Calutta University

Semester 3

UNIT 4

CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENTS

PSYCHOLOGY OF GENDER

PSYCHOLOGY OF WOMEN AND THE STUDY OF GENDER

- The field of women Psychology emerged, in part, from the field of Differential Psychology or the study of differences. One difference that has long interested researchers is of course GENDER.
- Research on gender typically compares or contrasts males or females on some trait of interest.

- A different emphasis emerges, though, when studying the Psychology of women than when studying gender differences. Gender texts (eg Basow1992)tend to focus on comparisons or differences between males and females thus continuing in the tradition of Differential Psychology.

- The field of women Psychology addresses not only the differences and similarities but the unique aspects of women's development .e.g. some events happen only to women- menstruation , menopause, pregnancy and certain other events that happen predominantly to women-rape ,battering, sexual harassment.
- Research on these issues is incompatible with research comparing women to <u>men and they become lost in a gender focused text or course.</u>

Psychology of women

- Is an important field of study

- Its identity is strong and separate yet connected to Psychology as a whole.

- It provides a substantial amount of information to the knowledge base filling in key gaps.

- It focuses our attention on important and unique events in women's lives originally ignored in the androcentric research comprising much of Psychology prior to the modern women's movement.

- The Psychology of Women is no longer in its infancy; the field has matured into a strong area of

SEX --Biological or Physiological structures that are Male or female such as Genitals or Gonads.

Gender--Much more fluid concept. Refers to the masculine or feminine behaviours that develop through socialization.

Gender Roles--Culturally defined behaviours or traits and beliefs that dictate how males and females should act.

Gender Stereotypes--Overgeneralizations, often inaccurate about what men and women are like. E.g. the idea that men will not stop to ask for directions and women cannot read road maps. Thus gender stereotypes ignore the vast individual differences that exist within groups of women and groups of men.

Gender Identity- Is our perception of the self as psychologically male or female.

Transgendered individuals are said to have a gender identity problem, meaning their biological sex is incongruent with their psychological sex (S. Cole et al., 2000).

A transgendered person maybe biologically female but feel psychologically male and can choose to live life as a male. This transgendered individual may dress and behave like a man, i.e., take on the male gendered role. In some cases transgendered people seek to have surgery to change them biologically to the other sex. A person whose sex has been changed is a *transsexual* (S. Cole et al., 2000).

Sexual orientation refers to whether people prefer to have other-sex or same-sex persons as partners for love, affection, and sex.

Heterosexuals prefer other-sex partners,

Homosexuals prefer same-sex partners and bisexuals are accepting of other-sex and same-sex partners.

three dimensions:

• *Body:* our body, our experience of our own body, how society genders bodies, and how others interact with us based on our body.

• *Identity:* the name we use to convey our gender based on our deeply held, internal sense of self. Identities typically fall into binary (e.g. man, woman), Non-binary (e.g. Genderqueer, gender fluid) and ungendered (e.g. Agender, genderless) categories; the meaning associated with a particular identity can vary among individuals using the same term. A person's Gender identiy can correspond to or differ from the sex they were assigned at birth.

• *Social:* how we present our gender in the world and how individuals, society, culture, and community perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. Social gender includes gender roles and expectations and how society uses those to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms.

Each of these dimensions can vary greatly across a range of possibilities and is distinct from, but interrelated with the others. Person's comfort in their gender is related to the degree to which those three dimensions feel in harmony

Body

- Most societies view sex as a binary concept, with two rigidly fixed options: male or female, based on a person's reproductive anatomy and functions.

- But a binary view of sex fails to capture even the biological aspect of gender. While we are often taught that bodies have one of two forms of genitalia, which are classified as "female" or "male," there are Intersex traits that demonstrate that sex exists across a continuum of possibilities.

- This biological spectrum by itself should be enough to dispel the simplistic notion that there are just two sexes.

- The relationship between a person's gender and their body goes beyond one's reproductive functions.

