributes associated with men and women?
- 7) Explain the ways in which gender roles influence behaviour.

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7.8 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- For more information on patterns of gender development:
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3747736/>
<https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-psychology/chapter/gender/>
<https://depts.washington.edu/dbpeds/healthy-gender-development.pdf>
- For more information on gender identity:
<https://caringforkids.cps.ca/handouts/behavior-and-development/gender-identity>
https://wp.nyu.edu/steinhardt-appsych_opus/aspects-of-gender-identity-development-searching-for-an-explanation-in-the-brain/
- For more information on gender roles and stereotypes:
<https://family.jrank.org/pages/686/Gender-Gender-Roles-Stereotypes.html>
<https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/10.1146/annurev-devpsych-051120-010630>

UNIT 8 EXPECTATION STATES THEORY AND GENDER SCHEMA THEORY*

Structure

- 8.0 Introduction
- 8.1 Expectation States Theory
 - 8.1.1 Role of Status Beliefs
 - 8.1.2 Scope of the Theory
 - 8.1.3 Gender Status and its Influence
 - 8.1.4 Research Evidence
 - 8.1.5 Recognizing the Role of Intersectionality
- 8.2 Gender Schema Theory
 - 8.2.1 Development of Gender Schemas
 - 8.2.2 Impact of Gender Schemas on other Processes
- 8.3 Summary
- 8.4 Key Words
- 8.5 Review Questions
- 8.6 References and Further Reading
- 8.7 Additional Online Resources

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After having read this Unit, you will be able to:

- Acquire understanding of the ways in which the expectation states theory explains gender development; and
- Elucidate gender development vis-a-vis gender schema theory

8.0 INTRODUCTION

In continuation of Units 5, 6, and 7, this Unit comprises two more theories of gender development i.e., the Expectation States Theory and Gender Schema Theory. These theories also expand on their underlying assumptions and explain the ways in which people acquire gendered beliefs and behaviors. Largely, for both the theories, their focus is on the covert cognitive processes that facilitate our understanding of gender and the ways in which our gender yields impact on various outcomes.

8.1 EXPECTATION STATES THEORY

Expectation states theory is a sociological theory of status and influence hierarchies (Berger, Fisek, Norman, & Zelditch, 1977; Berger & Zelditch, 1998; Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). It focuses on “the ways in which people create and maintain status hierarchies and how these hierarchies regulate inequalities in influence” (Reid, Palomares, Anderson, & Bondad-Brown, 2009). Similar to other social categories such as race, class, ethnicity, etc., gender as a category is also associated with status as per different societies’ cultural beliefs. For instance,

in most patriarchal societies, it is commonly believed that men are superior and more competent than women. These status beliefs associated with gender, thus become the basis for social inequality in day-to-day social situations.

Talking about the expectation states theory, Ridgeway & Bourg (2004) explained, “It offers a well-documented account of how gender, through the status beliefs associated with it, affects who is listened to in social encounters, who is judged to have the best ideas or the most ability, who rises to leadership, and who is directed toward or away from positions of power and influence in society” (pg. 218).

8.1.1 Role of Status Beliefs

Status beliefs are regarded as pervasive and agreed-upon cultural beliefs that explain the status relationship between different social groups in a society. Such beliefs pertain to social groups such as race, occupation, education, ethnicity, class, gender, etc. that characterize the social relations in a given society. Acquired through socialization processes (Fiske et al., 2002), status beliefs offer a comparative evaluation of importance, skills, and competence of people in one category compared to another (Berger et al., 1977). For example, men are considered to be better leaders than women. Or historically, white people were considered to be intellectually superior than people of color. In this way, when competence is equated with an appraisal of groups’ significance, status beliefs serve as a way of legitimizing inequality between people from different social categories. Thus, a social category like gender serves as a status characteristic in most societies. Research shows that these status beliefs become visible in early childhood years itself, and by secondary school years they appear to be fully developed (Persell, James, Kang, & Snyder, 1999).

Furthermore, status beliefs related to gender are also associated with specific gender stereotypes. As explained in Unit 3, gender stereotypes are widely held and generalized views about the status and characteristics considered to be appropriate for men and women. Generally, men are considered higher in status and overall competence than women. They are also considered to possess agentic attributes, while women are assumed to possess communal attributes (mostly considered less valuable than men’s instrumental attributes), giving rise to gender role expectations. These gender-stereotypes include beliefs about many aspects of men and women, such as their skills, abilities, emotional states, physical features, etc. (Deaux & Lewis, 1984).

