

Rejuvenating the gendered beliefs: From a socio-cultural perspective

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Abstract

Reflections of relationships, actions, interactions, beliefs, norms, values, etc. often reinforce popular notions concerning gender, that women differs from men and the very fact of this difference is a 'natural' part of our genetic makeup. Gender, according to sociologists, refers to the meanings a society gives to masculinity and femininity. Gender is not just an identity or status; it is a continual process of negotiation. Men are expected to maintain masculinity that includes toughness, bravado, strength, assurance, and confidence, all with little display of emotion. Women are expected to perform femininity that exudes beauty, caring, nurturance, neediness, compassion, and complete with every range of possible emotion. Grounded in the notion of gender differences are gender inequalities which discriminates females from males, and holds that masculinity means domination for they had the power or ability to carry out, in the Weberian word his (sic) will against another, while femininity means subjugation for being powerless. This paper aims to study the everyday life accounts of individuals, be it male or female, usually explains the expected roles and lifestyles of the gendered groups; and how they should acquire the said norms leading to the different forms of inequality that remains underneath sometimes ignorantly, but many a times more consciously and profoundly, for everyday life is organized in ways that constantly distinguish women from men.

Keywords: sex, sexism, gender discrimination, gender roles, gender, transsexuals, gender equality, gender mainstreaming, femininity, gender attribution, gender identity, gender socialization, masculinity, gender characteristics, gender inequality, gender stratification, patriarchy, gender differences, gender relations, gender stereotypes

Introduction

The notion of "gender" corresponding to the explanation and interpretation of the difference between males and females as a social discrepancy is fairly a recent focus in sociological studies. Classical sociologists and various other social thinkers similarly argued with the commonsense explanations on "sex" that describes individuals' physical body is influenced by their corresponding biological configuration that shapes their socio-cultural, psychological and environmental forces and nurture their life accordingly. It is the biology that is responsible for controlling and altering individuals. They used the concepts like "sex roles", "allocation of sex roles", "management of sex roles", etc. to justify their viewpoints. These explanations, as put forwarded by them, were granted as immutable biological facts which were the "natural" propensities and were powerless, or even, needless to change. That biology determines the way how a male and a female should behave in their everyday social life or how they should be treated by others in a particular social context was an inevitable truth. As male and female have different bodies or biology, it is taken for granted they will have distinctive psychology, distinctive, distinctive emotions, distinctive abilities, and this is the reason why they should act distinctively, think distinctively, observes think distinctively and so on.

Both sex-gender are biological facts

Different theories are put forwarded to validate the belief which is conceptualized as "biological essentialism". Starting from that *functional thoughts* (functionalism) that holds

biological construction of sex roles are indispensable in human society so that social equilibrium is efficiently maintained, it in due course of time went through the contradictory explanations as put forwarded by *conflict* theories which holds that sex differentiation, being an ever-present social phenomena, is crucial to exercise power and authority over one group of individuals (women) by the other group of individuals (men). *Symbolic Interactionist Theory* focuses on how interaction processes (re)produce sex roles in everyday life by actors' interpretations of situations and how meanings are attached to their behaviours. Gender is viewed as an enduring accomplishment that emerges during practically all interactions, both within- and between-sex. Gender is neither an individual-level attribute nor a constant feature of social organization. To a certain extent, people are continuously re-creating their own and their interaction partners' sense of gender as they interact, which is what West and Zimmerman (1987) label "doing gender." Gender is "omnirelevant" in the sense that any action can be interpreted as exemplifying it. Specific definitions of masculinity and femininity vary (in ways and for reasons that are not theorized), but the notion that men and women are basically distinctive does not. The taken-for-granted view is that there exist two and only two sexes, and everyone is a member of one and only one sex group.