- Research in neurology, endocrinology, and cellular biology points to a broader biological basis for an individual's experience of gender.
- In fact, research increasingly points to our brains as playing a key role in how we each experience our gender.

▪ Bodies themselves are also gendered in the context of cultural expectations.

▪ Masculinity and femininity are equated with certain physical attributes, labeling us as more or less a man/woman based on the degree to which those attributes are present.

▪ This gendering of our bodies affects how we feel about ourselves and how others perceive and interact with us.

▪ Gender identity is our internal experience and naming of our gender. It can correspond to or differ from the sex we were assigned at birth.

▪ Understanding of our gender comes to most of us fairly early in life. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, "By age four, most children have a stable sense of their gender identity." This core aspect of one's identity comes from within each of us.

▪ Gender identity is an inherent aspect of a person's make-up. Individuals do not choose their gender, nor can they be made to change it.

▪ However, the words someone uses to communicate their gender identity may change over time; naming one's gender can be a complex and evolving matter.

▪ Because we are provided with limited language for gender, it may take a person quite some time to discover, or create, the language that best communicates their internal experience. Likewise, as language evolves, a person's name for their gender

- **The two gender identities most people are familiar with are boy and girl (or man and woman), and often people think that these are the only two gender identities. This idea that there are only two genders–and that each individual must be either one or the other–is called the "Gender binary." However, throughout human history we know that many societies have seen, and continue to see, gender as a spectrum, and not limited to just two possibilities.**

- **In addition to these two identities, other identities are now commonplace.**

- **Youth and young adults today no longer feel bound by the gender binary, instead establishing a growing vocabulary for gender. More than just a series of new words, however, this shift in language represents a far more nuanced understanding of the experience of gender itself.**

•Terms that communicate the broad range of experiences of non-binary people are particularly growing in number. Genderqueer, a term that is used both as an identity and as an umbrella term for

Social

➢ **Social gender is the third dimension. This includes Gender expression, which is the way we communicate our gender to others through such things as clothing, hairstyles, and mannerisms.**

➢ **It also includes how individuals, communities and society perceive, interact with, and try to shape our gender. Social gender includes gender roles and expectations and how society uses those to try to enforce conformity to current gender norms.**

➢ **Practically everything is assigned a gender—toys, colors and clothes are some of the more obvious examples. We begin to teach children about gender from the moment they are born; given the prevalence of the gender binary, children face great pressure to express their gender within narrow, stereotypical definitions of "boy" or "girl."**

➢ **Expectations regarding gender are communicated through every aspect of our lives, including family, culture, peers, schools, community, media, and religion. Gender roles and expectations are so entrenched in our culture that it's difficult to imagine things any other way.**

➢ **Children who express gender outside of these social norms often have a difficult experience. Girls thought to be too masculine and boys seen as feminine face a variety of challenges. Kids who don't express themselves along binary gender lines are often rendered invisible or steered into a more binary gender presentation.**

➢ **Pressures to conform at home, mistreatment by peers in school, and condemnation by the broader society are just some of the struggles facing a child whose expression does not fall in line with the binary gender system.**

➢ **Because expectations around gender are so rigid, we frequently assume that what someone wears, or how they move, talk, or express themselves, tells us something about their gender identity.**

➢ **But expression is distinct from identity–we can't assume a person's gender identity based on their gender expression. For example, a boy may like to wear skirts or dresses. His choice in clothing doesn't define his gender identity; it simply means that he prefers (at least some of the time) to wear clothes that society has typically associated with girls. In fact, how we interpret a person's gender and the assumptions we make about them is related to our personal understanding of gender and the norms and stereotypes we have integrated—it isn't about them.**

Finally, norms around gender change across societies and over time. One need only consider men wearing earrings or women having tattoos to see the flexibility of social expectations about gender.