Thus, these beliefs become evident in the way men and women engage with each other, since behaviour that goes against the accepted status of a particular gender is considered to be a status violation and generates backlash - leading to the status system being continually reinforced. For instance, women who are assertive are often disliked and resisted by others (Reid & Ng, 2006; Rudman & Glick, 2001). In order for them to be influential, they would need to replace assertiveness with tentative language in deference to the status hierarchy.

8.1.2 Scope of the Theory

Expectation states theory focuses on the importance of status beliefs in influencing people’s behaviour and evaluations of each other in collective/group tasks (Berger et al., 1977). These collective tasks could be a part of formal settings such as school and work, as well as informal settings such as among family or friends. When people must work with each other to achieve a goal, they need to evaluate how to behave and whose contributions are likely to be more or less useful; this evaluation is often based on their consensually agreed-upon status beliefs

(Ridgeway & Bourg, 2004). Thus, performance expectations from different groups corresponds to their status position. This entails that some people are expected to have greater task competence and they are expected to make more valuable contributions to collective tasks (Berger, Norman, Balkwell, & Smith, 1992).

Such individuals are likely to take on a proactive role i.e., they act as leaders, actively give ideas, and shape the decisions of the group. On the other hand, those who are lower on performance expectations are expected to perform a reactive and subordinate role (Mullen, Salas, & Driskel, 1989; Ridgeway, 1991, 1997). These performance expectations also have self-fulfilling effects on people's task-oriented behaviors and the evaluations they form in the situation. As a consequence, some actors receive more advantages or disadvantages compared to others in the same situation and it can affect the following decisions taken by people during group tasks:

- a) How likely are people to make task suggestions?
- b) How likely are people to ask for others' ideas?
- c) What kind of evaluation (positive/negative) people make about others' ideas?
- d) How easily are people influenced by others' ideas?

The answers to these decisions maintain specific behavioural status hierarchies. Those who experience higher performance expectations offer more suggestions, receive more attention and are asked for their opinions, their ideas are evaluated more positively, and they wield more influence during collective tasks. Since gender is a socially significant dimension, it is easily accessible and is often employed by people to categorize others who they work with (especially when gender is salient in the situation such as a gender-typed setting), thereby enabling priming of gender stereotypes and their related status beliefs (Banaji & Hardin, 1996).

8.1.3 Gender Status and its Influence

Now looking at the intersection of gender and the expectation states theory, the theory entails status beliefs pertaining to gender attribute greater social status and competence to men as compared to women. Because many gender stereotypes are commonly shared by both men and women, they tend to be prescriptive about how people should behave, so that men and women both engage in behaviors which align with gender status beliefs. This is especially true in mixed gender settings.

In such settings when the task is gender-neutral, men receive more advantages in performance expectations than women who are generally similar to them. This is also especially true for masculine tasks. While for feminine tasks, women may have slight advantages over men.

8.1.4 Research Evidence

There exists a plethora of support for the implications of the expectation states theory. Many studies have highlighted the relative advantages received by one gender compared to the other, in a variety of domains and behaviours. For example, men interact and offer more task suggestions in mixed-sex groups (Wood & Karten, 1986). They are more assertive, less likely to seek others' ideas and more influential than women (Carli, 2001). However, these differences are not evident in same-sex groups.

The theory also entails that differences in gender status produce differential performance evaluations for men and women, both by themselves and the ones

they make for each other. Studies show that the same task performance is often evaluated less positively when produced by a woman; this is especially salient when the task is male-typed, and it goes down when the task is stereotypically feminine (Swim, Borgida, Maruyama, and Meyers, 1989). Similar findings have also been reported for evaluations of ideas given by men and women. Not just this, they also impact people's inferences about abilities. For example, in a longitudinal study by Correll (2001) girls attributed less math ability to themselves than did boys, even though both groups obtained the same math test scores and grades.

Furthermore, literature from the domain of leadership also highlighted similar findings with men being more likely than women to be selected as leaders and to be rated effective in leadership positions.

8.1.5 Recognizing the Role of Intersectionality

It is important to note that while the aforementioned sections focus on the status beliefs associated with gender, the expectation states theory looks at individuals not just from the perspective of gender as a social category but has an aggregate whole of all of their identities that grants them a certain status in society. Apart from sex categories, people are also categorised according to many other social categories they belong to (such as education, sexual orientation, race, class, caste, etc.). Depending upon the salience of particular status characteristics at a given moment, other categories may combine with gender to influence the people's performance evaluations and other outcomes.

