

# 26

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## PSYCHOLOGY

ABOUT GENDER IDENTITY: ANALYSIS OF CONCEPTS

### PSICOLOGÍA DE LA IDENTIDAD DE GÉNERO: ANÁLISIS DE CONCEPTOS

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#### ABSTRACT

Analyzing the psychology of gender identity is very relevant to understanding the individual complexities of this issue. We believe this understanding is essential to provide support to those facing challenges related to their gender identity, improving their psychological and emotional well-being. Furthermore, by advancing the understanding of this concept, progress can be made in the creation of public policies and programs that promote equality and equity for all people, regardless of their gender identity. Therefore, the objective of this work is to comprehensively analyze the most important concepts about the psychology of gender identity. To do this, various theories are examined such as "Biological and Psychoanalytic Approach", "Social Learning Theory", "Cognitive Approach", "Sociocultural and New Gender Psychology", "Gender Schema Theory", "Intersectionality" and "Developmental Perspectives", that have been developed by notable researchers. This critical analysis of the aforementioned theories and approaches offers a deeper and more nuanced view of the complexities surrounding gender identity. By challenging and questioning established ideas, space is made for a more complete and sensitive understanding of the issues people face concerning their gender identity. We believe that addressing this issue in more depth will allow us to move towards a more inclusive society.

**Keywords:** Gender identity, Social and cultural stereotypes, Behavioral characteristics.

#### RESUMEN

Analizar la psicología de la identidad de género es muy relevante para comprender las complejidades individuales sobre este tema. Se cree que esta comprensión es esencial para brindar apoyo a quienes enfrentan desafíos relacionados con su identidad de género, mejorando su bienestar psicológico y emocional. Además, avanzando en la comprensión de este concepto se puede avanzar en la creación de políticas y programas públicos que promuevan la igualdad y la equidad para todas las personas, independientemente de su identidad de género. Por ello, el objetivo de este trabajo es analizar de forma integral los conceptos más importantes sobre la psicología de la identidad de género. Para ello, se examinan diversas teorías como el "Enfoque Biológico y Psicoanalítico", la "Teoría del Aprendizaje Social", el "Enfoque Cognitivo", la "Psicología Sociocultural y de Nueva Género", la "Teoría de los Esquemas de Género", la "Interseccionalidad" y las "Perspectivas de Desarrollo", que han sido desarrollados por investigadores destacados. Este análisis crítico de las teorías y enfoques antes mencionados ofrece una visión más profunda y matizada de las complejidades que rodean la identidad de género. Al desafiar y cuestionar las ideas establecidas, se crea espacio para una comprensión más completa y sensible de los problemas que enfrentan las personas en relación con su identidad de género. Creemos que abordar este tema con más profundidad nos permitirá avanzar hacia una sociedad más inclusiva.

**Palabras claves:** Identidad de género, Estereotipos sociales y culturales, Características conductuales.

## INTRODUCTION

Gender identity, gender expression, and gender role identity are terms that refer to different aspects of an individual's perception and expression of their sexuality. The structure of gender identity comprises three main components: cognitive (gender self-awareness), emotional (gender identity), and behavioral (gender roles and behavioral characteristics). The emergence and evolution of gender differences are multifaceted, influenced by a range of factors as evidenced by diverse research. Significant research has demonstrated the pivotal role of the social environment in shaping gender disparities, particularly in domains such as competitiveness and earnings expectations. Interventions involving exposure to female role models through mentoring programs have been shown to positively impact girls' attitudes towards competition, contributing to a reduction in the gender gap in competitiveness and earnings expectations (Boneva et al., 2021; England et al., 2020). Other studies argue that some gender differences in perception appear to be intertwined with stimuli response, suggesting that sensory experiences may contribute to the formation of gender disparities however several noteworthy findings show that there are no significant sex/gender differences in other subjects like math performance or verbal abilities (Jäncke, 2018).

Developmental scientists have been concerned with understanding how and why gendered behaviors and thinking emerge and change over time, particularly about the prominence of gender as a social category. In this regard, efforts have increased to understand the early origins of gender differences, focusing on younger ages when gendered cognitions and behaviors first manifest (Martin & Ruble, 2010). For example, intriguing findings from research on wild chimpanzees suggest that early experiences with aggression can significantly impact the development of aggressive behaviors, demonstrating how social encounters shape sex-typed behaviors even in the absence of explicit gender norms (Sabbi et al., 2021).