The arguments of biological explanations went a step further as they started theorizing different beliefs that difference between male and females activities can be explained by different ideas like *hormonal difference* (that is, males have

higher testosterone level which made them more aggressive, while females have higher androgynous level which made less aggressive), *brain development* (that is, left part of the brain develops more quickly among the boys which develops visuo-spatial skills, while the right part of the brain develops quickly among the girls which made them more talkative). Ideas put forwarded by *sociobiologists* like E. O. Wilson and David Barash is worth mentioning. They, as influenced by the ideas of Charles Darwin and his works on human evolution, hold that it is due to the genetic makeup that differentiates males and females and are allotted different social roles, which they are expected to perform. They may choose different types of behaviour, but if they do such thing, it will go against their biological predispositions that make them less efficient in maintaining their species. Another group of sociologists comprising of George P. Murdock, John Bowlby, and Talcott Parsons argued that biological difference creates *sexual division of labour* in society that represents women as “expressive females” who is expected to have a close, intimate bond with their children and performs household activities only because their biology never permits them to do such works that needs hard physical labour. Contemporary social thinkers though used the term “gender” to explain the difference between what is meant to be masculine or feminine, they equate the term with “sex roles” and analyze in a similar tone that gender roles are essentially a biological construction.

The actual notion of gender

The era 1970s was ushered by few new thoughts in the discussions of gender specified roles of individual as sociologists started analyze the existing facts from a different angle. They try to understand the way society and its various forces like cultural facts, religious facts which govern the action-interaction patterns of males and females. This creates a particular way of thinking for being feminine and masculine. Thus the concept of “gender” is introduced in sociology as a distinctive way in which social conditions or forces shape the action and behavioural pattern of males and females. The concept of “gender” was used to challenge the existing commonsense views pertaining to sexed bodies. As feminists *Ann Oakley* depicted that this modern version of gendered beliefs hold that the terminologies “men” and “women” are socially constructed that reflects a kind of inequality that existed in society because individuals acknowledge it while ignoring the very fact that such norms are amenable to change. This leads to another assumption that sexual inequality is a natural phenomenon which omits or confines the potentials for changing the lower status of women. It’s a kind of power play that valued men more than women in each and every aspect. Characteristic traits of masculinity and femininity are socially created which are shaped through the subtle interactions between nature and nurture. There is nothing intrinsic or static about these notions of masculinity and femininity, rather these are seen as social categories that are subjected to change. That is, an individual can easily change it if he or she agreed to do so. It is now widely accepted that individual bodies is needed to be understood as a part of gender and a sharp distinction should be made between “sex” as a biological phenomenon and “gender” as a allocation of social expectations on sexed bodies. Understanding and organizing everyday life around

such differences between men and women leads to the particular understandings about sexed bodies (male and female) and how gendered expectations (masculinity and femininity) are attached to it, how it is produced and reproduced in each and every social context, and how it is inherited through different socialization processes. To put in the words of Oakley, “‘Sex’ is a word that refers to the biological differences between male and female: then visible difference in genitalia, the related difference in procreative function. ‘Gender’ however is a matter of culture: it refers to the social classifications into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’”. Those adopting this position point to the fact that there is no natural link between biological characteristics and social ones. Society and its intermittent element culture creates specific gender roles for specific sexed bodies which is generally considered as an ideal or appropriate behaviour of an individual corresponding to that specific sexed bodies. Sex is thus differed from gender and is labelled as the basic bodily differences among the individuals based on which the process of becoming men and women, through the formation of masculine and feminine traits in them, is carried out. According to Oakley, a major portion of an individual’s life went on socializing itself as well as others the appropriate gendered behaviour so that no norms pertaining to society’s expectations are violated. Different socializing agents constantly centered on individuals’ life to make them learn about their expected social roles through various affiliations or even manipulations and shape their everyday life accordingly by compelling them to accept it as natural indispensable facts which are needed to keep things intact.

