
UNIT 6 PSYCHOANALYTICAL AND COGNITIVE APPROACHES TO GENDER DEVELOPMENT*

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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
- Learn about 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
- 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

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 INTRODUCTION TO 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.

**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.*

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.

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

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.

of the figure (represented by the father), the boy comes to acquire the masculine characteristics align with his gender.

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 the 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 phallogocentric, 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 (pronounced Horn-eye) 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 phallogocentric. 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 Chodorow's

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).

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) Who are 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 finally Gender Constancy (by age 7).

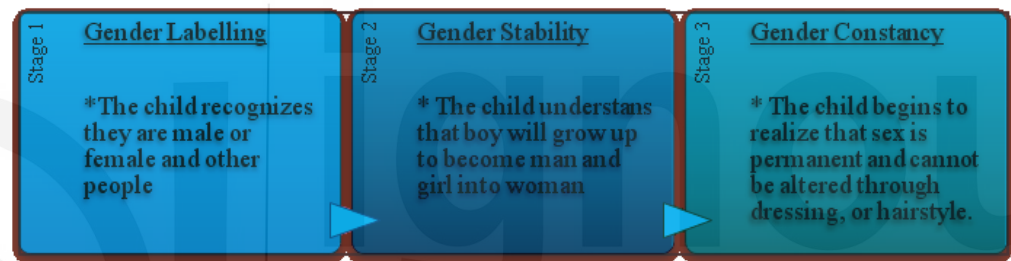


Figure 6.2 Gender Identity Development Theory

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.

6.2.1 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).

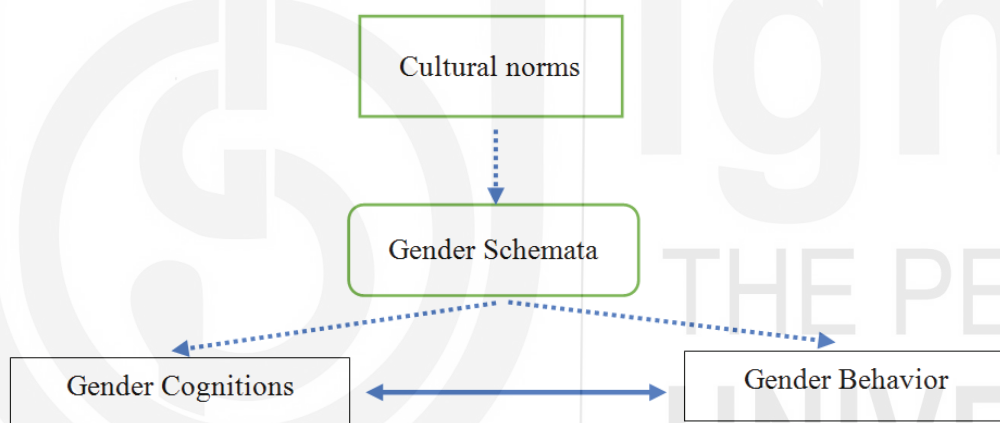


Figure 6.2 Gender Schemata linking gender cognitions to gender behaviour

Sandra Bem 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's 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 (e.g., 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.

6.2.2 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.

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?

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 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.

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.

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.

6.2.3 Social Cognitive Theory and Gender Development

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.

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.

6.2.4 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.

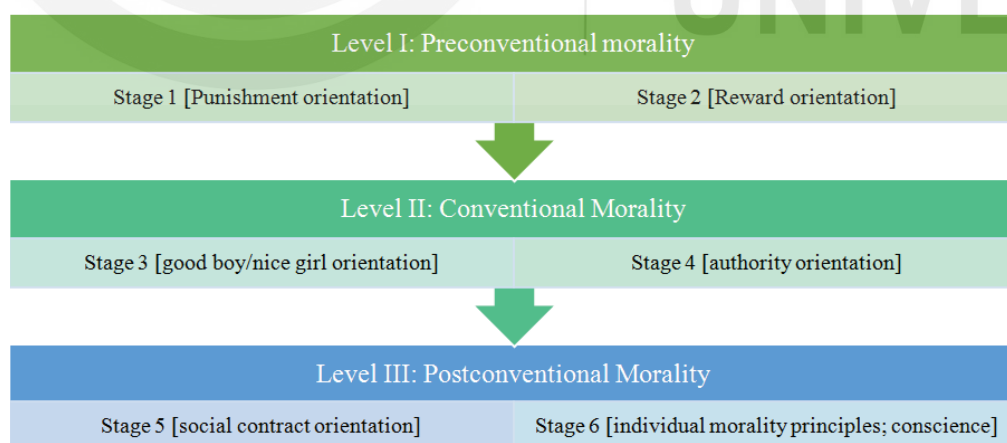


Figure 6.3 Kohlberg's theory of moral development

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.

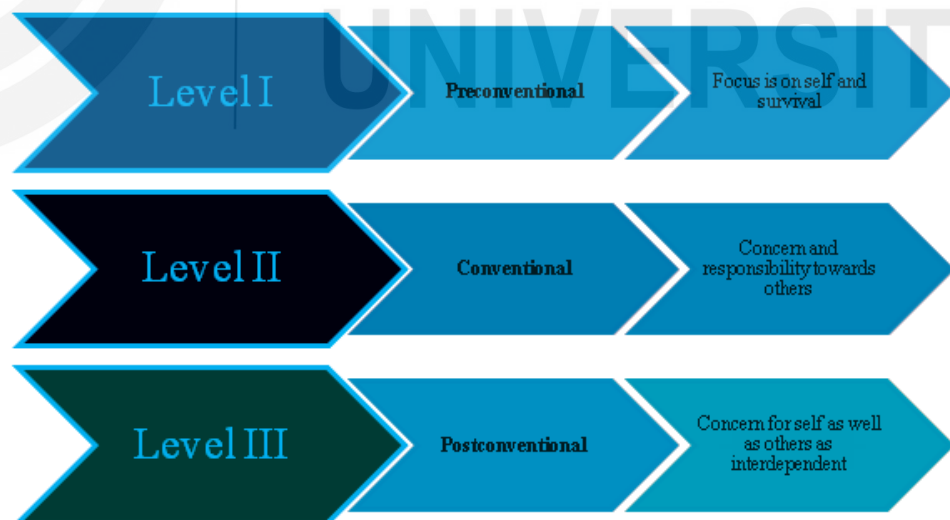


Figure 6.4 Carol Giligan's model of moral development of women

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 p.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 phallogentric 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 finally 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 are 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 a care 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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