Historically, psychologists began to study gender development in young children during the 1950s and '60s, partially aimed at understanding the origins of homosexuality, which was viewed as a mental disorder at the time (Rutherford, 2021). However, nowadays the social sciences approach gender as a social construct, while research in the natural sciences still investigates whether biological differences between females and males influence gender development in humans. In general, biological theories of gender emphasize the role of chromosomes and hormones in driving the development of secondary sexual characteristics during puberty. However, it has been shown that social environment also plays a significant role, as

social expectations and requirements for boys and girls to behave differently begin from birth, contributing to the development of gender differences (Helgeson, 2020; Wood, 2018).

Regarding the psychology of gender, the cognitive component includes an individual's knowledge and beliefs about themselves in the context of a specific gender group. The emotional-evaluative component includes a system of individual emotional meanings through which the perception of the surrounding world is realized. The behavioral component is represented by the individual's potential behavioral reactions, specific actions created by the image of "self", and the individual's self-esteem. Based on this, they have their characteristics:

1. Gender identity (cognitive component): It is determined by the knowledge and beliefs of an individual about belonging to a certain gender. It includes awareness of social and cultural stereotypes associated with the male and female genders. It is formed as a result of the perception and interpretation of socio-cultural signals related to gender. Gender identity may or may not coincide with the biological sex assigned at birth.
2. Gender identity (emotional component): It reflects one's inner sense of being male or female. It is related to the degree to which an individual feels harmony between the internal image of their gender and social expectations.
3. Gender roles and behavioral characteristics (behavioral component): They are sociocultural expectations regarding behavior considered typical for men or women. Behaviors include actions and expressions that conform to or violate these gender roles. They are formed as a result of socialization and exposure to cultural norms and values.

All these components interact and form an individual's gender identity (Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Understanding these aspects helps to explore more deeply how individuals perceive and experience their gender, as well as how society influences the formation of gender perceptions and roles. On the other hand, there are several approaches in the psychological literature on gender identity:

1. The biogenetic and psychoanalytic approach emphasizes the genetic and biological basis of gender identity, the role of identification with parents, and the special importance of imitation.
2. Social learning theory emphasizes the critical influence of reinforcement and learning mechanisms on the formation of gender identity.
3. According to the cognitive approach, the development of gender identity depends on the general intellectual

development of the individual and is related to the process of self-classification.

4. "The new psychology of gender" emphasizes the role of social expectations and gender stereotypes of society in the formation of gender identity.
5. Research on "gender schema theory" examines the processes of self-concept assimilation of the child's gender schema.
6. Intersectionality theories, recognizing the intersection of gender identity with other social categories such as race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status, examine how multiple identities interact to shape psychological experiences.
7. Developmental perspective theories, analysis of psychological theories of gender identity at different stages of life, including childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, examines the influence of major life events and transitions on the evolution of gender identity.

These classifications are broad and not absolute. Many scientists may contribute to and improve each approach over time. In addition, interdisciplinary perspectives and collaborative efforts are common in the field of gender identity research. These approaches point to multiple mechanisms and factors influencing the formation of gender identity, including biological, social, cognitive, and cultural aspects. Gender identity is perceived then as a dynamic process that is influenced by various factors throughout life. Considering this, the main goal of this academic research is to comprehensively analyze the most important concepts about the psychology of gender identity. To do this, the different theories and approaches mentioned will be examined from a qualitative perspective, discussing relevant literature.

## DEVELOPMENT

The biogenetic approach and psychoanalysis provide two different perspectives in the study of gender identity, focusing on the biological and genetic aspects of this phenomenon. The biogenetic approach is based on the idea that gender differences are mainly due to biological factors such as genetics, hormonal influences, and brain organization. It emphasizes the role of genes, hormones, and other physiological processes in the formation of gender characteristics and behavioral tendencies. Some biogeneticists appeal to evolutionary mechanisms to explain some sex differences. It is increasingly important to consider both perspectives in contemporary research and the psychology of gender identity. The idea of interaction between biological factors and the socio-cultural environment, including the role of family and society, is more common in modern theories of gender identity research.