For instance, identities that are marginalized in multiple ways, such as a woman with disabilities, or a woman belonging to a disadvantaged socio-economic background, may experience a cumulative impact of their related status beliefs and would be treated differently than an able-bodied or upper-class woman.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What are status beliefs?

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2) In which type of tasks does status beliefs impact people's behaviours and evaluations?

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3) What is the relationship between performance expectations and status beliefs?

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8.2 GENDER SCHEMA THEORY

Proposed by Sandra Bem (1981), gender schema theory is an amalgamation of the cognitive development theory and social learning theory. A schema is a network of mental associations that represent dynamic knowledge structures. Gender schemas, thus, represent mental networks of information about gender and guide the ways in which people process, interpret, and organize gender-related information (Bem, 1981). In this way, taking cues from cognitive theories, the gender schema theory emphasizes how gender schemas aids thinking and understanding, and thus facilitates people in becoming gender-typed (Crawford, 2011).

8.2.1 Development of Gender Schemas

Bem (1981) acknowledged how almost all societies employ the distinction between males and females as a “basic organizing principle”. Different roles and tasks are assigned to the two sexes and people are expected to behave according to the traits, skills and behaviors that are considered appropriate for their sex. This process of assigning the notion of masculinity and femininity to being male and female is described by Bem as sex-typing and it universally impacts the development of gendered notions among children via facilitating the development of gender-based schematic processing. This gender-based schematic process can be explained as a “generalized readiness to process information on the basis of the sex-linked associations that constitute the gender schema” (Bem, 1981).

Therefore, through observational learning and various socialization agents, children easily learn information about society’s gender schemas. As they develop an understanding of their own sex and that of others, they start to link gendered attributes, roles, and behaviors that they observe in their environment with different sexes. For example, a child might observe their mother and other women regularly engaging in cooking, this may lead them to believe that, “cooking is for females.” Any new incoming information also interacts with the perceiver’s pre-existing schemas and builds on existing knowledge structures. Thus, such beliefs related to gender attributes, roles, and behaviors become solidified over time and create many feminine and masculine categorizations, which become the basis of how children encode and interpret others’ behaviours.

According to Bem (1983), people can be classified as gender schematic and gender aschematic. This distinction is based on how much people employ gender schemas to process information about the world. People who have well-developed gender schema and who often rely on gender as a dimension for organizing and interpreting the world are called gender schematic. On the other hand, people who do not have well-developed gender schema and who do not rely on the dimension of gender to facilitate their understanding of the world are referred to as gender aschematic. Thus, a polarization of masculinity and femininity emerges in children’s thought processes without them even realizing it. Not only this, these schemas also assimilate into people’s self-concepts, thereby leading people to develop a gendered view of themselves and making them become conventionally sex-typed. As a result, their evaluation of behaviour (both their own and others’) depend on the notions of what is considered to be gender appropriate behavior for a particular sex (Bem, 1993).

Apart from Bem, many other scholars also emphasized on the role of gender schemas. For instance, an empirical article on self-schemas and gender was published by Markus et al. (1982) in the *Journal of Personality and Social*

Psychology. Two other accounts on gender schemas were proposed by developmental psychologists – Liben & Signorella (1980) and Martin and Halverson (1981), largely focusing on the development and processing of sex-typing among children. Notably, Martin and Halverson (1981) identified two types of gender-related schemas. The first is a general "in-group-out-group" schema that facilitates children in categorizing different objects, behaviors, roles, and traits into basic male and female categories. The second is a narrower and more specific version of the first - known as the 'own-sex' schema, that children employ to identify and learn information consistent with their own sex.

8.2.2 Impact of Gender Schemas on other Processes

Research indicates that gender schemas impact a wide variety of processes. As mentioned above, people's perception of events is closely tied to their network of pre-existing schemas causing new information to build on previously acquired information (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). Individuals with easily accessible and potent gender schemas are more likely to quickly encode and organize information in schema-consistent categories. In this way, gender schemas lead to selective attention and selective memory. In an experimental study by Martin & Halverson (1983), young children around the ages of 5 and 6 were shown pictures of girls and boys engaging in stereotype-consistent activities and stereotype-inconsistent activities. After a week, children's memory for these pictures were tested and results indicated that children tended to misremember the stereotype-inconsistent pictures. Thus, early in life, these gender schemas become the basis of how children organize and filter information - schema-consistent information is easily processed, while information inconsistent with one's existing schema is mostly ignored (Signorella et al. 1997). This impact of gender schemas on information processing can also lead to distortion of information and drawing of incorrect inferences (Martin & Dinella, 2001).

