

The Study of Gender and Sexual Differences between Men and Women

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Abstract: It is important to discuss gender diversity alongside biological and sexual differences. Traditionally, males and females are innately different in multiple facets. Females are generally more introverted while their male counterparts tend to be more extroverted, demonstrating a different intrinsic personality trait between sexes. At the same time, the structures of male and female brains are also different to some extent. While sexual difference and related personality traits exist, there are many mechanisms to protect citizens against sexual discrimination, such as laws developed in the United States to punish those who intentionally discriminate against someone due to their sex. Currently, there are practical strategies in trying to curb sex inequality, contributing to the fight for gender equality in society. All in all, profound improvements in gender equality have been achieved, but the journey for gender equality still has a long way to go.

1. Introduction

Gender diversity provides important criteria for companies when it comes to providing internships or choosing employees. By enacting gender diversity, firms may diversify the workplace, improve employee relations, and utilize different talent sets. It is important to discuss gender diversity alongside biological sexual difference, including related psychological differences between sexes. While inherent psychological differences define sex – among other factors – social conditioning and gender dynamics hold greater weight in sculpting the societal manifestations of these differences. As recent efforts to counter sex-based discriminations and include more gender-neutral language have shown, gender and sex are not interchangeable.

While the sex refers to the physical differences between people who are male, female, or inter-sex, gender, by contrast, involves how a person identifies. Despite progress made in differentiating between the sex and gender, biological sex differences between males and females are often subject to totalizing discourses, stereotypes, and forms of discrimination, particularly impacting females. In this essay, I will be addressing intrinsic psychological distinctions based in sex between men and women as influenced by gender. There are innate and learned psychological differences between genders and sexes, including distinct temperaments and personality traits. However, such differences should not hold weight in how we organize society.

2. Sexual Differences

In fact, male and female are innately different in multiple facets. At a very young age, females are generally more introverted while their male counterparts tend to be more extroverted, demonstrating a different intrinsic personality trait between sexes. At the same time, the structures of male and female brains are also different to some extent.

2.1 Sexual Differences in Personality Trait

In fact, males and females show their personality differences as early as infancy, which are influenced later in life by their gender. According to a 2013 study, the influence of gender on children's personalities is profound. During the experiment, researchers used the help of infants' mothers, fathers, and "Laboratory Temperament Assessment Battery" ratings, which are standardized tools used to assess early temperament.

By using specifically three-year-old as their sample, researchers found, "Boys had higher levels of activity level and lower levels of shyness and inhibitory control than girls across all methods of assessment." Furthermore, these gendered dimensions of temperament are interrelated with one another: shyness and physical activity level, for example, are interconnected. "Shyer children have lower activity level and higher inhibitory control, and those with higher inhibitory control are less active" [1]. It may seem easy to act on or divide society by such research, which underscores the inherent distinct personality traits between females and males. However, one must first acknowledge the role of "nurture," that is socialization, on personality development. Although, males and females have distinct personality traits, this should not be the reason to divide society into strict categories. Accordingly, society should not form any discrimination centered around sexual difference.

Moreover, according to Paul Irwing, Professor of Psychometrics at the University of Manchester, "Psychologically, men and women are almost a different species" [2]. Although Irwing elucidates on the psychological differences between genders, the differences could be considered minor. "The Big Five Model", used in this research, is the most widely accepted personality theory within the discipline of psychology. It includes five branches: extraversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. Following this model, women scaled higher in the areas of extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism when compared to men [3]. Relatedly – and as other studies demonstrate – women are more altruistic, nurturing, and tender. Tying the concept of "Big Five" with the Lab-TAB project, based on further research about gender differences, "higher levels of implicit Neuroticism and Agreeableness were observed in women, and somewhat higher levels of implicit Extraversion and Openness were observed in men."

In other words, this research further explains one set of distinct personality traits between females and males, stating that males are more extroverted while females are introverted.