Below we will try to critically analyze some of the modern approaches to gender identity and the theories of some of the researchers who represent them.

### 1. Biological and Psychoanalytical Approach: Sigmund Freud

Freud, the founder of psychoanalysis, had a significant impact on the field of psychology, including the concept of identity development. His theories about human development, particularly its psychosexual stages, offer insights into how gender identity is formed. S. Freud proposed a series of psychosexual stages that individuals go through during development: oral, anal, phallic, latent, and genital stages. The third phallic stage is of particular importance in gender identity. At this stage (about 3-6 years old), children become aware of their bodies and focus on sexuality. Freud introduced the concept of the Oedipus complex and proposed that children in the phallic stage subconsciously experience feelings of desire for the opposite-sex parent and competition with the same-sex parent. The Oedipus complex plays a crucial role in the formation of gender identity. According to Freud, boys identify with their fathers to resolve their rejection complex and fear. Daughters, on the other hand, develop their identity through identification with their mothers. This identification with a same-sex parent contributes to the development of gender roles and gender identity. S. Freud emphasizes the importance of subconscious processes in identity formation, stating that individuals may not be fully aware of the factors influencing their behavior and identity. According to him, subconscious conflicts and resolutions in early childhood play a decisive role in the development of gender identity.

It is important to note that S. Freud's theories have undergone criticism and revision over time. Contemporary perspectives emphasize the cultural and social dimensions of gender identity, often recognizing the influence of societal norms, roles, and individual experiences. For instance, Freud's theories have faced criticism for perpetuating gender stereotypes and biases. His concept of psychosexual development, which includes the Oedipus and Electra complexes, has been viewed as reinforcing traditional gender roles and assumptions about masculinity and femininity. It underscores individual, internal processes while overlooking the impact of socio-cultural factors on identity development. Nevertheless, social and cultural contexts are pivotal in shaping an individual's identity.

S. Freud's focus on early childhood experiences, particularly the significance of the first few years of life, overlooks the potential for growth and change across the lifespan. Identity formation is, in reality, a multifaceted and lifelong

process. Additionally, Freud, giving paramount importance to the subconscious mind and instincts, neglects the role of cognitive and emotional processes in identity development. However, cognitive and emotional aspects indeed play vital roles in shaping identity, as evidenced by rigorous research and experiments.

## 2. Social Learning Theory: Albert Bandura and M. Mead

Canadian-born American psychologist Albert Bandura is renowned for his social cognitive theory and contributions to the understanding of human behavior, learning, and socialization. His theories are central to broader discussions in psychology, particularly concerning aspects of identity development. Bandura proposed that individuals learn through observation, a process known as observational learning or modeling. This process involves imitating the behaviors, attitudes, and emotional responses demonstrated by others in a social context. Additionally, he introduced the concept of mutual determinism, highlighting the dynamic interplay among personal factors, environmental influences, and behavior. In terms of identity, this suggests that individuals both shape and are shaped by their environment, with ongoing interactions influencing their identity development. Moreover, Bandura emphasized the significance of self-efficacy, which reflects an individual's belief in their capacity to perform tasks and attain goals. High self-efficacy correlates with a heightened sense of agency and increased engagement in identity exploration and development (Bandura, 2000, pp. 123–124).

Bandura's emphasis on observational learning as a central mechanism for identity development is notable. However, critics contend that identity formation is influenced by a myriad of factors beyond observation alone. Genetic predispositions, individual experiences, and cognitive processes are also pivotal in shaping one's sense of self. Bandura's theory sometimes downplays the impact of biological factors on behavior and identity, despite scientific evidence highlighting their significant role in individual differences. Moreover, Bandura's theory tends to focus on observable behaviors and cognitive processes, often overlooking the emotional and motivational aspects of identity development. Emotions and motivations are integral components of human behavior, and their inclusion could enrich the theory. The theory also falls short in explaining the cultural and contextual variations in identity development. Critics argue that an exclusive focus on observational learning fails to account for the diverse cultural norms, values, and practices that influence identity across different societies. Additionally, Bandura's theory does not fully address the wide array of individual differences in how people observe, process, and imitate modeled behaviors. The theory's emphasis on later stages of

development leaves a gap regarding the formative years of early childhood, despite research indicating their profound impact on identity development.

