CHAPTER 1

The Varieties of Gender Theory in Sociology

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1. INTRODUCTION

As editor, I have chosen to begin this handbook where I believe all sociology should begin: with a review of the array of theoretical ideas available to, in this case, gender sociologists as they explore the social world, in the United States and elsewhere, looking at both the present and earlier times. Because they constitute the conceptual toolkit that helps gender sociologists make sense of the empirical world, many of the theories discussed in this chapter are developed further in later, substantive ones. In this chapter, I review the major gender/feminist theories in sociology, beginning with a review of what classical, nineteenth and early twentieth century theorists said about gender, but focusing most attention on theories developed since 1970, when the impact of second wave feminist activism began to be felt in our discipline. I generally confine my discussion to theories developed by sociologists, although the full corpus of feminist theory is far broader in its origins, both activist and academic. Omitted from this chapter are discussions of relatively narrow, substantive theories, which appear in subject-appropriate chapters. Also omitted is Standpoint Theory, the topic of an entire chapter (2), an approach sometimes considered virtually synonymous with the term "feminist theory." The current chapter demonstrates the many other types of contemporary feminist theory that emanate from, reflect, and significantly revise the rich variety of theoretical traditions in sociology (see Chafetz, 1988, 1997; England, 1993; Wallace, 1989, on the varieties of contemporary feminist sociological theory).

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All theory pertaining to gender is not feminist, although all feminist theory centers much or all of its attention on gender. Three features make a gender theory specifically feminist: (1) a (not necessarily exclusive) focus on the inequities, strains, and contradictions inherent in gender arrangements; (2) an assumption that gender relations are not immutable but rather changeable social creations; and (3) a normative commitment that societies should develop equitable gender arrangements (Alway, 1995, p. 211; Chafetz, 1988, p. 5).

2. THE CLASSICAL TRADITION

The nineteenth and early twentieth century founding *fathers* of sociology lived amidst the international protest of first wave women's movements, an intellectual, political, and social ferment that compelled most to address the "woman question" in some manner (Kandal, 1988). Regardless of their views concerning feminism, most confined their discussion of women largely to issues of family, emotion, and sexuality, embedded within broader theories that typically stressed the importance of other, male-dominated structures (e.g., social class and the economy; political, legal, and military systems; bureaucracy; religion). Moreover, women and femininity constituted the problem or issue. The effects of culturally defined masculinity on shaping the structures and processes central to their theories were largely unrecognized, males were infrequently examined in terms of gender, and male-dominated social structures/institutions were implicitly defined as if they were gender neutral. With few exceptions, the best that can be said for our classical tradition is that gender issues were peripheral; at worst, some theorists promulgated a crude biological determinism to justify gender inequities. The contemporary version of the sociological theory canon, as exemplified in all but a handful of theory texts, continues this androcentric bias, largely ignoring or short-shrifting both the topic of gender and the contributions of contemporary feminist theories, which remain substantially ghettoized (Alway, 1995; Stacey & Thorne, 1985; Ward & Grant, 1991). Moreover, many contemporary "general" theorists, such as James Coleman, Jeffrey Alexander, Peter Berger, and Anthony Giddens, ignore the topic of gender entirely (Seidman, 1994, p. 304).

2.1. The Biological Approach: Apologists for the Status Quo

Several early founders of sociology assumed that men and women are innately different and unequal in their intellectual, emotional, and moral capacities. Herbert Spencer, the founder of British sociological theory, began as a liberal feminist, as reflected in his book *Social Statics*, in which he devoted a chapter to "The Rights of Women." He argued that men and women deserve equal rights, inasmuch as there are only "trifling mental variations" between them (Kandal, 1988, p. 32). Within 4 years he had embarked on Social Darwinism and decided that biology (not culture) produced profound (no longer trivial) sex differences. Women, whose brains are smaller, are deficient in the sense of justice and reasoning ability required of all life beyond the care of husband and children. Moreover, women naturally prefer to be protected by a powerful man. Permitting women to enter public life would therefore be antithetical to human progress (Kandal, 1988, pp. 32–46). The founder of French sociology, Auguste Comte, echoed these sentiments. Because of their emotional and spiritual "superiority," women are perfectly fit for family and domes-

tic life, but their state of "perpetual infancy" and intellectual inferiority to men render them unfit for anything else (Kandal, 1988, pp. 46–77). Similar stereotypes about the innate natures of women and men, and conclusions about the appropriate roles and status of each, were repeated by founders of German (Ferdinand Toennes) and Italian (Vilfredo Pareto) sociology (Kandal, 1988, pp. 177–182 and 193–201).

The most famous early French sociologist, Emile Durkheim, also resorted to a biological explanation of what he recognized as women's social subordination (Kandal, 1988, pp. 77–88, especially 85; Lehmann, 1990, 1994). In *Suicide*, his statistics demonstrated that marriage produces opposite effects for men, for whom it lowers the suicide rate, and women, among whom the rate is higher among the married. He concluded that marriage ought some day to be reformed but, in the interim, men must be protected from suicide through the maintenance of a form of marriage that produces more stress and disadvantage for women (Kandal, 1988, p. 88). His justification was that the increase in suicide for married women is less than that for unmarried men because women have fewer "sociability needs," are more "instinctive," have a less developed "mental life," and therefore are more easily satisfied. Men are more "complex," and their psychological balance is more precarious and in need of the constraining protections afforded by existing marital arrangements (Kandal, 1988, pp. 83–85). Feminism supported divorce and, therefore, Durkheim opposed it as rooted in "unscientific" thinking (Lehmann, 1990). Durkheim also referred to the topic of gender in *The Division of Labor in Society,* where he argued that increasing physical and cultural differentiation have evolved over time between the sexes, allowing for increasing specialization of labor between them and, therefore, "conjugal solidarity." A state of gender similarity and equality is a "primitive" one associated with unstable marital unions (Lehmann, 1990, pp. 164–165; Kandal, 1988, pp. 80–81).