Social anthropologists like *Margaret Mead* argues that what is meant to be masculine or feminine differs from particular society as every society has its own understandings about gender in a particular time and space. While conducting extensive studies on the gender roles all over the world almost which were dominated by males, Mead came across of three unique tribes of New Guinea. In a tribe named *Arapesh*, both males and females conform a personality which is generally regarded as ‘feminine’. Individuals comprising both the sex are gentle, sober, passive and emotional. They equally took part in all activities like child care, procuring plants for food, etc. and are supposed to have equal sex drives. The second tribe which is known as *Mundugumour* exhibits gender roles which are generally regarded as ‘masculine’. Both sexes are expected to be violent and aggressive. Women of this tribe hardly showed ‘maternal instincts that are common to all other women everywhere in human society. None took part in raising children. All were warriors. The third tribe, *Tchambuli* tribe not only exhibits no difference between males and females, but also among these tribal people expected sex roles differs: men displayed feminine personality traits and women displayed masculine physical traits. The men raised children and cleaned the home, while women were more energetic, domineering and major economic providers of the family. She concluded that ‘gender traits of masculinity and femininity have no necessary connection to biological sex’. That is, there is no innate difference between males and females. Neither males nor females are born to be dominant or violent or emotional or clingy. It is the social environment that made them so.

Socializing individuals into gender roles

Feminist *Judith Butler* argued that, “gender makes individuals the kind of human being that others understand, that is, individuals can understand others as gendered.” When a child is born and its sex is made obvious, the child then becomes a part of the whole social framework in which its action will be understood in relation to the ideas of its gender. Gender is something that comes into being as individuals use it as a tool to define others as well as their own behaviour, justifying as well as imitating the appropriate gendered behaviour. Gender, in other words, can be understood as the social organization of sexual difference. Gender signs and signals are so ubiquitous that we usually fail to note them-unless they are missing or ambiguous. A sex category becomes a gender status through naming, dress, and the use of other gender markers. The most powerful means of sustaining the moral hegemony of the dominant gender ideology is that the process is made invisible; any possible alternatives are virtually unthinkable.

It’s not just that being born with a sex organ makes an individual man or woman, its liking ‘feeling’ to be a man or woman. Even those whose biological makeup does not fit within established sex categories, the inter-sexed for instance, are still indoctrinated within a gender system. While explaining the ascription of gender roles among the infants, ethnomethodologists Suzanne J. Kessler and Wendy McKenna are interested in the ways that members of society categorize the world around them. From this perspective, gender attribution is socially produced in much the same ways as gender roles. For most people, it seems obvious whether someone is male or female, and it is taken for granted that a decision about the sex of another will coincide with the biological facts. While examining how individuals are allocated to sexes by others; or how do people decide of what gender another person is, Kessler and McKenna interviewed few transsexuals (Haralombos and Holborn: 2000). According to them, four main processes are pieced together so that a gender attribution or allocation can be made by the observer:

1. The content and the manner of the speech of others are taken into account. Some male to female transsexuals have trained them to appear to be women by putting more inflection in their voice and by having more mobile facial movements when talking. Others introduce themselves as ‘Miss’ to settle any doubt there might be in an observer’s mind.
2. Another important factor in gender attribution is public physical appearance. For example, female to male transsexuals may disguise themselves by wearing baggy clothes.
3. The information people provide about their past life helps to determine gender attribution. Again transsexuals have to be careful to avoid suspicion. They may need a cover story. In one case, a female to male transsexual attributed pierced ears to belonging to a tough street gang.
4. The final important factor is the private body. Transsexuals may need to avoid certain situations if they have not undergone the appropriate operations to change their sex physically.

Similarly, transvestites dress in a fashion that disturbs the social expectations regarding what should men and women would wear. Individuals use different biological signs, like

beards in case of men, to make gender attributions, but these signs may not always provide ambiguous facts, for instance, due to hormonal problems some women may have facial hair. Thus, gender is not only about acting their own part, but also looking the part so that others will know how to treat humans.