Bandura's theory, despite its critiques, has significantly advanced our comprehension of the role of observational processes in social learning and human development. Recognizing that theories are subject to refinement and integration with other perspectives, Bandura's work has paved the way for a deeper understanding of these fundamental mechanisms. In addition, Margaret Mead, as highlighted in her works, delves into the notion that an individual's subconscious identity is a construct shaped by the expectations of their social group. This subconscious identity takes root from the accepted norms and habits within the group. Mead argues that conscious identity formation occurs when individuals begin introspecting about themselves and their behaviors. It is important to note, however, that conscious identity does not entail complete detachment from society. Instead, it emerges through social interaction and the utilization of linguistic categories. Mead further posits that a person is not born with a fixed identity, but rather it evolves through experiences and engagements with others within a social context. This evolution progresses from a subconscious state to a conscious one as individuals join social groups and interact with fellow members. The transition signifies a move from ritualized actions to a deliberate consideration of goals and behavioral tactics, indicating the relative autonomy and freedom of the individual within their social milieu (Shankman, 2009, pp. 45–46).

Mead's portrayal of culture as the primary determinant of gender roles and identity has been criticized for potentially oversimplifying the intricate influence of culture on behavior (Mead, 1955, pp. 34–35). By focusing on broad cultural patterns, Mead's perspective may obscure the existence of diverse subcultures with varying gender norms. Additionally, it tends to downplay the role of biological factors in the development of gender identity. However, it is well-documented that biological variances, such as hormonal influences, contribute significantly to changes in behavior and identity, as discussed extensively in the second chapter of the dissertation. Despite these critiques, it is important to acknowledge that Mead made substantial contributions to our comprehension of cultural diversity and its impact on social behavior. Her work has sparked a nuanced discourse on the complex interplay between culture, biology, and individual agency in the formation of identity and gender roles.

## 3. Cognitive Approach: Lawrence Kohlberg, John Turner, and Henry Tajfel

Tajfel, renowned for his work in social psychology, is celebrated for his contributions to the realm of social identity theory. His insights have been instrumental in comprehending how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, illuminating how these categorizations shape perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Tajfel's theory posits that individuals seek to bolster their self-esteem by aligning with specific social groups while displaying a preference for their in-groups over out-groups. Social identity, an integral component of self-concept, is derived from an individual's affiliation with various social groups. This theory provides valuable insights into the formation of social categories, stereotypes, and prejudices rooted in group membership (Tajfel et al., 1979).

In the context of gender psychology, her theory of social identity offers insights into the formation of gender identity. Gender identity often entails an individual's alignment with a specific gender group and a sense of belonging. Tajfel's theory suggests that individuals may seek to bolster their self-esteem by positively identifying with their gender within a group, thus reinforcing prevailing gender norms, stereotypes, and prejudices. Moreover, Tajfel's concept of social categorization and the significance of group membership sheds light on the internalization of gender roles and how individuals navigate their identity within broader social frameworks. The theory underscores the role of social comparison and the need for positive differentiation between in-groups and out-groups, which can either reinforce or challenge traditional gender norms (Tajfel et al., 1971, pp. 160–161).

Tajfel's theory of social identity offers valuable insights into the process of group formation, yet it tends to oversimplify this complex phenomenon. The theory posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups based on minimal criteria, potentially overlooking the myriad factors that contribute to group formation, such as shared experiences, values, and interests. While emphasizing the impact of group membership on attitudes and behaviors, the theory sometimes neglects the diversity of individual perspectives within groups. Not all members of a social group will necessarily identify strongly with the group or exhibit uniform behavioral patterns. Tajfel acknowledges the natural inclination of individuals to favor their in-groups over out-groups, a dynamic that can lead to inter-group conflict. However, the theory falls short in addressing power dynamics inherent within and between groups. It does not fully account for how unequal power relations influence the establishment and perpetuation of social identities. Moreover, the theory's emphasis on the binary categorization of in-groups and out-groups oversimplifies the intricate cognitive processes involved

in social categorization. In reality, individuals often belong to multiple social groups concurrently, leading to identities that are more fluid and multifaceted than Tajfel's theory suggests. Additionally, the emotional and psychological dimensions of social identity, such as individuals' emotional attachments to their groups or the impact of emotions on intergroup behavior, are not sufficiently explored in the theory. These considerations underscore the need for a more nuanced understanding of social identity that incorporates the complexities of human behavior and group dynamics.

