

Name: Dr E Shawa
Batch: 28983-50
Paper: Gender Studies

Part II

Q2 Highlight the differences b/w Gender studies and women studies. Also write a comprehensive note on autonomy versus integration debate in Gender studies.

Gender studies is relatively a new field of study that emerged out of the women studies. As gender studies emerged out of women studies many aspects of gender studies overlap the focus of women studies. However there are various differences between these two fields of study.

1. Differences between gender studies and women studies:

Differences between gender and women studies are highlighted below with respect to the nature, aspects, disciplines and methodologies each subject offers.

i Nature of the subject: Gender studies and women studies both are interdisciplinary but women

(2)

Studies discusses theories with an approach to highlight women issues while gender studies adopt an approach to highlight issues pertaining to all genders. For example; An American historian, an Mary Ritter Beard who in 1934 constructed a 54 page syllabus for a course titled "A changing political economy as it affects women" so this course was solely highlighting and focusing women issues in changing political economy. On the contrary another author i.e; Judith Butler in 1990, in her ^{paper} ~~book~~ "Gender trouble, feminist theory and psychoanalysis" focused on how psychoanalytic contexts affect gender (men, women and other gender identities) so women ^{discuss issues} studies in any field of study ^{write} focus on women solely while gender studies focus on all genders be it an issue of psychology, sociology or economy as depicted in above example.

ii- Approaches and aspects:

Women studies adopted women in Development (WID) and Women and Development (WAD)

(3)

approach while gender studies adopted Gender and Development ^(GAD) approach. The focus of women studies is that 'women are subjects that needs to be developed' and 'are deprived so must be considered to be part of development projects' while gender studies focuses on all genders and endorses the notion that 'all genders must be considered equally in development projects'.

For example; ^{During 1990's} the authors and scholars examined the gender differences and inequalities and developed theories and frameworks to empower all genders such as Rowlands (1997) gave her wholistic empowerment approach which is gender neutral and gives an empowerment framework that considers all genders of the society.

000
(111)

Discourses: Women studies developed the topics concerning women, feminism and politics for example; women suffrage movement was the aftermath of 1st wave of feminism and highlighted women political rights. Gender studies began and discussed gender

relations, gender hierarchies and gendered qualities that exist in society and how these hierarchies and inequalities can be reduced. For example; Naila Kabir (1994) in her book *Reversed Realities* mentions that division of labor ('gender roles') and gender relations creates gender hierarchies in a society which gives more power to men as compared to women

10-

Methodologies: While the focus, nature, approaches and discourses are different both subjects adopt different methodologies with respect to subjects of research. However ^{neither} ~~the~~ ^{common} methodology is followed by both the subjects. For example; Gender theorists are more interested in the interactions of all genders while women theorists only focus women as subject of their research. However majority of gender and women ^{studies} scholars adopt interpretivism and social constructionism research design. Both the subjects majorly adopt qualitative research designs.

(5)
Conclusion: As gender studies is relatively new field of study its focus, discourses and methodologies are wider than women studies. However it emerged from women studies so the focus, discourses and methodologies of women studies and gender studies overlap.

Part B:

AUTONOMY VERSUS INTEGRATION DEBATE:

The autonomy versus integration debate started in 1980's. The proponents of women studies and gender studies struggled to decide whether disciplines should remain autonomous or to be integrated into other areas of studies as a subfield.

1. Debate on autonomy:

The proponents of women studies do not support the integration of women studies into gender studies or other disciplines as subfield. The proponents of autonomy of women studies justify their claim on the basis of various reasons:

1. Women's self representation:
The scholars who support the idea of women studies as an

independent subject argue that women are true representatives of their issues and must self represent their issues properly. The founder of US National Women's studies Association calls it as "an education strategy for change" owing its existence to the women's liberation movement.

2. Control over their own lives:

The proponents of autonomy of women studies further claim that as women are oppressed and have lesser control over their own lives so focus of the subject must be women only and development of strategies for generating self directivemems and emancipation of women. Since the strategies are to be developed for women only, these strategies will be more effective as individual level variables can be more easily and deeply examined as compared to cluster level variables.

