

# SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO THE STUDY OF GENDER

## I. Critique of biological and psychological perspectives

1) emphasis is on difference despite variation within a particular gender is greater than between genders.

2) multiple genders – multiple masculinities and femininities

3) “artificial” creation of public/private dichotomy

4) focus is on individual rather than interactional and institutional organization

## II. Assumptions

1) gender is socially constructed –

2) gender is not simply a characteristic of the individual

3) important dimension along which resources (material and non-material) are distributed in society

### III. A Sociological Approach – Gerson and Peiss

- any adequate theory of gender difference must incorporate the individual (consciousness), interactions (negotiation and domination), and social organization (boundaries).
  - Individual – “consciousness”
    - 1) gender awareness
    - 2) female and male consciousness
    - 3) feminist/antifeminist consciousness
  - Interactions – “Negotiation and Domination”
    - 1) Domination
    - 2) Negotiation
  - Social Organization, social structure, institutional -- “Boundaries

#### IV. Gender at the Individual Level

-Gender identities

#### V. Gender in Interaction – “Doing Gender”

##### A. What does this mean?

##### B. Requires distinguishing between

- Sex: determination made through the application of socially agreed upon biological criteria for classifying males and females
- sex category: achieved through application of sex criteria
- gender: activity of managing situated conduct in light of normative conceptions of attitudes and activities appropriate for one’s sex-category

##### C. How can we see people “doing gender?”

- Gender displays: demonstrations of behavior that communicate gender identities, or membership within a particular sex category.

D. If gender is simply something that we do, why not act differently?

##### E. Contributions

##### F. Limitations

## V. Institutional Approach

- Emphasis on how organizations and institutions are “gendered”

### A. What does this mean?

- Organized and function in gendered ways
- Examples

### B. Contributions

### C. Limitations