2.2. Gender as Inequitable but Peripheral

Proponents of classical Marxist theory were well aware that gender arrangements are both the product of social life and inequitable. The most fully developed statement of this approach, Friedrich Engels' *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State,* is an evolutionary theory describing three stages, each characterized by a different form of marriage. Gender inequality originated during the third stage, when an inheritable economic surplus first arose due to technological development and the institution of private property. Men overthrew the traditional matrilineal system to ensure that their sons would inherit, and instituted all manner of controls over women to insure "proper" paternity. During this stage household work became private service, and women were excluded from social production and became legally subordinated to men (p. 104). The solution to gender inequality is the abolition of capitalism, which would eliminate concerns about inheritance and paternity and return women to "public industry" (pp. 105–106). Women's emancipation was a stated goal of most Marxist parties and thinkers in subsequent decades. However, orthodox Marxism, including its feminist proponents (e.g., Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin), juxtaposed their position to that of "bourgeoisie feminism" by claiming that gender inequities were the byproduct of social class inequality and that the replacement of capitalism with socialism would automatically resolve women's problems.

Max Weber, under the influence of his activist mother and wife, supported the liberal branch of the women's rights movement (Kandal, 1988, pp. 126–156). In *General*

Economic History, he refined Engels' theory in describing the transition from matriarchal tribes to patriarchal agrarian societies, a process by which the gender division of labor within the family increased and the status of women declined. Reflecting his general theoretical orientation, Weber responded to the ghost of Marx by arguing that this transition was not simply a function of economic change, but also reflected alterations in the military, religion, and magic (Kandal, 1988, pp.146–147 and 149–151). He understood that the process of societal rationalization, a central theme in Weber's work, was a masculine phenomenon. Despite his sensitivity to the historically specific subordination of women, Weber failed to explore the conditions under which they challenge gender inequality and in his premier essay on social inequality, "Class, Status and Party," he was curiously silent about gender.

2.3. Gender as Central, but . . .

Another early German sociologist, Georg Simmel, devoted extensive attention to gender in many of his best known essays and in *The Philosophy of Money* (see Coser, 1977; Kandal, 1988, pp. 156–177; Oakes, 1984). Kandal describes Simmel as sensitive to the fact that male-dominated culture hinders women's autonomy and prevents them from contributing to the common culture. Moreover, the standards used to evaluate social achievements "are formally generically human, but are in fact masculine in terms of their historical formation" (Kandal, 1988, p. 158), leaving women to be judged by criteria developed by and for men within a context where women are denied the opportunity to achieve them (p. 159). Women thereby become the object of contempt and come to evaluate themselves as means for others', specifically their families', satisfaction. In a search for recognition within a context in which they are denied other avenues, women devote themselves to personal adornment and fashion. Simmel recognized that women develop social groups to defend themselves against men. Although most often the form such protection takes is staunch defense of custom, he also examined the social conditions that prompt women to develop groups that challenge male privilege (Kandal, 1988, pp. 169–171).

Although Simmel was closer to writing feminist theory than other classical sociologists, his ideas nonetheless were "ideologically contradictory" (Kandal, 1988, p.165). He recognized that gender differences and the level of gender inequality vary over time and space, but he also posited innate gender differences. Oakes (1984) argues that Simmel rejected all of the contemporary approaches to "the woman question": traditional, liberal, and Marxist. Rather, he posited an inherent difference in male and female "modes of being," which are embodied in inexorably opposed, universal, male and female cultures. Simmel's solution to "the woman question" is a "separate but equal 'female culture' expressed in the theater and in the home . . . " (Kandal, 1988, p. 177).

The most recent theorist incorporated into the classical theory canon is Talcott Parsons. Because of his focus on normative consensus as it arises chiefly through socialization, Parsons devoted considerable attention to the family and to "sex roles," including several essays and *Family, Socialization and Interaction Process.* In his description of then-contemporary, American, middle-class, family life, Parsons demonstrated sensitivity to the contradictions, inequities, and strains with which women lived, noting also that the occupations available to single women are considerably below those available to their male class peers. Because they are generally denied the opportunity to combine wife/mother and employment roles, and are confined to the "pseudo occupation" of "home

management," wives' status becomes asymmetrical with that of their husbands. Given a society that strongly emphasizes individual achievement, yet strongly values domesticity for wives and mothers, widespread tensions and strain are inherent in the feminine role (Kandal, 1988, pp. 228–234). Parsons discussed alternatives to the drudgery of housework (e.g., perfecting it as an "art," using domestic servants (!), doing volunteer work with children and the sick, and the "glamour pattern" of emphasizing sex appeal), but concluded that all were problematic. He also recognized that married women could assume the "masculine pattern" and compete with male class peers in the labor force, but suggested that this would result in "profound alterations in the structure of the family" (Kandal, 1988, pp. 230–233).

Parsons' explanation for why family structure and sex roles took the form they did reflected his general evolutionary theory that focused on increasing functional specialization and integration. A more specialized type of family emerged with industrialization that, having lost its economic and political functions, became a "factory" for producing human personalities through childhood socialization and the stabilization of adult personalities. Using his famous instrumental/expressive dichotomy, Parsons described the contemporary family as an institution devoted to the expressive function. As jobs became separated from the household, men came to specialize in the instrumental role of earning a living for the family. Because they bear and nurture children, women came to specialize in the expressive role, that is, the production of human personalities within the household. For Parsons, as for Durkheim, this evolutionary process accentuated role complementarity (Kandal, 1988, pp. 233–234).