➢ **Even the seemingly intractable notion that "pink is for girls, blue is for boys" is relatively new. Prior to the mid-twentieth century, pink was associated with boys' clothing and blue with girls' clothing (still due to the gendering of colors, but with a different rationale associating each color with particular gendered characteristics).**

Congruence

Gender congruence is the feeling of harmony in our gender:

•experiencing comfort in our body as it relates to our gender;
•naming of our gender that adequately corresponds with our internal sense of who we are;
•expressing ourselves through clothing, mannerisms, interests and activities;
•being seen consistently by others as we see ourselves.

Finding congruence is an ongoing process throughout each of our lives as we continue to grow and gain insight into ourselves. It is most often found through *exploration.* For some, finding congruence is fairly simple; for others, it is a much more complex process. But the fundamental need to find gender congruence is true for us all, and any degree to which we don't experience it can be distressing.

"**Transitioning**" **is a term commonly used to refer to the steps a transgender, agender, or non-binary person takes in order to find congruence in their gender.**

But this term can be misleading as it implies that the person's gender identity is changing and that there is a moment in time when this takes place.

More typically, it is others' understanding of the person's gender that shifts. What people see as a "Transition" is actually an alignment in one or more dimensions of the individual's gender as they seek congruence across those dimensions.

A transition is taking place, but it is often other people (parents and other family members, support professionals, employers, etc.) who are transitioning in how they see the individual's gender, and not the person themselves. For the person, these changes are often less of a transition and more of an evolution

A person can seek harmony in many ways:

•*Social congruence measures:* **changes of social identifiers such as clothing, hairstyle, gender identity, name and/or pronouns**;

•*Hormonal congruence measures:* **the use of medical approaches such as hormone "blockers" or hormone therapy to promote physical, mental, and/or emotional alignment;**

•*Surgical congruence measures:* **the addition, removal, or modification of gender-related physical traits; and**

•*Legal congruence measures***: changing identification documents such as one's birth certificate, driver's license, or passport.**

Personal Gender

  While the Dimensions of gender and the desire for congruence are common to us all, ultimately gender is personal. Each dimension of gender is informed by our unique intersection of identities, experiences, and personal characteristics.

  We are more than our body, gender identity and gender expression: we are also our race, ethnicity, class, faith, sense of geographic place, family history, and more.

  Our gender is personal because, while we share some of these aspects of self with others, the way that all of these identities, influences and characteristics come together is unique to each of us.

✓ Agender is a person without a gender. An agender individual's body does not necessarily correspond with their lack of gender identity.

✓ Often they are not concerned with their physical sex, but may seek to look androgynous.

✓An androgyne is a person who identifies and/or physically appears as neither man nor woman.

Cis
Cis, which is short for cis gender, refers to people whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth.
So if you were born with a penis and you feel and consider yourself to be male, you'd be a cis gender male.

Gender fluid

A gender fluid individual does not see themselves as male or female, but may identify as one or the other depending on the day. This is referring to being fluid with their gender expression, which is different than one's gender identity. Gender expression is a person's physical characteristics, behaviors, and presentation that are linked to either masculinity or femininity.

Gender fluid individuals may express one gender through clothing or interests one day and then identify as another the next.

This identity is a variety. This person may identify as male or female,

between or beyond genders, or a combination of genders.

These individuals often challenge gender stereotypes and the gender binary system of male and female. They often are fluid in their gender expression.

Genderqueer is also a term that gives respect to one's sexual orientation. They may not identify as either heterosexual or same-gender loving. This term is gaining popularity in society. (Alternative is non binary.)

Intersex

Intersex is the term used for a variety of medical conditions in which a person is born with chromosomes, genitalia, and/or secondary sexual characteristics that are inconsistent with the typical definition of a male or female body. Individuals are not always aware that they have this condition, but it is an identity that some choose to share.

Gender Non-conforming

Gender Non-conforming is a person who either by nature or by choice does not conform to gender-based expectations of society. This identity goes along with a lot of the ones above.

