Sex and Gender

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This world and its phenomena are all about how we understand and make sense of them. From the very beginning we develop cognitive frameworks to understand and memorize novel information within our hippocampus. These schemas are actually the thought patterns or certain behaviors that we acquire to organize the information into distinct categories and their mutual relationship. Hence, what we think is based on the schemata that organize the current knowledge and construct an appropriate framework for the understanding of future. Needless to say, gender is the best example of schemata that runs genetically within the cultures.

Human beings are primordially divided into two categories; male and female (Richard, 1994). Sex is what creates a fine distinction between males and females based on the nature of sex organs and certain physiological characteristics they possess. For example, males are thought to have a different sex organ, a wide and taller muscular body, beard and heavy voice whereas women possess fragile body, compromised muscular strength, clear skin and soft voice; this is what sex differentiation means. The sex differences are exclusively physiological and anatomical in nature; for example the nature of sex hormones is entirely different in males and females; women possess estrogen whereas testosterone is predominately present in males. Both these hormones are responsible for developing sex related differences in individuals (Richard, 1994). The genetic predisposition is what defines the term sex; women have a pair of two X chromosomes whereas males are having one X and one Y chromosome hence their genetic makeup indicates XX and XY pairing respectively. Y chromosome is responsible for the development of testes and other similar male attributes.

Gender, on the other hand, encapsulates the range of attributes differentiating between and pertaining to the masculinity and femininity. Depending of the context, gender can be used to define biological sex, gender identity and sex driven social characteristics. Gender intends at denoting the social and cultural roles, responsibilities and obligations associated with varying sexes within a given society (Richard, 1994). The source of gender roles is not purely genetic in nature rather social norms and environmental factors play irrefutably significant role in their determination; interaction with the family members, peer groups, education and media are some social factors influencing gender stereotyping (Richard, 1994). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender as the socially established characteristics of men and women such as roles, norms and relationship between men and women. It must be noted that gender beliefs are highly culture specific in nature and can be modified over time (WHO, 2016). Based on the culture specific nature of gender roles, it is worth noting that in some societies, gender beliefs are more rigid as compared to the other ones. For example, women are thought to be home-makers whereas men are considered as the bread winners of the family responsible for the full fledge fiscal remittance of their family members. Based on the dynamic nature of gender roles, it can be seen that in some societies, women are making an active share in the employment sector comparable to the men. Moreover, gender roles are highly fluid in nature and are shifted substantially overtime.

Based on the above mentioned description, it can be concluded that gender and sex are two different terms; we cannot use them interchangeably. Sex is rigid and is a genetic predisposition whereas gender is reinforced by social norms; their varying approach is what draws a fine line between them. Sex do not define that pink color is for girls and blue is for boys but gender does; sex does not prohibits the males to wear high heels but gender does; sex does not say that men can not pursue nursing and related jobs but gender does (Buiten, 2016). Hence, in my opinion, gender and sex are two different entities aimed at defining and making distinction between the similar attributes.

Various approaches are propounded by biologists, sociologists and psychologists for defining the theoretical grounds of gender. Sociological theories emphasize the significance of social factors in the determination of gender roles whereas biological determinism suggests that behavioral differences between men and women are holding evolutionary grounds (Buiten, 2016). Furthermore, biological theories also suggest that behavioral differences between males and females are the potential consequences of hormonal differences that they possess.

Patriarchy is the phenomenon referring to the biased expected gender roles encapsulating dominant and leading roles of males and the subordination of women. Patriarchy is strictly culture specific in nature; males are preferred in the employment sector and are paid more than the women; women on the other hand are discouraged to reach the employment sector and are paid less than men (Henslin, 2001). Another example of patriarchy is the poor emotional control of women as compared to men due to which women are thought to be highly impulsive and verbal rather than being a rational being. In the cultures where patriarchy is embraced, men act as dominating figures in family making that make significant decision whereas women are directed to abide by these at any cost.

Socialization is the process defined as the ways through which beliefs, customs, norms and behaviors from one generation are transmitted to the next generations (Baker et. al., 2007). Socialization is highly dynamic process, responsible for the liveliness of customs and cultural hallmarks that perpetuate aversively within the cultures. The Social Learning Theory (SLT) of Albert Bandura suggests that human being learns new behaviors from his fellow beings after contemplative action of attention, observation, memory, retention and retrieval coupled with the positive reinforcement (Baker et. al., 2007). For example, a child observes his mother staying at home, cooking food and performing household chores and stores this information in his memory and learns that women are the homemakers whereas while observing his father going work daily, making important decisions, providing money and fulfilling the economical needs of all the family members, he inoculates his personality with the similar beliefs. These transitions at micro level determine the belief systems and norms of society at macro level. Hence, based on the interaction with other members of the society, gender beliefs are run in the cultures in long term.

Feminism is referred to an advocacy of the rights of women on the grounds of sexual equality. This concept favors the social, economical, political and personal equality of all the sexes regardless of the cultural and societal norms and beliefs. The term feminism was first denoted in the eightieth century in response to the inequalities in terms of the wage distribution in the western society. In the later years, it focused more on the equal rights of marriage, abortion, parenting, contract and the property rights of the women. This movement led to the development of Custody of Infant Act 1893, Tender Years Doctrine and Married Women’s Property Act 1870 (Roberts, 2017). The instances of marital rape came into light after this movement and it enabled the relevant institutions to develop intervention strategies accordingly. The Stand Point theory (SPT) explains the rationale behind feminism stating that person’s knowledge is what influences his social position, not his gender. Hence, women, if more knowledgeable and able than men must be prioritized in the workplace setting (Beasley, 1999). This theory considers the traditional science about sexual views as unbiased hence suggests that gender roles must not be stereotypes.

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