

Inclusivity in a Gendered Society

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ABSTRACT

The immense scope, dynamic nature and perceived commonness of the nature of social concepts makes Social Psychology a challenging field. It, however, provides valuable insight into developing consistent and reliable frameworks to understanding commonplace phenomena. Gendering is one such phenomenon that often begins from an individual's birth and continues to persist throughout various developmental stages. This affects one's attributes, etiquette, choices, decision making and associated practices, that ultimately impact their course of life. Advancements in modern technology as well as multiple avenues generating streams of support are vital measures to curb the widening gaps, still prevalent in our world. This study emphasizes the interactions between an individual's internal world, external environment, virtual spaces and social experiences in gaining perspective on the availability of opportunities for growth. Gendering or socialization according to dominant social norms can perpetuate generational cycles of bias and inequality impairing the ability to fulfill personal obligations, often due to marked disturbances in prioritization of tasks according to gender roles. Furthermore, there is also the internalization of gender based prejudice and discrimination in the form of sexism, in day to day scenarios, that promote inequality amongst the population. Therefore, we aim to explore the intricacies of gendering, sexism and prejudiced representations in family, academia, organizational and virtual environments, to uncover crucial aspects of career advancement and personal development of the oppressed.

Keywords: *Gendering, Virtual Spaces, Generational Cycle, Career Advancement*

Three stages have been identified in studying men and women since the 1970s. The initial assumption was that the differences were mere due to sex, on the basis of biological differences between the two counterparts. We then went on to establish that gender is the construct responsible for these differences, and is born out of socializations and social roles that are bestowed upon an individual. It is only the third stage that identifies gender as the form of social organization in various aspects of systems such as daily life, legal provisions, organisational policies, economic development, political environment and of course familial systems. (Beth Hess & Myra Marx Ferree, 1987).

However, despite decades of having been established as an integral analytic dimension in sociology by feminist sociologists, (Judith A. Howard & Jocelyn A Hollander, 1997) it remains seemingly unimportant to professionals from other domains. For instance, despite a

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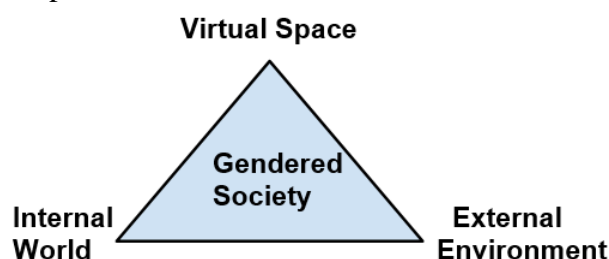
rise of masculinist and queer archeologists, a large part of the associated literature is centered around women. (Diaz-Andreu & Lucy, 2007). This phenomenon of treatment of gender as being related to only the female gender category through the process of being taught through feminist literature only is known as ghettoisation of gender studies. While this approach is necessary, it also lacks sustainability. (Santoso & Widyawati, 2020)

The field of Social Psychology is predominantly concerned with individuals and their relationships and interactions with the world around them. Social situations can often be ambiguous and open to interpretation. Therefore, three traditional approaches to explaining these social phenomena are by the conceptual frameworks of *social influence*, the effect of others' interpretations of one's actions, *evaluation apprehension*, concern towards social perception and *diffusion of responsibility*, a process that underlies the bystander effect. Social exchange, social cognition and symbolic interaction theories provide the necessary theoretical frameworks to analyse these complex situations through the lens of social psychology.

The psychological study of such social situations takes into consideration the makeup of an individual involved in such situations, including their behaviour in terms of personality, emotionality and cognitive attributes. Sex and gender are associated with the study of all three.

Gender Differences in Gendering

“If one had to predict a person’s life course, on the basis of a single attribute, the best choice would probably be gender.” These lines from *The social psychology of female-male relations: A critical analysis of central concepts* progress to highlight the implications of a person’s sex, in terms of personal growth, starting developmental milestones to their lifescipt. (Katz, P. A. (1986). While sex is fundamentally a product of the genetics and biology of an individual, gender can be a form of social identity, and play an integral role in crafting one. Individual and Collectivism (INDCOL) dimensions focus on the significance of cultural groups in the peaceful existence of groups and individuals alike. (Triandis et al., 1998). Therefore, culture can be conceptualized as a variable that focuses on individual difference to illuminate the effects it has on people’s behaviour. (Tehrani & Yamini, 2022). A collective finding of the literature reviewed for the same study by Tehrani and Yamini, found that women are perceived to be more collectivistic. The American Psychological Association’s definition of collectivism explains it as one’s tendency to view themselves as a member of a larger group, rather than as an individualistic entity. As a concept, it is an ideology that promotes unity of a group, over one’s personal and individual functionality. Societies that place comparatively higher value on collectivism also stress on cooperation, allegiance to one’s own group and conformity to cultural roles. This is where we see an overlap between gender and cultural identity. Therefore, the social environment, or the influencers have been categorized into the three domains- Internal World, External Environment and Virtual Space.



Internal World

Gender provides cues to a young mind to capture the nuances of their world. Their learning develops into self-talk, which is an essential component of self-motivation. Therefore, thoughts, feelings and behaviours are fundamental parts of one's internal world. This remains open to modification through interactions with non-internal stimuli which act as reinforcers throughout the course of life, continuing to have an impact on the individual's cognition.

External environment

The external environment here, comprises familial interactions, peer groups, organizational environments, public spaces, mass media, as part of the Microsystem, Mesosystem and Exosystem respectively. Finally social, cultural and national normalities, legal, ecological, and political systems, the constituents of Macrosystem are the additional influencers that play a role.

Virtual Space

The virtual space is an extension of society, which exists in the online world. This may include all components of the external environment, with the added strengths and limitations incorporated through technological advancements. Through the years, social media has penetrated the day to day lives of individuals across all stages of lifespan, albeit for their own interests and growth. The availability of content, exposure to information and ability to interact with others to reach a wide audience, from a state of comfort provides flexible forms of learning opportunities from the virtual space.

Scope for future studies

This study provides a framework for continued investigation in the field of social psychology with further application in various other areas, including but not limited to:

- Organizational Psychology
- Gender Studies
- Psychological Interventions

Furthermore, additional research would be beneficial in taking a solution focused outlook towards the concerns highlighted, to address the challenges posed by gendering of society.

CONCLUSION

Over the recent year, there has been a shift towards gender neutrality as an attempt to promote inclusivity of genders across various platforms. However, this does not guarantee an equal or equitable distribution of resources for individuals to utilize.

The construction of gender and its associated roles is still connected to a feminine-masculine duality. This can be used to understand the components of the culturally mediated expectations, roles, beliefs and systems that exist in individuals and thus, society. Therefore, in order to aid progression, we would benefit from finding a balanced perspective between the notions propagated by the two concepts, since dualism can further reinforce the views that sex is binary and the traits bestowed by sex on an individual is irreversible and genetically predisposed.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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