Basically, think of all the gender stereotypes out there, like pink for girls or guys having muscles. This person chooses to not conform to these, or may identify as the opposite sex, such as transgender individuals.

Transgender (Trans Male or man, Trans Women or female, Trans Person)

Transgender is an umbrella term for those individuals whose gender identity does not match with the one assigned for their physical sex. It includes, among others, transmen, transwomen, genderqueer people, crossdressers, and drag queens/kings. Generally, it refers to anyone whose behavior or identity falls outside of stereotypical expectations of gender.

Transgender people may identify as straight, gay, bisexual, or some other sexual orientation. It is sometimes shortened as trans. Not everyone may identify as transgender, but rather just the gender they identify with, and it should never be assumed.

Pansexual

A **pansexual person** is someone who is attracted to people regardless of the person's gender.

Bisexual

Bisexual people are attracted to people of all genders. A **common misconception** is that bisexuality reinforces the gender binary, or that bisexual people only date cis folks. In reality, bisexual people date and are attracted to both their own gender and genders other than their own (not just "men" and "women").

Sapiosexual

Sapiosexuals typically don't deal with the same prejudices as people that aren't cishet go through, but we included this because it's a word being used a lot lately, and you might be curious as to what it means. A sapiosexual is someone who is turned on and attracted to intelligence, or someone's mind before their appearance

BIASES IN CONDUCTING THE RESEARCH PROCESS

ANDROCENTRISM-
The tendency to view the world from a male perspective ;the assumption that the male perspective is normative and the female perspective is "other".
Bem (1996)defines Androcentrism as the privileging of males ,male experience and the male perspective". E.g. the generic use of masculine pronouns like "He" to refer to everyone and anyone.

Ethnocentrism-
The tendency to view the world from the perspective of a particular culture or group; the assumption that ones own group is normative and other groups should be measured against this standard.

Ageism-

Biased against people based on their age.

Heterosexism-

Assuming that heterosexuality is normative and anything else is different in a negative way.

Biology, socialization and culture interact to create gender but the influence of biology on gender is minimal or nonexistent.

Gender as a subject variable-
The notion that characteristics within a person related to that person's gender affect their behavior.

Gender as a Stimulus Variable-
The notion that a person's gender triggers different responses from other people ,which influence how the person behaves.

A common theme in Psychology of women is that gender as a subject variable has very little effect on behaviour but gender as a stimulus variable has a powerful influence on behaviour.

EXPLAINING GENDER

Gender typing-

Processes through which individuals acquire the roles, behaviours and values that society deems appropriate for them as men or women.

Theories of Gender typing attempt to provide universal explanations of how gender differences develop.

Psychodynamic Theories: Freud and Biological Identity

(Behaviour is motivated by unconscious forces or conflicts over which people have little control).

"Anatomy is destiny"-

Freud believed our anatomy ,specifically our genitalia ,in large part determines our adult personality.

➢ *Psychosexual Stages of Development with special emphasis on Phallic stage and female characteristics like passivity, inferiority masochism and jealousy arise from the conflicts of the phallic phase.*

➢ *Freud believed that developments during the phallic stage are crucial to gender typing and later personality.*

➢ *Children become gender typed by identifying with the same sex parent and by acquiring this parents behaviours and beliefs .*

➢ *Girls are less gender typed as compared to boys because they are less similar to their mothers for not having castration anxiety.*

<u>Evaluation</u>

➢ *Freud's theory is anti woman and blatantly anti feminist in its biological determinism . (Millet 1971)*

➢ *Explains Male and female development from a patriarchal context.(Millet 1971)*

➢ *Research suggests that young children are not very knowledgeable of anatomical differences between male and females(Bem 1989)*

➢ *No evidence that young children feel desire for their opposite sex parent*

Lerman (1986) note that "Freudian theory is so fundamentally flawed in it thinking about women that it cannot be repaired………Assumptions about the inherent inferiority of women are embedded within the very core of Psychoanalytic theory."