3. Consciousness raising and individual empowerment of women: Debate on autonomy propagates that lack of awareness among women is the major reason for oppression on their rights of women so women studies as an autonomous and independent

(7)

subject can focus more on their conscience raising and self-empowerment which can better equip them ~~to~~ to fight against discriminations and oppression.

4.

Manipulation of personal environment. Proponents of autonomy of women studies argue that if historical and social conditions may promote or impede the capacity for autonomy of a woman so it is paramount to study the personal environment of women such as individual women historical and social conditions in her personal capacity that lead to her subordination. Rather than focusing on their broader community i.e. political, economic and legal etc.

2. INTEGRATION DEBATE

Supporters of integration debate believe that by integrating women studies in other disciplines can have broader impact overall with respect to the discipline itself and overall societal change. The supporters of integration of women studies justify their claims based on the following reasons:

1)

Representation of all entities and identities. Proponents of

integration debate of women studies club that if the subject focus is broadened by integrating it into other subjects it will cover all entities including men, transgender organisations, institutions etc and then it will be possible to bring overall change in the society just focusing women will not make any difference. For example Kabeer in her approach of ^{resistance} rajen Cyl achievement in order to empower women' mentions that

'women empowerment is inseparably bound with the conditions of their disempowerment and bound to gendered explanations and processes which have denied them ability to make decisions and to acquire choices' (Kabeer, 1999).

ii)

Collaborative efforts: Integration debate supports the idea of merging the field into other disciplines because it will lead to collaborative efforts as not only women organization but also other institutions and organization will be taking part in development of overall whole society. ~~and~~ such as patriarchy does not only affect women in private sphere but also in public spheres so integration of the subject will cover all encompasses

all the institutions and factors that cause public patience.

iii)

Inclusive reforms and movements: As the women studies is integrated into other disciplines the scope of the subject will be widened so all the strategies and movements developed will not only focus on women and women within the category of women but also men and other oppressed identities in the society.

iv)

Condemning sexism: Proponents of integration of the subject also argued that treating women differently can lead to additional forms of sexism and to condemn sexism it should be integrated into other subjects.

CONCLUSIONS: Proponents of ^{both} autonomy and integration of women studies with other disciplines had strong justifications. However the aims of both school of thoughts were divergent, How ever the goal of both the approaches ^{was} same i.e. emancipation of oppressed and deprived groups of society. As a result we can see ^{new} inclusive strategies and policies were devised globally.

Q3. Gender is socially constructed phenomena. Discuss the statement in light of theories of social construction of gender. Give examples to substantiate your arguments.

"One is not born woman but becomes one"
(Simone De Beauvoir)

The above quote is true depiction of social construction of gender. Social construction as a theory of knowledge describes social aspects such as race, gender and class as products of social construction. Simply social constructionism emphasises the role of culture, society and history in the determination of how cultural categories are constructed, evolved and reproduced.

How gender is socially constructed? Social construction of gender rejects essentialist stance and claims that gender is socially constructed by various social and cultural influences. Gender is constructed due to various factors at various levels.

- 1- family and gender construction
In her book "Night is no Day"

(11)

The social construction of gender
Judith Lorber mentions that
The social construction begins
with assignment of identity,
to a sex category on the basis
of what its genitalia looks
like at birth.

At the time of birth it's the family
that decides gender identity
of a baby. On the basis of this
identity gender is constructed
starting from gendered language
to stereotypes and to gendered di-
vision of labor. For example
pink dresses for girls and Blue
jeans for boys. Parents usually
treat girls with mild attitude
and teach them to be polite
while parents teach boys to
be tough and practical. Girls
are expected to do house chores
while boys to do outdoor
chores.

(12)

Peer groups. Peer groups play
major role in gender construction
For example, Boys play with
boys, girls with girls. Girls us-
ually play with dolls and Boys
are seen playing or playing
football with their boys peers.

(13)

Education and Schools
Educational institutions are
other important factors that
construct gender. For example

M)

Boys are considered to be good at maths while girls to be good in Biology.
Media: media also construct gender in various ways i.e by promoting stereotypes or by showing folklores that promote gender stereotypes for example typical dramas show women are always involved in family politics in Pakistani society while men as businessmen.

v)

Cultural/religious beliefs: Cultural and religious beliefs assign certain roles to specific genders. For example in Hindu community the purpose of a woman to live is to her husband.