For 30 years, feminists have interpreted Parsons' argument as one that not only described the then-modern family and explained its evolution, but also prescribed its continuation based on functional necessity. However, Johnson (1989, 1993) argues that, although not advocating radical family change, neither did Parsons oppose it; he only (rather presciently) predicted it as an outcome if married women entered the labor force in large numbers. Moreover, although he failed to foresee the looming rebirth of feminist activism, he nonetheless was sensitive to many of the inequities and strains that helped cause it. Regardless of which interpretation one accepts, it was clearly the case in the 1950s and 1960s that Parsonian-influenced family sociologists explicitly suggested that the widespread employment of married women would endanger the "proper" socialization of children and the "health" of the family as a social system (Ehrlich, 1971).

2.4. Turn-of-the-Century Feminist Social Thought: The Forgotten Tradition[1]

Few women worked as academic social scientists before the mid-twentieth century: however, a number of turn-of-the-century feminist activists and social service administrators in the United States received Ph.D.s in the social sciences and produced writings that should be considered feminist theory. Fitzpatrick (1988) describes four, one of whom, Frances Kellor, received a Ph.D. in sociology. Another activist sociologist was Charlotte Perkins Gillman, whose book, *Women and Economics*, made her the leading late nine-

[1] After this volume went to press, an excellent book was published by Lengermann and Niebrugge-Brantley (1998) that discusses in depth the contributions of more than a dozen United States and European founding mothers of feminist social theory.

teenth century feminist intellectual (Kandall, 1990, p. 220). Yet a third feminist thinker and activist trained as a sociologist was Jane Addams, founder of Hull House, which served as the intellectual and activist center of feminist social science (Deegan, 1988). Rosenberg (1982) describes a number of additional feminist social scientists in the United States and Lengermann and Niebrugge (1996) list a myriad of European feminist women who contributed to nineteenth and early twentieth century sociological thought. Together, these founding *mothers* constitute the largely forgotten feminist tradition in classical sociology, one totally ignored in the contemporary theory canon.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to review the accomplishments of these remarkable women (see detailed accounts in Deegan,1988; Fitzpatrick, 1990; and Rosenberg, 1982). Several male sociologists at the University of Chicago, such as Lester Ward, W. I. Thomas, and George Herbert Mead, supported the Women's Movement and Hull House, mentored female graduate students, and wrote about the topic of gender from a liberal feminist perspective. Opinions differed concerning the primary cause(s) of and solution(s) to women's problems. Ward, Jessie Taft, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman rejected the notion that the sexes are fundamentally different and focused on the sociocultural roots of observed differences. Others, such as Jane Addams, accepted the Victorian-era belief in sex differences, especially women's moral superiority. She argued that, given changed circumstances resulting from industrialization, by which the role of the family had diminished, women sought public roles precisely to express their moral nature. Moreover, social progress depended on women achieving them. Taft and Gillman emphasized that both genders needed to change, women by assuming more of the rational, competitive, adventurous attributes of men, men by taking on the peaceful and nurturant attributes of women. However, where Gillman focused on economic restrictions and advocated economic independence for women, Taft stressed political and psychological, as well as economic issues. In general, turn-of-the-century, feminist social scientists in the United States wrestled with issues of the nature, degree, and origins of gender differences, guided by abiding commitments to gender equity and to Progressive-era social reforms. That feminist sociologists still wrestle with these same issues will be apparent throughout this volume, especially Chapter 3.

2.5. Conclusion

The theorists reviewed in Part II were motivated to address gender issues by the intellectual and political ferment arising from the first wave women's movement. Although few works today considered theory classics met the criteria specified for feminist theory, the theories discussed subsequently do. Some nonfeminist gender theory has been developed since 1970, notably sociobiology, which is briefly reviewed in Chapter 3. However, I confine my review of contemporary gender theory to its feminist varieties, which are grouped into four parts: Macrostructural, Microstructural, Interactionist, and Childhood Engenderment. Like their predecessors, contemporary gender theorists have been inspired by the broader intellectual and political ferment of an ongoing feminist movement.

3. FEMINIST MACROSTRUCTURAL THEORIES

The theories reviewed in Part III seek to explain systems of gender stratification, or patriarchy, at the societal level, primarily with reference to other societal-level structures and

processes. This part of the chapter is divided into four sections: World Systems Theory, Marxist-Inspired Theory, Other Macrostructural Approaches, and Multiple Jeopardy Theory.

3.1. World Systems Theory

General World Systems Theory, which focuses on the outcomes of inequitable relationships between wealthy, core nations and poorer, semiperipheral and peripheral ones, has ignored the vital role women play in the economies of Third World countries, as described in the huge Women and Development literature (Ward, 1990, 1993). This literature, which is the subject of Chapter 5, demonstrates that capital penetration of poor by core nations usually increases the level of gender inequality. The most basic corrections required of the general theory are to cease considering women only as members of male-headed households, to cease assuming that household members have unitary interests, and to analyze women's independent economic contributions as members of the global economy, participants in the informal labor market, as household workers, and as food producers (Blumberg, 1989; Ward, 1993). Ward (1984) theorizes that the effects of Western capital penetration on women's work and status can be understood by examining preexisting patterns of "patriarchal relations," which include both ideologies of male supremacy and institutionalized forms of male dominance. In addition, gendered assumptions made by Western male capitalists in the planning and execution of their projects alter the distribution of constraints and opportunities between women and men in peripheral nations. Together, local patriarchal relations and androcentric capitalist bias usually result in new economic, educational, and political opportunities and resources being disproportionately awarded to local men. Gender inequality is exacerbated further as women's traditional subsistence agriculture, trade, and small-scale handicraft production suffer from competition with newly developing foreign trade, which is in the hands of men (Ward, 1984, p. 21). New opportunities on the global assembly line are often open to women, but they frequently are confined to the young and unmarried and are insecure, tightly supervised, and very poorly paid. The result is that the greater the peripheral nation's trade dependency on core nations, and the higher the level of foreign investment, the greater the level of gender inequality (Ward, 1984, p. 40–43).