However, singular personality traits alone do not account for the depth of sex and gender difference and relations. There are other characteristics that distinguish one person from another that are not based on sex. It is these other characteristics that are not necessarily based on sex that define people, their interpersonal relationships, and society. As a result, society should not treat males and females as inherently different because certain sex inherited baseline personality traits are not enough to define people or their sex.

2.2 Sexual Differences in Brains

The structures of male and female brains are different to some extent such as differences in structure and size of sub-brain parts including the hippo-campus, amygdala, and more. While females have two X chromosomes, males have one X and one Y chromosomes. Moreover, according to research completed in 2020, while females have larger prefrontal, orbitofrontal, superior temporal, lateral parietal cortex, and insula, males have greater volume of ventral temporal and occipital regions, which are responsible for information processing [4].

Different cortexes and insula have various uses: the superior temporal cortex controls eye movements and visual analysis, the lateral parietal cortex is used for attention and memory, and the insula directs taste and autonomic control. These minor differences in structure account for some of the inherent personality differences between males and females. In contrast, as the research indicates, ventral temporal and occipital regions of which males have greater volume of, are used for information processing. Even so, the biological contrasts between men and women's brain structures are minor as brains do not function differently [5].

3. Mechanisms of Countering Sexual Discrimination

While sexual difference and related personality traits exist, there are many mechanisms to protect citizens against sexual discrimination. The United States government, for example, developed law to punish those who intentionally discriminate against someone due to their sex.

According to the United States Department of Justice, "Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 makes it unlawful to discriminate against someone on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex

(including pregnancy, sexual orientation, and gender identity) or religion” [6]. With the aid of official laws, people who discriminate based on sex can be tried under the extent of the law.

As a result, companies and individuals now implement policies to ensure that no inappropriate language is used in the workplace. Such improvements demonstrate the need for the promulgation of laws that reduce the possibility of sex-based discrimination. The law, in theory, is supposed to create equality between men and women. However, women in the United States still face serious inequality regarding their gender identity and sex. For example, although women did gain more working opportunities in society, many of these are part-time or independent jobs that are not secure, and with low pay. Aside from unequal treatment of women in society, domestically speaking, women are often burdened with handling both outside work and unpaid housework. Moreover, women in the United States “still do almost twice as much unpaid care work as men; 54 percent of women but only 22 percent of men report doing all or most of the housework” [7]. However, this issue of gender inequality in the workplace is not limited to the United States.

With the help of laws and awareness from the public, gender inequality is slowly headed towards the right direction. Compared to 2015, the 2019 Gender Parity Score (GPS), which is based in 125 countries, has shown a trend towards gender equality defined by a higher ratio of female earning leadership positions, more legal protection, and lower maternal mortality [7]. However, this trend is marginal and the appearance of COVID-19 exacerbated gender inequality. As a result, there is still a huge gender inequality gap between males and females.

4. Current Situation of Gender Equality

In terms of the contemporary situation, women provide both the household labor while working outside the home. Many societies have maintained that psychological differences between men and women matter when it comes to decision making. There are practical strategies in trying to curb sex inequality that do not require as much time as writing laws. For example, social media provide a productive platform to disseminate correct information regarding gender and sex rights, the implications of biological and psychological differences between the sexes, and for seeking advice. In effect, utilizing social media can raise greater awareness regarding the impact of sex and gender-based discrimination. In turn, those subscribed to social media might take this information to the larger public and lobby for sex and gender-based rights with their governments.

Rather than discriminate based on one’s sex, it is most important to pursue equality and to cooperate and utilize our social resources to the greatest extent possible. There are already profound improvements in gender equality when compared even to 2015. However, the fight for gender equality is still in progress. In the near future, by collaborating with social media platforms, law makers, and activists, there can be more improvements at the grassroot level.

5. Conclusion

From both the perspective of nature and nurture, men and women are born with different personality traits, which may be changed according to one’s social environment. Both biological and psychological differences are thus often overstated. Despite salient progress achieved in combating gender discrimination, the journey for gender equality still has a long way to go.

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