Sex is too socially created

Even many a time sex is allocated socially too. Gender is what leads to the notion of sex. That fundamental differences between men and women leads to the distinctions between two distinct biological categories called male and female is the center idea that governs individual lives. Individuals stick to this idea even when the confirmation of inter-sexed individuals contradicts that reality. An example that highlights how biology is linked to culture concerns the processes by which ambiguous sex characteristics in children are handled. When hermaphrodites (individuals with both female and male genitalia) or “intersex” children (without distinct genitalia to characterize them as either girls or boys) are born, health professionals and the family tend to make an immediate sex determination. Hormone therapy and surgeries follow to make such a child fit the constructed binary categories the society has created, and gender is taught in accordance with this decision. This is an example of the way a breakdown in the taken-for-granted tight connection between natural biology and learned gender is seen as a medical and social emergency. Sociologists *David Morgan and Lindo Birke* viewed that sex and gender interacts with each other. They argued that biology actually affects individuals’ lives and one cannot ignore these biological facts. Correspondingly, cultural interpretation placed on biological differences is also very crucial. If certain differentiations between males and females came to be seen as vital, this itself is a cultural fact and has its consequences, although this is the outcome of an intricate interaction between the biological and cultural fact rather than the primary contention of the former.

Probing further, defining gender sociologically also means noting that the two-sided bifurcations that have differentiated the worlds of “masculinity” and “femininity” have also, throughout most recorded history, accorded superiority to the former and inferiority to the latter. It is precisely such distinctions between “primary” and “secondary” that *Simone de Beauvoir’s The Second Sex* set out to explore. But what, more precisely, has the enculturation of gender from early childhood bequeathed? According to de Beauvoir, within a traditional nuclear family in which a mother disproportionately parents and a father is deemed the breadwinner, little girls may initially seem to be the privileged ones because they are allowed to stay close to their mothers’ skirts; they can continue to be clingy and emotional, and to express feelings of dependency if they wish to. On the other hand, while the little girl is allowed this leeway, little boys soon learn that “to be a man” is to exude independence; clearly drawing on a conventional model of familial expectations, little boys soon realize that their crying may be frowned upon.

Ascribing Gender Differences

Gender is such a familiar part of daily life that it usually takes a deliberate disruption of our expectations of how women and

men are supposed to act to pay attention to how it is produced. Gender signs and signals are so ubiquitous that we usually fail to note them-unless they are missing or ambiguous. A sex category becomes a gender status through naming, dress, and the use of other gender markers. Once a child's gender is evident, others treat those in one gender differently from those in the other, and the children respond to the different treatment by feeling different and behaving differently. Children learn to walk, talk, and gesture the way their social group says girls and boys should.

The gendered practices of everyday life reproduce a society's view of how women and men should act. Gendered social arrangements are justified by religion and cultural productions and backed by law, but the most powerful means of sustaining the moral hegemony of the dominant gender ideology is that the process is made invisible; any possible alternatives are virtually unthinkable. Most of the gender differences just described is attributed to differences in socializing the infant.

Few examples of manipulating gender roles:

- One of the first questions people ask of expectant parents is the sex of the child. This is the beginning of a social categorization process that continues throughout life
- Preparations for the birth often take the infant's sex into consideration. For example, painting the room blue if the child is a boy, pink for a girl. The embellishment of rooms and spaces revealed the gender of the domain: stern, substantial and dark-toned for masculine rooms, and sophisticated, attractive and colourful for feminine rooms. The role of parents' preferences or advices, and the child's so-called self-expression are also significant aspects while analyzing the interior decoration of modern children's bedrooms
- The child's concept is affected by manipulation. For example, mothers tend to pay more attention to girl's hair and dress them in feminine cloths
- Differences are achieved through canalization involving the direction of boys and girls towards different objects. This is particularly obvious in the provision of toys for girls which encourage them to rehearse their expected adult roles as mothers and housewives. Girls are given dolls, soft toys, and miniature domestic objects play with. Boys, on the other hand, are given toys which encourage more practical, logical, and aggressive behaviour, for example bricks and games
- Girls are more inclined to face each other and make eye contact when talking, while boys are more likely to look away from each other
- Another aspect of gender socialization is the use of verbal appellations, such as "you are a naughty boy" or "that's a good girl", as if 'naughtiness' is always related to boys and 'goodness' is always related to girls
- On average, men's vocal tracts are longer than women's, yielding a lower voice pitch. But individuals' actual conversational voice pitch across society does not simply conform to the size of the vocal tract. At the age of four to five years, well before puberty differentiates male and female vocal tracts, boys and girls learn to differentiate their voices as boys consciously and unconsciously lower their voice pitch while girls raise theirs. In the end, one can usually tell whether even a very small child is male or

