

Sociology of gender

chapter 1



**ASSIGN
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Interplanetary Theory Theory of complete and universal gender differences. Essentially, this is typically the way we explain gender inequality; as in that men and women are naturally and biologically so different, they are almost from different planets. Two tasks when we study gender? To explain both difference and inequality/ difference and dominance. Two central questions for explanations of gender

1. why is that that virtually every society differentiates people based on gender?

2. Why is it that virtually every society is based on male dominance? (basically every society is founded on the differences of gender and politics of gender inequality)

Two basic explanations for gender inequality

1. biological determinism

2. differential socialization

ie: nature vs nurture

Most arguments about gender start with biological differences.

Are men and women hardwired to be different, or are we taught to be different? Gender is not just a system of classification, it is also expressed in the near universal inequality between men and women. When we speak about gender, we are also inevitably speaking about hierarchy and dominance. sex differences catalogues of anatomical, hormonal, and chemical and physical differences between females and males. In reality, sex differences are not binary. There is an enormous amount of variation in maleness and femaleness. It is far from clear that biological differences automatically lead men to dominate women. sex biological apparatus; chromosomal, chemical and anatomical. Biological basis for the hierarchical, binary system we have of only two sexes. gender meanings attached to sex differences within a culture. Gender varies enormously across cultures and

even within cultures. Gender varies enormously while biological sex doesn't as much. Differential socialization these explanations assert that we are not born different, but that we become different through a socialization process. Domination is an outcome of society valuing men's experiences over women's. cross cultural differences in gender The differences between two cultures is typically greater than the differences between the two genders. There can be more variation between two females than there can be between a male and a female. How biological determinism and differential socialization are the same and both fail; 2 points

1. both schools of thought assert women and men are fundamentally different from one another
2. both assume that the differences between women and men are greater than the differences within men and within women.

****both fall into the interplanetary theory of gender difference, which is false. Both assume that gender inequality stems from gender difference; that difference causes domination**

****In reality, Gender difference is the product of gender inequality, not the other way around****

Essentially, they both assert that gender inequality cannot be totally ameliorated because it is rooted in our differences. social constructionism approach Refutes both biological determinism and differential socialization. Neither gender difference nor gender inequality is inevitable in the nature of things or in the nature of our bodies; neither difference nor equality is explainable in terms of differential socialization either. By eliminating gender inequality, we will be eliminating the foundation on which gender differences are made; leaving the differences among people to emerge in a context in which all of us can be appreciated for our individual uniqueness as well as

our commonality. invisibility of privilege In the past 30 years, feminists have focused on women's experiences. Feminism has made it clear that gender is a central axis in women's lives. When we think of gender, we think of femininity- gender study classes only being for women. Privilege as well as gender, remains invisible for white men. Men themselves are studied, but masculinity is not; the masculine experience is invisible; but men are gendered too and we need to recognize this. Invisibility is a privilege (whiteness, high class, male). White males are seen as the most objective; seen as unbiased when they make statements revealing the problems of gender, race, etc. Men tend to get very defensive when confronted with this notion that they are privileged. Hegemonic definition (of masculinity) There are multiple masculinities, but not all are created equal; influenced by race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, religion, etc. Masculinity held up as the opposite of femininity. "not a woman" definition of manhood that is also constructed in relation to various subordinate masculinities as well as in relation to women. Is the one form of masculinity that reigns supreme. Is held up as a model for all else to be compared against. It is like this ideal that is unattainable for more than a short period of time. emphasized femininity There is no hegemonic femininity because Hegemonic masculinity arose through competition among men within patriarchic societies. Masculinity must be earned, femininity is simply grown into. Organized around compliance with gender inequality and accommodating the interests and desires of men. Like succumbing... Emphasized femininity exaggerates gender differences as strategy of adaptation to men's power--stressing female qualities; playing by the rules of the excluded middle it is the place in the middle of the two binary positions of gender: where most women and men actually fall. There

is this assumption that men act like men no matter where they are and so do women, but this isn't true, as the positions we occupy are actually gendered. Deceptive distinctions many distinctions that we see in our everyday lives between men and women are actually not really gender differences at all, but differences that are the result of being in different position or in different arenas. The positions themselves are gendered, not the people within them. So it is the position/situation that determines the appearance of gendered behaviour. So the differences appear to be based on gender differences, but they are actually based on the situation. Men and women act differently in different situations that are gendered.