Gender schemas also inform people's personal preferences (Bosson, Vandello, & Buckner, 2018). Many studies have highlighted sex-differences in children's preferences for what are considered to be masculine or feminine colors, toys, clothes, and play activities. In a study by Martin, Eisenbud, & Rose (1995), preschool children were offered gender-neutral toys in different boxes labelled "Boys" and "Girls." Results highlighted a preference for the "sex-appropriate" box among both boys and girls. In this way, gender-schemas serve as way of regulating people's behavior - they offer what Schank & Abelson (1977) called "scripts" or Goffman (1959) defined as "frames" i.e., they allow people to understand what can be expected in a given situation so people can figure out what sequence of action will need to be performed.

Another study highlighted that by early childhood, children also develop a stereotypical understanding of what occupations are suited for men and women. In fact, in their own occupational aspirations for their future, children consistently reported wanting to pursue gender-stereotypical occupations (Helwig, 1998; Teig & Susskind, 2008). For instance, research shows that women's interest in STEM careers declines with age (Miller, Blessing, & Schwartz, 2007). This decline can be attributed to the gender stereotypes and stereotype threat associated with women's math and science abilities leading to disengagement with these domains or due to girls' perception of discrimination in STEM careers (Hayes & Bigler, 2013).

Moreover, gender schemas also impact attribution processes since they include a diverse array of dimensions on which men and women are compared with each other. Not only do these schemas define on what dimensions men and women

fare better than each other (for example, men are stronger than women), but also how different dimensions may be relevant for the two sexes. To give an example, let us consider the example of modesty. While focusing on modesty is particularly common for women, it is rarely ever noticed or discussed as an important attribute for men. In the same vein, the attribute of strength is most often employed to describe men, while it is not as commonly used to describe women. Thus, as a child learns to apply these notions to the self, their self-concept becomes increasingly sex-typed.

Another important implication of this process is its direct impact on people's self-evaluations and self-esteem. As one's self-concept becomes sex-typed, these gender schemas serve as the basis on which people learn to evaluate their own worth and strive to emulate their behaviors and attitudes as consistent with these schemas in order to maintain a positive self-image (Kohlberg, 1966).

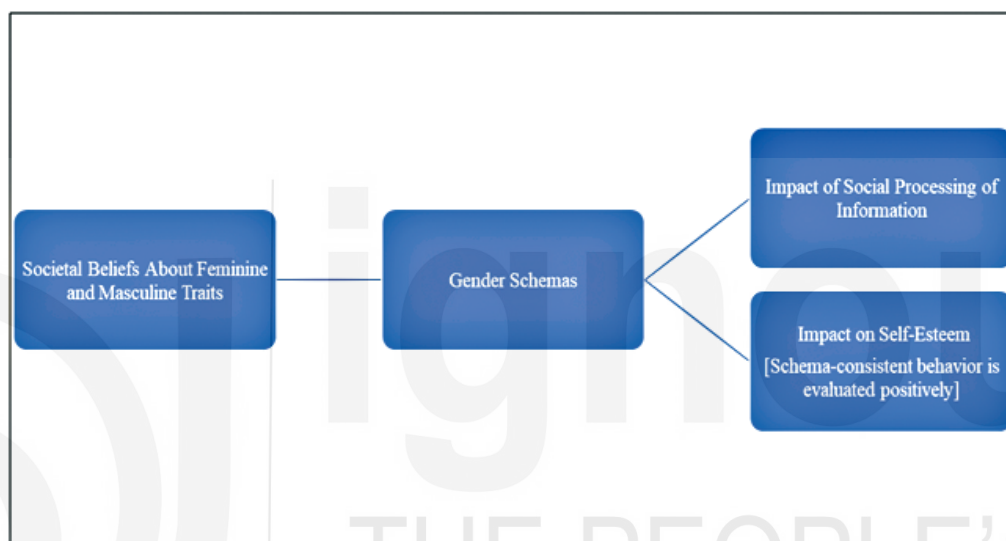


Figure 8.1 Gender Schema Theory

It is important to note that the gendered thinking and behavior emanating from gender schemas often begin in a rigid way, they do become more flexible across late childhood and adolescence as a result of increasing sophistication of cognitive processes. Although they remain relatively stable throughout adolescence and into adulthood (Priess & Hyde, 2011).