Post and Neo Freudians

<u>Karen Horney</u>

➢ *Horney moved away from Freud's emphasis on biological influences to a greater emphasis on environmental and cultural influences.*

➢ *Women did not envy the penis but envied what the penis represented.*

➢ *Womb Envy*

Nancy Chodorow (1978;1989)

▪ *Believed that women's involvement in mothering leads to development of different identities for boys and girls.*

▪ *Initially boys and girls identify with the mother. In the process of acquiring masculinity , boys use their mother as a negative model Thus developing a masculine identity means wrenching away from the mother and any feminine identity that has been formed.*

▪ *Boys move toward a <u>positional identity</u> i.e. sense of self based on position in the society.*

▪ *Girls develop a <u>relational Identity</u> i.e. sense of self based on relationship with others. This capacity for relatedness equips girls with a richer emotional life and greater capacity to care for others.*

Social Learning Theory (Albert Bandura 1977)

✓ *Acquisition of gender identity by observation ,imitation and differential reinforcement.*

✓ *Society gives approval for behaviours that are traditionally gender typed.*

✓ *Children choose as role models those individuals who seem typical or representative rather than atypical models.*

✓ *Parental reactions are critical in development of gender identity.*

Evaluation

• *The theory would predict more strongly gender typed parents would have more strongly gender typed children but this is not the case.*

• *The theory also does not explain why children will do things they have not been reinforced for.*

• *Children donot always imitate same sex model –it depends on what the model is doing. Thus girls are likely to imitate more a woman who is acting submissively than one scowling with the auto mechanic. This suggests that children already have gender stereotypes and use this in deciding whether or*

Bandura revised his theory in 1986 calling it <u>Social Cognitive theory</u>.

❖ *In a major change to the theory, children are now regarded as active participants in their socialization rather than as passive subjects swept along by external rewards and punishments.*

❖ *As children get older they internalize gender linked standards and react with self approval for same gender actions and with self criticism for cross gender activities.e.g.4 year old boys felt good about themselves if they played with a truck and bad about*

COGNITIVE THEORIES

Focus on how we think about gender and how our thought processes influence behavior. Kohlberg's cognitive developmental theory and Gender Schema theories of Bem fall under this category.

Cognitive Developmental Theory

Kohlberg's (1966) cognitive developmental theory states that children must develop a cognitive understanding of gender identity, stability and consistency before they will act in gender typical ways.

Gender identity - the understanding that one is male or female.

Gender Stability-understanding that gender stays the same across time.

Gender consistency- understanding that gender stays the same across situations such as changes in appearance.

Gender constancy-form of cognitive conservation in which a person understands that gender is determined by biological factors e.g. genitalia and cannot be changed by altering a person's appearance e.g. voice, hair or clothing. Thus gender is understood to be a permanent, unchanging feature of individuals.

Evaluation-

✓ **Gender constancy does not seem to precede or bring about gender typed behavior.**

✓ **Bem noted that preschool children construct much more rigid gender roles for males than females which is not adequately explained by the cognitive developmental theory.**

✓ **If roles were constructed solely on the basis of cognitive processing of biological differences, then female roles should be as restrictive as male roles. This suggests that culture, in addition to cognitive processing is important in construction of gender typing.**

Experimental findings suggest that relationship between

gender constancy and toy preference are not found for

girls thus indicating girls are less gender typed than boys

or may choose masculine toys and activities because they

are associated with greater social power than feminine

GENDER SCHEMA THEORY

We form categories or schemas that organize information in memory as male or female. These gender schemas then influence what information is attended to and remembered. Further people value positively those attributes associated with their own gender.

A simple gender schema involves association between an object or behaviour and a gender label. Thus children use simple gender schemas when they associate boys with trucks and dolls with girls. Such gender schemas are constructed as children develop in a gendered world.