3.2. Marxist-Inspired Theory

Although twentieth century socialist nations usually ameliorated women's problems, substantial gender inequities persisted, a point not lost when feminism reemerged in the 1960s. Contemporary Marxist-inspired feminists, who call themselves socialist feminists, propound a theory that analytically separates class and patriarchal forms of oppression and analyzes their interpenetration as a major mechanism that sustains both. They explicitly recognize that patriarchy predated capitalism, but argue that its form is very different and constantly changing under capitalism. Unlike their orthodox Marxist predecessors, socialist feminists view the demise of capitalism as a necessary but not sufficient condition to end women's oppression.

Under capitalism, women are responsible for the unpaid work of maintaining and reproducing the labor force, work that directly profits capitalists. Like men, they may also be involved in the production of surplus value through waged work. One of the major

recent transformations of capitalism has been from denying most women the opportunity to become "social adults" through waged work (Sacks, 1974) to seeking them as a source of cheap labor in a highly sex-segregated labor market (Eisenstein, 1979). Women are doubly exploited by capitalism, in the household and the economy, thereby producing far greater surplus value than do men (Shelton & Agger, 1993). The gender inequities women experience in the labor market are linked, ideologically and practically, to their domestic responsibilities (Shelton & Agger, 1993; Vogel, 1983). Capitalists foster an ideology of patriarchy (male supremacy) that justifies women's nonwaged domestic and child rearing work with reference to biologically rooted reproductive differences between the sexes, and justifies labor market inequities based on women's domestic obligations (Eisenstein, 1979). Male workers derive advantages both at home and in the labor market: their wives' unpaid services and subservience as well as better paying jobs protected from competition by women. In return for husbands' economic resources, wives provide subservience and domestic labor, which in turn surpresses their wages (Hartmann, 1984). Thus "compensated" for their subordination to capitalist domination, working class men are less likely to develop class consciousness (Shelton & Agger, 1993; Sokoloff, 1980). Moreover, because wives are economically dependent, their husbands are tied more securely to wage-earning jobs, which they are less likely to jeopardize by rebellion against the capitalist system (Eisenstein, 1979; Hartmann, 1984; Vogel, 1983). The result is that capitalism and patriarchy buttress one another.

A variant of feminist socialism, developed by Dorothy Smith (1990, 1987), combines Marxist insights with those of Foucault on the role of knowledge in the (re)production of the "social relations of ruling," which include both capitalism and patriarchy. Smith analyzes how "male-created discourse" functions to oppress women. Similarly, Patricia Hill Collins (1990) identifies white, male-produced knowledge as a major component of a racist, classist, and sexist "matrix of domination." To the extent that women adopt male discourse in their work as professionals in major institutions, including as scholars, they provide "alienated labor" in the Marxist sense that they contribute to the order that oppresses them (Smith, 1990, p. 19; also 1987, p. 3–5). Smith and Collins relate their analyses of domination to broader epistemological discussions that comprise Standpoint Theory, the topic of Chapter 2. The relationship between knowledge systems and gender inequality is also explored in the chapter on science (20).

3.3. Other Macrostructural Approaches

Six categories of theoretical constructs provide the starting points for the diverse and eclectic theories considered in this section: cultural, environmental, technological, economic, demographic, and political. Many of these theories are sufficiently complex, in number of constructs and of linkages posited as connecting them, so as to defy brief summary beyond the listing of central ideas. These anthropological and sociological theories share a focus on delineating the conditions that explain variation in the level of gender stratification across time and space. Chafetz (1984, Chapter 1) defines gender stratification as the degree to which men and women, who are otherwise social equals, are unequal in their access to the scarce and valued resources and opportunities of their society, suggesting 11 dimensions that may be unequally distributed and an additive approach to combining them. Blumberg (1979) conceptualizes gender inequality as comprising three forms of power: political, coercive, and, most importantly, economic, and

later (Blumberg, 1984) adds a fourth, ideological. Using a factor analytic technique to examine a grab-bag of 52 variables, Whyte (1978) inductively defines nine dimensions of gender stratification that vary independently. Clearly, much work remains to conceptualize adequately gender stratification in a manner that enables cross-national and historical comparison.

Virtually all macro-level feminist theories agree that cultural or ideological definitions of masculinity and femininity (see especially Connell, 1987, on hegemonic masculinity), and of "gender-appropriate" behaviors, responsibilities, and privileges, are fundamental components of systems of gender inequality (a topic discussed in Chapters 10 and 27). Some anthropologists make a cultural construct the most central to their explanations, and of these, Peggy Sanday's work (1981) is the most nuanced. She argues that each society develops an overarching cultural orientation rooted in the kinds of environmental conditions most important to the society's survival strategy. An "inner orientation" arises in relatively benign environments, treats nature as sacred, and emphasizes the "female creative principle," as embodied in creation myths which include females as central actors. An "outer orientation" arises in more physically harsh and/or warlike environments, where nature in defined as dangerous, men's activities as hunters and warriors are revered, and creation myths stress masculine progenitors. Each society develops a "sex role plan" based on one of these cultural orientations. The level of gender inequality reflects that plan and is highest where an "outer orientation" prevails.

Another anthropologist, Marvin Harris (1978), links environmental harshness to warfare, female infanticide, and gender inequality. He argues that population pressure and resource shortages produce warfare in technologically simple societies, which control population through female infanticide. Infanticide is made possible by the devaluation of nonwarriors, that is, females, which develops as a mechanism to encourage masculine fierceness and aggressiveness. The level of gender inequality is a function of the frequency of warfare and its location—remote (which may reduce male advantage) or proximate (which enhances it). The military as a masculine institution is explored in Chapter 25.