However, Bem (1983) acknowledged that it is possible to socialize children in a way that curtails the development of rigid gender schemas. In cultures where there is no strict distinction between the roles, activities, and traits exhibited by men and women, children will less likely internalize rigid gender schema. Furthermore, if adults in a child's life use gender-neutral language and do not use gender as a dimension for explaining others' behavior, it is possible that children would learn to differentiate between sex and gender and would not develop gender-stereotyped attitudes and behavior (Crawford, 2011).

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) What are the basic principles that explain the development of gender schemas?

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2) Define sex-typing with the help of an example.

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3) What are the types of gender schemas as explained by Martin and Halverson (1981)?

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8.3 SUMMARY

To sum up what we have learnt in this unit, here is a quick recap:

- The expectation states theory and gender schema theory provide insight into the covert cognitive processes that facilitate people's understanding of gender and the ways in which our gender yields impact on various outcomes.
- The expectation states theory focuses on the creation and maintenance of status hierarchies and the ways in which these hierarchies regulate inequalities in influence. Like many other social categories, gender is associated with status as per different societies' cultural beliefs.
- The status beliefs associated with gender explain how men and women are perceived in society. These beliefs allow the evaluation of importance, skills, and competence of people in one category compared to another.
- Status beliefs related to gender are also associated with specific gender stereotypes. Generally, men are accorded higher status and overall competence than women. They are also considered to possess agentic attributes, while women are assumed to possess communal attributes (mostly considered less valuable than men's instrumental attributes), thereby leading to the development of gender role expectations.
- The relevance of expectation states theory mainly pertains to the importance of status beliefs in influencing people's behavior and evaluations of each other in collective/group tasks where performance expectations from different groups corresponds to their status position.
- Finally, there exists a considerable body of work which highlights the implications of the expectation states theory in multiple domains.
- Gender Schema Theory explains the role of gender schemas in helping people process, interpret, and organize gender-related information. Bem described the influence of sex-typing in influencing the development of gendered notions among children through gender-based schematic processing.
- Research highlights the role of observational learning and various socialization agents that inform children about society's gender schemas.
- Bem (1983) also classified people as gender schematic and gender aschematic. This distinction is based on how much people employ gender schemas to process information about the world. Not only this, these schemas also assimilate into people's self-concepts, thereby leading people to develop

a gendered view of themselves and making them become conventionally sex-typed. As a result, their evaluation of behaviour (both their own and others') depend on the notions of what is considered to be gender appropriate behaviour for a particular sex (Bem, 1993). Finally, a wide variety of processes have proven to be linked to gender schemas.

8.4 KEYWORDS

Expectation States Theory The theory focuses on the creation and maintenance of status hierarchies and the ways in which these hierarchies regulate inequalities in influence.

Status Beliefs Pervasive and consensual cultural beliefs that explain the status relationship between different social groups in a society.

Gender Schema Theory Theory states that children actively construct mental representations about gender on the basis of observational learning and socialization processes.

Gender Schemas Mental networks of information about gender and they inform the ways in which people process, interpret, and organize gender-related information.

Sex Typing The stereotypical categorization of people as per the conventional perceptions of what is considered typical of each sex.

Gender Schematic The term gender schematic is used to describe people who possess well-developed gender schema and who often rely on gender as a dimension for organizing and interpreting the world.

Gender Aschematic People who do not have well-developed gender schema and who do not rely on the dimension of gender to facilitate their understanding of the world.

8.5 REVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) Define status beliefs. How are status beliefs linked to gender stereotypes?
- 2) Discuss the scope of the expectations states theory.
- 3) What are gender schemas? Explain the process of development of gender schemas.
- 4) Explain the impact on gender schemas on information processing.
- 5) How can children be raised in such a way that they do not develop rigid gender schemas?

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8.7 ADDITIONAL ONLINE RESOURCES

- For more information on Expectation States Theory:
<https://www.thoughtco.com/expectation-states-theory-3026316>
<https://www.encyclopedia.com/social-sciences/encyclopedias-almanacs-transcripts-and-maps/expectation-states-theory>
- For more information on Gender Schema Theory:
<https://healthresearchfunding.org/sandra-bems-gender-schema-theory-explained/>
<https://www.thoughtco.com/gender-schema-4707892>