A) Communication differences are deceptive distinctions.

B) mathematic and financial abilities are deceptive distinctions: based on this notion it is not socially acceptable for women to be good at them, it's nothing biological. They actually can be very good. If you control for earnings, experience and education, men and women are the same.

****It is our experience and not our gender that predicts how we will behave****institutional gender neutralityIt is opportunity that predicts success, and not gender. When men lack opportunity they behave in more stereotypical feminine ways. We assume that institutions are gender neutral, but in reality, they are arenas that have been already established to reproduce and sustain masculinity.

Our behaviour in the family has more to do with family situation we are in than our gender socialization.

Men can be as mothering and nurturing in child rearing as women- if the situation requires it.

Women are in no win situation when in the workplace because the arenas

are already established to reproduce masculinity. So this "gender neutral" job really requires females to take on masculinity in order to be successful. illusion of gender neutrality Gender standards that are held up as the norm appear to us to be gender neutral. It means that people are being measured by what are thought to be objective standards; but really, masculinity is the bar to which we are all being held up to. (Simmel). So white men are seen as the most unbiased in their statements about gender or race inequality.

objective= male or white

A man in a position of power is seen as superior over woman, and his standards are not generically human at all- they are male biased. Gender varies... 1. across life course of an individual

2. across historical time within a culture

3. across cultures

4. across men and women within a given culture

but we speak about gender as though it is constant and universal common to all men and women. But it is fluid, ever changing assemblage. We need to pluralize masculinities and femininities. masculinities and femininities idea of multiple femininities and masculinities undercuts the idea that we are differentially gendered people occupying gender neutral positions. Also the idea that these femininities and masculinities are on a hierarchy, just tells us that domination exaggerates difference. Conclusions about gender difference research That there are some differences between women and men, but those differences are not as great or decisive to social change as we think. Differences in behaviour may be more due to situation/context than innate OR learned gender differences. Mean differences When we speak about gender differences, we are talking mean differences, not differences that

apply to every individual person. The mean scores tell us about the difference between two groups, but not between two individuals. Sociology deals with averages.

In fact, the differences among men and among women are greater than differences between men and women.

So these mean differences between men and women may tell us less than we think. It sort of supports this interplanetary theory of gender difference- in our culture we seem obsessed with trying to prove it to be true. Why is gender difference so important to us? Is the major question that we are trying to answer. In fact, we shouldn't even say 'opposite sexes' we should say neighbouring sexes. gendered societythe social institutions of our world-- workplace, family, school, politics, are all gendered--sites where dominant definitions are reinforced and reproduced and deviants are disciplined.

Organization of our society have evolved in ways that reproduce differences between sexes and the domination of men over women.

Assuming institutional gender neutrality serves to maintain the gender politics of those institutions. Summary1. men and women are more similar than different; despite dominant interplanetary theory

2. gender differences exist, but are neither complete nor absolute.

3. gender inequality and dominance are often explained using biological determinism and differential socialization.

4. inequality produces gender differences, not the other way around.

5. our social norms are really masculine norms- hegemonic masculinity

6. sexualitynot procreation but pleasure. Defined as any activity that produces sexual pleasure, Combination of attraction, behaviour and identity.

functionalismschool of thought that mainatains that the sex based division of

labour arose because it was a necessity for early human societies- hunting and gathering. ONSOCIOLOGY OF GENDER CHAPTER 1 SPECIFICALLY FOR YOUFOR ONLY\$13. 90/PAGEOrder Now