female on the basis of their voice pitch and quality alone, regardless of the length of their vocal tract

- Girls tend to be talkative in small and more intimate groups, taciturn in large and more formal situations. Boys tend to be more talkative in those more public contexts and fall into taciturnity or monologues in situations of intimacy

Reinforcing Gender Differences

While it takes a community to develop gender, not all participants in the community are equally involved in enforcing difference. In research on early gender socialization, males – both children and adults – have emerged as more engaged in enforcing gender difference than females. Fathers were more extreme than mothers in their gender-based misassessments of infants' size and texture. Men are more likely than women to play rough with boys and gently with girls, fathers use differential language patterns to boys and girls more than mothers, and men are more likely than women to reward children for choosing gender-appropriate toys.

While females may wear clothing initially viewed as male, the reverse is highly stigmatized: women and girls now wear jeans but their male peers are not appearing in skirts. A girl may be sanctioned for behaving "like a boy" – particularly if she behaves aggressively, and gets into fights – on the grounds that she is being "unladylike" or "not nice." But there is a tomboy category reserved for girls who adopt a male rough and tumble style of play, who display fearlessness and refuse to play with dolls. And while in some circles this categorization may be considered negative, in general in western society it earns some respect and admiration. Boys who adopt girls' behaviors, on the other hand, are severely sanctioned. The term "sissy" is reserved for boys who do not adhere strictly to norms of masculinity, and is never heard as a compliment.

This asymmetry is partially a function of the cultural devaluation of women and of the feminine. One way or another, most boys and girls learn that boy things and boy activities are more highly valued than girl things and girl activities, and boys are strongly discouraged from having interests or activities that are associated with girls. Even where they do not encounter such views formulated explicitly or even find them denied explicitly, most boys and girls learn that it is primarily men and not women who do important things as adults, have opinions that count, direct the course of events in the public world. It is hardly surprising then that pressures towards gender conformity are not symmetrical.

This asymmetry or differences is further extended through too many domains:

- a) *Unequal Treatment*: With unequal treatment, boys and girls do learn to *be* different. Children's eventual behavior, which seems to look at least statistically different across the sexes, is the product of adults' differential responses to ways of acting that are in many (possibly most) cases very similar indeed. A child who's told she has to do more housework than her brother because she's a girl, or that she can't be an astronaut when she grows up because she's a girl, is likely to say "that's not fair!" A boy who is told he cannot play with dolls because he's a boy, or that he cannot be a secretary when he grows up, may find that unfair as well. But the boy who is told he can't be a nurse

is being told that he is too good to be a nurse. The girl, on the other hand, is essentially being told that she is not good enough to be a doctor. This is not to say that the consequences cannot be tragic for the boy who really wants to play with dolls or grow up to be a nurse. He will be deprived of a legitimate sense of unfairness within society's wider discourses of justice, hence isolated with his sense of unfairness. But gender specialization does carry the evaluation that men's enterprises are generally better than women's, and children learn this quite early on.