Sanday and Harris focus on technologically simple societies. A broader range of societies is incorporated into theories developed by Martin and Voorhies (1975), Huber (1988), Blumberg (1978), and Chafetz (1984), who employ variants of Lenski's fivefold typology (ranging from foraging to industrial societies), wherein types are defined in terms of dominant technology and related size of the economic surplus. These works describe and explain a curvilinear relationship, beginning with very low levels of gender inequality in most non-surplus-producing, technologically simple foraging societies, peaking in agrarian/pastoral societies, and tapering off gradually in advanced industrial ones. This relationship comprises the topic of Chapter 4.

Demographic variables have also been used as independent constructs. As stated previously, Harris (1978; also Chafetz, 1984) defines population density as an important impetus for gender inequality. Huber (1991) focuses on the negative impact of high fertility rates on the relative status of women. Guttentag and Secord (1983) discuss the effects of skewed sex ratios on women's opportunities to marry and to participate in the labor force, on dyadic power within heterosexual relationships, and on women's likelihood of collectively rebelling against the system.

Randall Collins (1975) links a typology of political structure to gender inequality. He distinguishes between nation–states, which monopolize the legitimate use of force, and earlier, household-based polities in which it was decentralized into the hands of

(male) household heads. In the latter case, individual men have the legitimate right to physically coerce wives (and other household members), a variable that, when coupled with women's level of economic opportunity, constitutes the most important construct explaining the degree of gender inequality. Male violence against women is the topic of Chapter 14, and the relationship between gender and political life is explored in Chapter 23.

Economic power, or the extent to which women produce economic surplus, and especially control the products of, and/or income derived from their labor, constitutes a central construct in most macrostructural theories (e.g., Blumberg, 1984; Chafetz, 1984, 1990; Collins, 1975; Collins, Chafetz, Blumberg, Coltrane, & Turner, 1993). The more economic resources women produce and control, the lower is the level of gender stratification. Blumberg (1984) adds the concepts "nesting" and "discount rate." The relative economic power of women varies at different societal levels (household, community, social class, and society), with the broader levels controlling (nesting) those below. Coercive, political, and ideological forms of power, although less important than economic, tend to flow from higher social levels downward and are less accessible to women than economic power. Therefore, males tend to be more dominant at higher levels, which discounts the amount of power women receive based on their economic resources. The relationship between gender and the economy is explored in Chapters 15 and 16.

Finally, macrostructural theories often include family structure and culture as intervening constructs. Like the socialist feminists, they (e.g., Blumberg, 1978, 1984, 1988; Chafetz, 1984, 1990; Collins et al., 1993) define the domestic (i.e., reproductive and household maintenance) division of labor as important for understanding women's economic roles: the more responsible women are for domestic labor, the less their opportunity to achieve economic resources, and vice versa. Locality and lineage systems are also incorporated: women fare worst under patrilocal and patrilineal systems of marriage and family (Blumberg, 1978; Chafetz, 1984; Martin & Voorhies, 1975). Family relations and the division of domestic labor, as they are impacted by gender, constitute the focus of Chapters 18 and 19. Further, secular and religious idea systems reflect and buttress systems of gender inequality by "explaining" gender difference and justifying male privilege (e.g., Blumberg, 1978, 1984, 1988; Chafetz, 1984, 1990). This substantial array of structural constructs is woven together in complex and varying ways by the different theorists.

3.4. Multiple Jeopardy Theory

In recent years, feminist scholars have become aware of the white, middle-class biases of much of their work, as reflected in a recent emphasis on the topic called "The Intersection of Race, Class and Gender." This literature is mostly descriptive, although the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1990) provides a basic theoretical approach. Collins (1990, Chapter 11) conceptualizes "one overarching structure of domination" that includes, in addition to race, class, and gender, the dimensions of age, religion, and sexual orientation. Rejecting an additive approach to understanding how these various systems of inequality affect people, she recommends that we focus on how they interact. She uses a "both/and" (rather than an "either/or") approach to argue that people can simultaneously be oppressed and oppressor, privileged and penalized; "a matrix of domination contains few pure victims or oppressors" (p. 229). Although individuals and groups may define one form of oppression as more fundamental than others that they simultaneously experience, no one form is primary. The matrix of domination has several layers, including persons, group or

community culture, and social institutions, and different systems of oppression rely on varying degrees of interpersonal versus systemic means of domination. All layers are sites of potential resistance to systems of domination, as are all forms of oppression. The next task in the development of this promising theoretical approach is to delineate the general conditions under which: (1) any specific form of oppression is likely to be perceived as more fundamental than other forms simultaneously experienced; (2) the various levels of domination constitute more or less important loci of oppression; and (3) collective resistance is likely to arise in response to particular forms of dominance. A fully developed theory of multiple jeopardy could constitute a major vehicle for moving gender (and race/ethnicity) to the center of sociological theory, where social inequality, defined narrowly as class/status, has long played a fundamental role.

4. FEMINIST MICROSTRUCTURAL THEORY

The theories included in Part IV focus on explaining the gendered behaviors and choices of individuals, and gendered interaction patterns between them, as outcomes of gender inequality at the macro-level. Four sections comprise this part of the chapter: Network Theory, Utilitarian Theories of Exchange and Rational Choice, Role Theory, and Status Expectations Theory.

4.1. Network Theory

Network Theory is concerned with the nature (structure) of linkages between actors, not with characteristics of actors. Nonetheless, Smith-Lovin and McPherson (1993) use this theory to shed light upon issues of gender difference and inequality. They argue that gender differentiation begins with what appear to be inconsequentially small differences in the network structures and ties of young boys and girls. They review a considerable body of empirical literature to show how single-sex childhood networks cumulate over the life course, resulting in substantial differences in the kinds of networks in which women and men are typically located and the nature of the ties within gender homophilous networks. In turn, different types of networks and ties have major impacts on the development of aspirations, the level and forms of opportunities people enjoy, and behavior, differences summarized by the title of their article: "You Are Who You Know." As adults, women and men are different and unequal because of the effects of their current network ties, which, although begun in childhood, are potentially changeable.