THEORIES OF SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF GENDER: There are various theories that explain the social construction of gender. These theories validates that gender is socially constructed.

1)

QUEER THEORY: Queer theory assumes that all concepts from sexual identities to gender identities are socially constructed.

Arguments of gender and sexuality are not personal identities but these are social identities.

2

while majority including women
think too much about men
so we ignore female char-
acteristics

3.

Main theorists: Queer theory
came from Teresa de Lauretis
'1991'. Her arguments were mainly

- i) refusing heterosexuality
- ii) Challenged beliefs that
lesbian and gay studies
are one
- iii) Strong focus on multiple
ways that race shapes
sexual bias.

Core theorists:

- i) Michael Foucault: She rejected
that sexuality is biologically
determined rather it is lived
changed over time from one
society to another. She exp-
lained multiple forms of sex
including hostile sex, bene-
volent, semi and ambivalent
sex. Hostile sex is usually
associated with male while
benevolent with female in
various societies. As per Foucault
this is not the case as from
ruling class of Ancient Greece
to working class of 1940's of Lond-
on, homosexuals & heterosex-
uals do not exist much in his-
tory. This does not mean that
all Africans were heterosexual.

ii-

Judith Butler gave gender performativity theory. She argued that repetitive performances of male and female in accordance with social norms legitimates the categories creating the appearance of a naturalized and essential binary. According to Butler 'gender' is never a stable descriptor of an individual, but an individual is always doing gender, performing or deviating from socially accepted performance of gender stereotypes. These performance normalize the essentialism of gender categories. For example, a male can cook in a household and a female can drive to office at some point in their lives thus adopting and doing certain roles and actions which are associated with the opposite binary in society.

3.

2. SOCIAL DETERMINATION OF

SEX: Mainly theorists identify sex as biological characteristic but theorists believe that to some extent it is socially constructed too. Theorists agree that sex is determined on the basis of five characteristics

- a) Chromosomes

- b) Hormones
- c) Gonads
- d) secondary sex characteristics
- e) Genitals

But in case of gene mutation a female can carry sex gene and can have both breasts and genitals. So in that case such female will not be considered as female in part as identity here is determined by genitals. On the contrary in Texas identity is determined by chromosomes.

The case of Caster Semenya also shows that in America chromosomes and genitals determine sexual identity.

3. Gender expression theory:

Gender expression theory states that masculine and feminine behaviors are also learned and accepted on the basis of sex. For example expected masculine behaviors/traits are strong, aggressive, rational and competitive while expected feminine traits are weak, passive, emotional, nurturing and compassionate in many societies. But all these are shaped by social-cultural factors such as location, age, physique, sexual orientation

roles
ones
mus
par
ily
female
y
is
l
ed
f
d

education, lifestyle, culture, religion, belief etc. For example Julia (a female boxer) exhibits masculine traits so it's again learned and acculturated.

Connell's socio-economic analysis and feminist on the basis of social and economic indicators. i.e. hegemonic masculinity & subordinate masculinity and emphasized femininity, resistance femininity and complex femininity.

According to Connell all these types of masculinities and femininities can be expressed by any gender at different time and different places. For example rise of women in politics as a result of suffrage movement which was totally considered a masculine field.

4. Nature versus Nurture Debate
These theories differentiate between male and female characteristics which are naturally determined and culturally determined. For example, sexual organs, weight, masculine, deep voices, puberty all are naturally determined while how a girl or boy should behave is culturally determined.

Social (17)

Cognitive learning theory proposes that gender roles are the outcomes of socially acceptable norms. For example, wearing a dupatta for a male is not socially acceptable ~~for~~ in Pakistani society and this is what female or male learn from socially acceptable norms prevailing in Pakistani society.

CONCLUSION: Theories of social construction clearly explained that sex, sexual identity, sexual roles, gender, gender roles and gender expression are socially constructed. However, some male and female characteristics are hereditary and natural that are fixed and cannot be changed.