Boys and girls will attend and remember information they believe is consistent with their own gender. Thus exposed to the same information, they retain and process it differently.

Gender schema theory believes that gender typed behavior can be changed only if the culture in which it exists changes.

In Kohlberg's theory children are motivated internally to behave in ways consistent with their knowledge of gender. In gender schema theory, children are however externally motivated to behave in ways consistent with other members of their gender by cultural conceptualization of gender as two distinct categories.

Evaluation

• It stresses on the importance of culture on the development of child's gender typing.

• Good deal of research support for gender schema theory.

• But children's knowledge of gender does not always predict their behavior or preferences.

• Girls are more flexible than boys about gender stereotypic traits.

SOCIAL ROLE THEORY

Alice Eagly (1987)

Social Role theory suggests that gender differences among adults are maintained by the social roles that men and women hold in society. Men and women occupy different positions and occupations in society leading to gender role expectations and gender typed skills and beliefs. These expectations, skills and beliefs create gender differences in numerous social behaviours such as aggression and helpfulness. In sum, the theory states that men and women behave differently because they fulfill different social roles.

Evaluation

➢ It does not address the gender typed behaviour during infancy and childhood, but concentrates on structural factors that maintain gender differences in adult's behaviour, particularly social behaviours.

➢ It is unable to account for the initial differences in the division of labour between males and females.

FEMINIST PERSPECTIVES
Gender as Social Construction

▪**Gender exists not in individuals but in the interaction between people.**

▪**It does not exist in and of itself; it is constructed or invented.**

▪**This can be contrasted with *Essentialism (*the belief that gender resides in the individual separate from the various external contexts of social life.).The Essentialist view maximizes gender differences**

▪**The *constructionist* view does not minimize or maximize gender differences because bit does not assume there is a "truth" about differences.**

▪**Gender does not exist in itself but is constructed.**

Another unifying feature of the feminist theory is that women's experiences give them a different perspective of the world and this perspective is important to understand.(Morawski).Women who have given birth and are primary caregivers for these children will have a different outlook on the parent child relationship and on child rearing.

A 3rd feminist theme is that women's behavior is consistent with their relative lack of power in society. From their position of dominance, men define the characteristics of the "normal" women which include submissiveness, passivity, docility ,lack of initiative, ability to act, to decide.
If subordinates adopt these characteristics, they are considered well adjusted.

Evaluation

Alternative perspective

Attempts to understand the diversity of findings on gender typing have led to the integration of different theories.

Gender Typing is a multi dimensional concept and can be best understood by taking an Eclectic Approach that combines the strongest concepts of all the theories.

• An individual's **gender identity**, a personal sense of one's own gender, may be described as androgynous if they feel that they have both masculine and feminine aspects.

• The word "androgyny" can refer to a person who does not fit neatly into the typical **masculine** and **feminine** **gender roles** of their society. Many, but not all, androgynies identify as being mentally between woman and man. They may identify as "gender-neutral", "**genderqueer**", or "**non-binary**".

• A person who is androgynous may engage freely in what is seen as masculine or feminine behaviors as well as tasks. They have a balanced identity that includes the virtues of both men and women and may disassociate the task with what gender they may be socially or physically assigned to.

• People who are androgynous disregard what traits are culturally constructed specifically for males and females within a specific society, and rather focus on

Gender expression

• **Gender expression** which includes a mixture of masculine and feminine characteristics can be described as androgynous. The categories of masculine and feminine in gender expression are **socially constructed**, and rely on shared conceptions of clothing, behavior, communication style, and other aspects of presentation.

• In some cultures, androgynous gender expression has been celebrated, while in others, androgynous expression has been **limited or suppressed.** To say that a culture or relationship is androgynous is to say that it lacks rigid **gender roles**, or has blurred lines between gender roles.

• According to Sandra Bem, androgynous men and women are more flexible and more mentally healthy than either masculine or feminine individuals; undifferentiated individuals are less competent.