4.2. Utilitarian Theories of Exchange and Rational Choice

Contemporary theories of Rational Choice and Exchange, derived from classical Utilitarian thought, have been criticized by feminists (e.g., England, 1989; England & Kilbourne, 1990; Harstock, 1985) on the basis that they assume selfish, separative, and nonemotional actors who are presumably masculine, and ignore connective, altruistic, and emotional motivations said to be characteristically feminine. Nonetheless, both types of theories have provided the basis of feminist theorizing.

Social Exchange Theory has been used by feminist thinkers to explain inequities

between spouses (e.g., Bell & Newby, 1976; Chafetz, 1980, 1990; Curtis, 1986; Parker & Parker, 1979), a topic explored in Chapters 17 and 18. They begin by noting that social structural arrangements function to allow most husbands far greater access than their wives to resources that families require and desire. The major, but not sole resource of interest is economic, with prestige, superior knowledge, and culturally based male authority constituting other important resources. The higher level of access by husbands to resources generated outside the family must be "balanced" in some fashion by wives for the relationship to continue. Wives typically provide compliance and deference (as well as domestic labor) as their part of the exchange. In a nuanced description of spousal exchanges under these conditions, Curtis distinguishes economic from social exchange, noting that the former type is based on the advance specification of what is to be traded for what. In social exchanges, gifts and favors are given with an implicit understanding that the debtor will eventually fulfill some diffuse, unspecified obligation. Because it is unspecified, the amount of debt "can be infinite in effect," inasmuch as it is unclear when it has been discharged (Curtis, 1986, p. 179). Husbands acquire considerable power over their wives because of their superior ability to provide gifts and favors. Exchange-based spousal inequality tends to handicap women in the labor force, thereby reinforcing macro-level gender inequality (Chafetz, 1990). However, as Parker and Parker (1979; also Chafetz, 1980) note, as women increase their access to resources generated outside the family, the nature of spousal exchanges alters, often resulting in either increased equality or in divorce.

Friedman and Diem (1993) review a considerable body of feminist empirical work to demonstrate the implicit Rational Choice Theory inherent in it. They argue that three central Rational Choice mechanisms are often employed to explain differences in the choices made by men and women: institutional constraints, opportunity costs, and preferences (p. 101). They demonstrate how gender-related choices made by parents (e.g., regarding investing in sons' versus daughters' educations), employers (e.g., whether to hire/promote men or women in various kinds of jobs), and individual women (e.g., whether to be a full-time homemaker) can be understood using these Rational Choice concepts. Chafetz and Hagan (1996) employ a modified version of this theory, using the concept "satisficing" (seeking a satisfactory rather than maximal level of some good) to understand how women increasingly try to balance preferences for individual achievement and for long-term romantic commitment and children. Their theory explains a set of family changes experienced by all industrial nations (increased ages at first marriage and first birth, decreased completed fertility, increased divorce and cohabitation rates) as primarily the result of changes in the rationally calculated choices women make as they confront a new set of opportunities and an old set of constraints.

4.3. Role Theory

Despite intense feminist criticism of Parsonian Theory in the 1960s and 1970s, the newly emerging field of gender sociology originally called itself by the Parsonian label, the Sociology of Sex Roles. This term, which assumes the existence of overarching, general, feminine and masculine roles, has since been discredited and abandoned, because it obscures power differences between men and women, thereby depoliticizing the study of gender (Stacey & Thorne, 1985), and because it fails to recognize situational variation in role enactment (Lopata & Thorne, 1978). However, because so many specific social roles

are exclusively (e.g., mother, husband) or largely (many occupations) specific to one sex, and because women's roles have changed considerably in recent decades, Role Theory remains important to the study of gender, as demonstrated in Chapter 12.

A major theme in the literature concerning women's roles is conflict between domestic and employment roles. Coser and Rokoff (1982) theorize that role conflicts are avoided for men because normative expectations specify priority for employment over family obligations. For women, cultural definitions are the opposite, so in cases of conflict they are supposed to disrupt their work organization rather than family. Because of this, employers often restrict women's opportunities, women tend to have low career aspirations and they readily relinquish careers. Female-dominated occupations are structured to assume high rates of absenteeism and relatively low levels of commitment and are therefore under-valued and -rewarded.

A recent feminist Role Theory (Lopata,1994) examines the effects of societal modernization on the major types of roles women play (family, kinship, employment, domestic, community, student) and compares three ideal-typical kinds of women—modern, traditional, and transitional—in terms of their role-playing. While emphasizing the modern role pattern, Lopata recognizes that within a modern society such as the United States, different categories of women vary in the extent to which they enjoy the opportunity to assume modern role options. Women perform the duties of their numerous roles within a "social circle" comprising all those with whom they interact in their role enactments. Given cultural definitions of various roles, some combinations ("role clusters") are easier to negotiate and create less conflict and strain than others. Lopata also explores the relationship between role enactments and gendered personal identity, using a life course perspective to focus on transitions between various roles and the differing levels of role salience women experience during their lifetimes. The modern role-player deals with a more complex role set, a wider social circle, and greater opportunities to negotiate her role performances than a traditional one. In this way, Lopata's theory links changing, socioculturally generated definitions, constraints, and opportunities to individually negotiated role performances and identities of women.