- b) *Discrimination*: Within the household, women and girls can face discrimination in the sharing out of household resources including food, sometimes leading to higher malnutrition and mortality indicators for women. At its most extreme, gender discrimination can lead to son preference, expressed in sex selective abortion or female feticide. In the labour market, unequal pay, occupational exclusion or segregation into low skill and low paid work limit women's earnings in comparison to those of men of similar education levels. Women's lack of representation and voice in decision making bodies in the community and the state perpetuates discrimination, in terms of access to public services, such as schooling and health care or discriminatory laws. The law is assumed to be gender-neutral when in fact it may with oppressive gender ideologies. Even where constitutional or national legal provisions uphold gender equality principles, religious or other customary laws that privilege men may take precedence in practice.
- c) *Separateness*: To differing degrees from culture to culture and community to community, difference is reinforced by separation. Boys play more with boys; girls with girls. And this pattern repeats itself cross-culturally, in all forms of society. The extent to which individuals grow up participating in same-sex playgroups varies tremendously, depending on such things as the genders and ages of their siblings and their neighbors. Some kids spend more time in same-sex groups at one stage of their lives, less at other stages. The fact remains that however much kids may play in mixed-sex groups, there is a tendency to seek out – and to be constrained to seek out– same-sex groups. This constraint is stronger for boys – girls who prefer playing with boys are tolerated, perhaps admired, while boys who prefer playing with girls are not.
- d) *Maintaining stratification*: Gendered patterns of interaction acquire additional layers of gendered sexuality, parenting, and work behaviors in childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Gendered norms and expectations are enforced through informal sanctions of gender-inappropriate behavior by peers and by formal punishment or threat of punishment by those in authority should behavior deviate too far from socially imposed standards for women and men. As part of a stratification system, gender ranks men above women of the same race and class. Women and men could be different but equal practice, the process of creating difference depends to a great extent on differential evaluation.
- e) *Perception of Unequal Life Choices*: Socializing individual infants into different gendered roles and behaviours leads to the possible inequalities in men and

women's capacity to make definite life choices, for they posit to give different values to different possible ways of being and doing. It is due to the fact that men and women's lives reflect differences in preferences and priorities from those which embody a denial of choice. For example, the focus of talk of women is on the community of humans who are connected together in their lives. Men, on the other hand, tend to be more concerned with topics like sports, politics, international business and economy, or, where they engage in personal details, success and advancement, etc. Women tend to hearing of someone else's problems by telling of their own problems. This indicates that they understand the situation the other person is in and that they feel sympathetic. Men, in contrast, are more likely to take it as a request for help and to offer a solution, however pointless the solution might be.

- f) *Choosing Not to Choose*: There is an intuitive plausibility to the equation between power and choice as long as what is chosen deliberately by women appears to contribute to the welfare of those making the choice. In various evident situations of striking gender inequalities in basic well-being achievements, the equation between choice and power would suggest quite plausibly that such inequalities signal the operation of power: either as an absence of choice on the part of women as the subordinate group or as active discrimination by men as the dominant group. Women's adherence to social norms and practices associated with son preference, discriminating against daughters in the allocation of food and basic health care to the extent of compromising the survival chances of the girl child, promotion of the practice of female circumcision, the oppressive exercise of authority by mother-in-laws over their daughter-in-laws, etc. are examples of behaviour in which women's internalization of their own lesser status in society leads them to discriminate against other females in that society.
- g) *Object of Abuse*: To be a woman has to be born, within an allotted and confined space, into the keeping of men. Thus, women became easy prey to any form of violence- be it physical, sexual or verbal- perpetuated by their male counterparts who always try to dominate women in every possible ways. Another example of male power play that reflects indecently representing or portraying women body as an object of male gaze, devaluing their existence just to get a pleasurable view of their body for entertaining and titillating the male target audience. Defining women as sex objects has become the defining representation of media. The women are made to look alluring and appealing so as to attract a section of the audience. This kind of sexualized way of commodifying women are clear indication of exploitation. According to Germaine Greer, like other male-dominated institutions, the media upholds a *glamorous ideal image of beauty* in its representation - the image to which women are made to be desperate to conform to if they wanted to have a successful modeling career.

Summarizing the aforesaid facts one can say that it is our socio-cultural norms and values which gave male a supreme and primary authority over women. This is what feminists

called a *patriarchal form of society*. It is an unjust form of social system where a patriarch (a male figure: father, husband, etc) hold authority over female, children and property. In a patriarchal structure, women face different situations that are detrimental to their rights. Patriarchy is, thus, a form of society which assumes that males are different from the females and are both physically and sexually stronger than females. It is a form of society where females are dictated what to do and “know their place”. It is the norm- a fundamental human nature. Feminist Sylvia Walby recognized “patriarchy” as indispensable factor that leads to gender inequality six social structures of patriarchy:

- *Culture* (though varies across class, ethnicity, age, etc culture consistently differentiated between men and women and expected different sets of behaviour from them);
- *Household production* (which reflects distinctive patriarchal relations where men directly exploit women by gaining benefits from the latter’s paid work);
- *Paid employment* (entering labour market was restricted for women in nineteenth century. The era of twentieth century exhibits women’s paid employment ensured by male-dominated society which involves a new kind of inequality: inequality between and women in terms of forms of occupation engaged in pay structures, conditions, opportunities, etc);
- *State Policies* (though there has been a considerable change in the state politics, yet these policies earlier hold exclusionary practices regarding women’s education, paid employment, political participation. Still in the capitalist society, either in some form or other these policies and practices are continued which leads to the devaluation of women);
- *Sexuality* (Heterosexual Relations constitutes a patriarchal structure, where women’s sexuality is subjected to a strict control and was directed to one patriarchal agent for a lifetime. This structure compels women to accept those as norms. Still the influence of this patriarchal structure remained the same though the forms of exploitation regarding sexuality had changed);
- *Violence* (Both in household and paid employment women are subjected to different types of violence- a perfect example of exercising power of men over women and exploiting them by controlling their (women) sexuality. Forms of violence mainly involve sexual violence like rape, sexual assault and harassment, sexual abuse of girl child, etc. The use of violence, or, the threat of violence, helps to keep women in their place and discourages them from challenging patriarchy)

Patriarchy, thus, refers to any system prevailing pattern of organization within the whole society whereby males achieve and maintain social, cultural and economic dominance over females and even younger males. Within feminist tradition, use of the term patriarchy has lead to the politicization of discussion of *gender relations*, enabling gender relations to be predicated on inequalities of power.

Conclusion

Individuals are delimited by gender traditions from the time they are very small. It is ubiquitous in conversation, humor,

and conflict, and it is called upon to explain everything from driving styles to food preferences. Gender is embedded so thoroughly in their institutions, their actions, their beliefs, and their desires, that it appears to us to be completely natural. The world swarms with ideas about gender – and these ideas are so commonplace that we take it for granted that they are true, accepting common adage as scientific fact. The pervasiveness of gender as a way of structuring social life demands that gender statuses be clearly differentiated. Varied talents, sexual preferences, identities, personalities, interests, and ways of interacting fragment the individual’s bodily and social experiences. Nonetheless, these are organized in Western cultures into two and only two socially and legally recognized gender statuses, “man” and “woman”. In the social construction of gender, it does not matter what men and women actually do; it does not even matter if they do exactly the same thing. The social institution of gender insists only that what they do is *perceived* as different. If men and women are doing the same tasks, they are usually spatially segregated to maintain gender separation, and often the tasks are given different job titles as well, such as executive secretary and administrative assistant. Thus, Gender inequality-the devaluation of "women" and the social domination of "men" - has social functions and a social history. It is not the result of sex, procreation, physiology, anatomy, hormones, or genetic predispositions. It is produced and maintained by identifiable social processes and built into the general social structure and individual identities deliberately and purposefully. Gender, not sex, is regarded as a primary frame for organizing social relation. Anne Fausto-Sterling (2000) sums up the situation as follows: “*labeling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us to make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender – not science – can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place*”.

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