4.4. Status Expectations Theory

Status Expectations Theory explains how gender is related to power and influence in mixed-sex, goal-oriented groups (see review essay by Ridgeway, 1993). The theory assumes that males enjoy higher social status than females. Both men and women typically enter mixed-sex groups with expectations that men will behave more competently than women in moving the group toward task achievement, that is, their "performance expectations" favor males. The theory recognizes that the salience of gender is context specific and, in some instances (e.g., when the task is traditionally feminine), performance expectations will not privilege males. Normally, however, they do and they become self-fulfilling prophecies that result in a reduction of women's self-confidence, prestige, and power in group interactions. Moreover, such expectations are usually accepted by group members as legitimate and, therefore, an individual woman's attempt to counteract them will be rejected as inappropriate by members of both sexes (Meeker & Weitzel-O'Neill, 1985). The outcomes of mixed-sex groups will typically reflect the preferences of their male members, and group processes will usually enhance male power and status (Ridgeway, 1993), reinforcing gender-based status expectations in future group settings and the wider society. This body of research and theory is explored further in Chapter 13.

4.5. Conclusion

The theories discussed in Part IV explain how gendered differences in resources, opportunities, constraints, and social definitions, generated at the macro-level, influence individuals' choices, behaviors, and interaction patterns in gender differentiated and unequal ways. In turn, micro-level responses to structured inequality feed back to buttress the macro-level system. They at least implicitly recognize that change is possible, its major source and direction flowing from the macro- to the micro-levels.

5. FEMINIST INTERACTIONIST THEORY

The theories discussed in Part V, Ethnomethodology and Symbolic Interactionism, focus on how interaction processes (re)produce gender in everyday life, a topic also explored in Chapter 13. They differ from the theories in Part IV because they focus much more attention on actors' interpretations of situations and how meanings are attached to behaviors, and because they imply greater individual agency than the more structurally focused theories discussed to this point.

5.1. Ethnomethodology

The Ethnomethodological approach views gender as an ongoing accomplishment that emerges during virtually all interactions, both within- and between-sex (Gerson, 1985). Gender is neither an individual-level trait nor a stable feature of social structure (West & Fenstermaker, 1993). Rather, people are constantly 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 that any action can be interpreted as exemplifying it (West & Fenstermaker, 1993). Specific definitions of masculinity and femininity vary (in ways and for reasons that are not theorized), but the notion that men and women are fundamentally different 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 (Kessler & McKenna, 1978). Using a variety of different kinds of cues, people characterize self and others by sex ("gender attribution") and then interpret all kinds of behavior through the lens of gender-normative "appropriateness." Individuals, therefore, hold themselves and others accountable for their behavior as men and as women and are legitimated or discredited accordingly (West & Fenstermaker, 1993, p. 157). Gender (as well as race and class) are conceptualized as emergent features of social situations, accomplishments whose relevance cannot be determined apart from the context in which they are accomplished (West & Fenstermaker, 1995).

5.2. Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic Interactionism has influenced a number of feminist theories. Lopata's Role theory, discussed earlier, is grounded in the Symbolic Interactionist emphasis on role negotiation, rather than the more static and deterministic Parsonian concept of role. So-

cialization Theory, to be discussed in Part VI, employs Symbolic Interactionist insights on the development of self-identity in delineating the processes that produce gendered selves. A number of feminist sociolinguists, social psychologists, and sociologists focus on what this theory tradition defines as the key medium through which "mind, self and society" are produced: symbolic communication or language (e.g., Fishman, 1982; Mayo & Henley, 1981; West & Zimmerman, 1977). This body of work (see Bonvillain, 1995; Chapter 9, for a comprehensive review) theorizes that gender inequality is sustained because men dominate conversations (which women work hard to sustain), whereas women use verbal and body language in ways that weaken their ability to assert themselves. Moreover, most languages, including English, build gender bias into their vocabularies. Fishman (1982, p. 178) concludes: "the definition of what is appropriate conversation becomes men's choice. What part of the world [they] . . . maintain the reality of, is his choice . . . ," that is, through talk men create the definition of the situation.

Scripting and Labeling Theories are offshoots of Symbolic Interaction Theory also used by feminist theorists. Gender is reproduced because the social scripts for many tasks are specifically associated with one gender; as people go about doing those tasks, they automatically "do gender" (West & Fenstermaker, 1993). The division of domestic labor, for instance, provides gendered scripts for numerous tasks that make the household a veritable "gender factory" (Fenstermaker Berk, 1985). The gendered scripts of many female occupations include "emotional labor" (the need to fake or hide one's feelings in order to please others; Hochschild, 1983), which functions to deny women an "integrated autonomous identity" (Kasper, 1986, p. 40). Schur (1984) uses Labeling Theory to demonstrate how the devalued and stigmatized master status of femaleness results in the selective perception of women based on stereotypes, and in their objectification as things rather than persons. In turn, objectification allows others to treat women in degrading and exploitative ways that produce self-fulfilling prophecies by which women come to define themselves as inferior and to suffer from low self-esteem, in-group hostility, and identification with their male oppressors. The relationship between gender and mental (as well as physical) health is explored in Chapters 21 and 22.

The most explicit use of Symbolic Interaction Theory is provided by Ferguson (1980). She argues that men possess the power to define both specific situations and the generalized other, by which women come to define themselves "by reference to standards that brand them as inferior" (p. 155). The result is that women's self-identity is undermined and they assume self-blame for their problems. In addition, women become highly adept at taking the role of the male other, anticipating his wants and attempting to please, flatter, and acquiesce to avoid punishment by the more powerful other (pp.161–162).

Recently, Cecilia Ridgeway (1997) developed a fascinating theoretical explanation of the persistence of gender hierarchy in the labor force, rooted in an interactionist perspective but synthesizing ideas from several social psychological theories. Her starting point is that of the ethnomethodologists: the pervasive tendency in nearly all interactions to dichotomously "sex categorize." She traces the implications of this for understanding gender stereotyping, the salience level of gender in interactions, and the development of gender status beliefs, demonstrating how these in turn affect the gendered distribution of rewards and of men's and women's relative feelings of entitlement (thus making her theory more general than simply an explanation of labor market phenomena). Finally, she applies her theory to an analysis of how jobs come to be sex labeled and inequitably rewarded.

6. CHILDHOOD ENGENDERMENT THEORIES

The last two types of feminist approaches to understanding gender difference and inequality focus on childhood experiences and learning, a topic examined in Chapter 11. These are theorized as producing gendered personalities, cognitive styles, preferences, and values that are assumed to be quite stable and influential throughout life, and to be the wellspring from which macrostructural gender inequities arise and/or are maintained. The two theories of childhood engenderment are Socialization and Neo-Freudian. Both create problems for explaining change in gender arrangements to the extent that they stress the lifelong importance of early learning, and both tend to lead to an exaggerated picture of the extent of gender difference.

6.1. Socialization Theory

The Socialization Theory of childhood engenderment utilizes Symbolic Interactionism and Cognitive Development Theory to identify the basic processes by which children develop "appropriately" gendered self-identities and learn gender-normative behaviors. It assumes, at least implicitly, that such identities and behavioral repertoires shape behavior across specific roles and situations over the lifecourse because the theory is linked with the Parsonian concept gender role. The engenderment process begins at birth with sex-labeling of infants and differences in responses to them by parents/caretakers based on assigned sex (e.g., naming, how infants are handled and spoken to, nursery decor, toys, clothing). The result is that toddlers develop a stable identity as female or male that is an integral part of their developing self-identity, and then actively seek confirmation from others of that gendered identity (Cahill, 1983; Lewis & Weinraub, 1979). They also become increasingly adept at labeling others according to gender. Modeling same-sex parent, siblings, peers, media figures, etc., along with positive and negative feedback from adults and peers concerning their behavior, teach children gender-specific behavioral norms (Constantinople, 1979). Gender-specific forms of sport, play, and games are also important for teaching children gender-appropriate physical, cognitive, and interaction skills (Cahill, 1983; Lever, 1976), skills that traditionally orient females to domestic roles and close, interpersonal relationships, and males to employment roles and emotional inexpressiveness (Sattel, 1976). The relationship between gender and sport is explored in Chapter 26.

6.2. Neo-Freudian Theory

For reasons that are not clear, interest among gender sociologists in Socialization Theory waned as interest in a Neo-Freudian approach to engenderment waxed, beginning in the late 1970s, despite feminist criticism of Freud as intense as that of Parsons. The theorist who has most influenced feminist sociology in the United States is Nancy Chodorow (especially 1978; also 1974, 1989), who combines Object Relations Theory with a revision of Freudian ideas (see Kurzweil, 1989 and Williams, 1993 for reviews of feminist Freudian thought). Although hotly contested among feminist sociologists (e.g., Lorber, Coser, Rossi, & Chadorow, 1981), few feminist sociological theories have been as widely cited as hers.

Chodorow begins with the observation that infant and toddler caretaking is done overwhelmingly by women; that for young children of both sexes, their "primary love object" is female. Oedipal-stage boys must separate from their female love object in order to acquire a gendered self-identity. Similarly aged girls, however, can continue close bonds with their same-sex primary love object during the process of acquiring their gendered identity. The result is that girls grow into women whose primary concern is with interpersonal connection and nurturance, while boys mature into men who focus on individuation, deny affect, and strive to prove themselves through social achievement. Male dominance and misogyny are also posited as results of the fact that women "mother" male children. Using Chodorow's ideas, Gilligan (1982) theorizes that males and females develop different forms of moral reasoning; men emphasize abstract principles, women concrete, personal obligations as the basis of moral behavior.

Gender system change could occur from this perspective if men assumed substantially greater responsibility for the daily nurturance of infants and young children. This solution is problematic for two reasons: What would motivate the "typical" male produced by this (or, for that matter, the socialization) process to become substantially more nurturant? Also, would any feminist want to see children raised by individuating, emotionally unexpressive, misogynistic fathers? Miriam Johnson (1988) questions this solution for a different reason. In response to Chodorow, Johnson theorizes that fathers constitute the primary agents who teach young children gender difference and inequality. Children of both sexes become "human" through their interactions with (female) primary love objects, but mothers tend to minimize, while fathers actively differentiate their children along gender lines. In addition, children observe husband–wife interactions, which model gender inequality.

6.3. Conclusion

Theories of childhood engenderment provide an important basis for most feminist interactionist theories, to the extent that "doing gender" involves the ongoing search for confirmation of fundamentally gendered self-identities. In general, microstructural approaches theorize in a "downward" direction from macrostructure, whereas interactionist theories, at least in part, move "up" from personality and self-identity, both attempting to explain how people's everyday choices, behaviors, and interactions are thoroughly gendered. In addition, childhood engenderment and most interactionist approaches imply that macrostructural gender inequality is rooted in micro-level processes, while microstructural theories suggest that gendered interactions are shaped by macrostructual inequity.

7. CONCLUSION

The review of feminist sociological theories demonstrates the rich variety of approaches to understanding gender difference and inequality developed in recent years. They reflect every general theoretical approach in our discipline. Each provides a useful, albeit partial contribution to the solution of a giant puzzle: a full explanation of the mechanisms by which systems of gender inequality are produced, maintained, and changed at all levels of social life. Although some efforts at broad theoretical synthesis have been made (e.g.,

Chafetz, 1990; Collins et al., 1993, Connell, 1987; Lorber, 1994), one challenge for gender theorists in sociology is to continue the work of theoretical integration. A second challenge is to explore more fully the effects of gender on all social processes, structures, and institutions; to use gender difference and inequality more systematically as independent, rather than primarily as dependent constructs. A third challenge is only slightly less compelling than it was when first explicated over a decade ago by Stacey and Thorne (1985): to end the ghettoization of feminist theories by fully integrating their insights into the sociological theory canon, thereby incorporating gender as a fundamental feature of social life into the basic fabric of our discipline.

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