It is important to note that Tajfel's theory of social identity has significantly contributed to our understanding of group dynamics and intergroup relations. Despite criticism, the theory has led to valuable research and debate in the field of social psychology. Researchers continue to develop and refine these ideas, addressing some limitations and incorporating insights from other perspectives within the discipline.

British social psychologist John Turner is known for his theory of social identity, which he developed together with Tajfel. Social identity theory, developed in the 1970s, has been influential in understanding how individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups and how these social categories influence attitudes and behaviors. His theory of social identity in the context of gender psychology is relevant to understanding gender identity formation and the influence of group dynamics on individuals' perceptions of themselves and others in terms of gender. The theory suggests that people derive their sense of self and dignity not only from their identity but also from their social identity based on group membership. Turner's main concepts in the theory of social identity are:

- Social categorization: Individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups based on shared characteristics such as gender.
- Social identification: Individuals derive their sense of self and self-esteem from identifying with certain social groups, such as being a member of a specific gender category.
- Social comparison: People tend to compare their in-group, the group they belong to, favorably with out-groups to boost their self-esteem (Turner, 2005, pp. 15–16).

In terms of gender identity, individuals may strongly identify with their gender group (e.g., as male or female) and engage in social comparison processes that reinforce positive perceptions of their gender group, potentially leading to negative attitudes toward other gender groups

(Turner & Reynolds, 2012, p. 411). J. Turner's work helps us understand how social identity processes influence the construction of gender identity and the dynamics of gender-related intergroup relations. The theory provides a framework for examining how individuals manage their identities concerning societal gender norms and how group membership contributes to the formation of gender-related attitudes and behaviors.

On the other hand, the prominent psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg, known for his work on moral development, also contributed to understanding gender identity within the framework of cognitive development. He proposed a series of stages of cognitive development, primarily focusing on moral reasoning. The stages include pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional levels, representing different levels of moral understanding. His theories have been extended to address how individuals develop their understanding of gender roles and identity. Kohlberg suggested that the formation of gender identity is complexly related to cognitive development, proposing that as children's cognitive abilities develop, their understanding of gender identity also increases (Kohlberg, 1981, pp. 54–55).

Kohlberg introduced the concept of gender stability, which is a critical aspect of gender identity development. Gender stability refers to a child's perception that their gender remains stable and consistent across situations, despite superficial changes. Kohlberg outlined the cognitive developmental stages of gender identity, including the gender identity stage, the gender stability stage, and the gender consistency stage. During the gender identity stage, children may label themselves and others as boys or girls. The stability stage involves understanding that gender remains stable over time, and the consistency stage recognizes that gender remains stable despite changes in appearance or activity (Kohlberg 1981, pp. 24–25). Kohlberg's work emphasizes the role of cognitive development in the formation of gender identity, suggesting that children progress through specific cognitive stages to fully understand and internalize the experience of being male or female. His theories provide a cognitive framework for comprehending the dynamic process of gender identity formation.

#### 4. Sociocultural and New Psychology of Gender: Carol Gilligan

Carol Gilligan, a prominent feminist psychologist, has made significant contributions to the field of gender psychology, particularly through her work on moral development. While she is widely recognized for her exploration of moral development, her ideas extend to the broader

discussion of identity, including gender identity. One of her most influential works, "In a Different Voice," published in 1982, critiques Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development for its male-centric focus. Gilligan argued that Kohlberg's stages of moral development predominantly reflect the male perspective, overlooking the unique approaches that women often take in moral decision-making. She introduced the concept of an "ethic of care," emphasizing the significance of relationships, compassion, and reciprocity in moral decision-making. Gilligan proposed that women may prioritize considerations of care and relationships in their moral judgments, contrasting with the typically justice-oriented approach associated with men. Her work contributes to the understanding of gender identity by challenging traditional assumptions about gender differences in moral development and highlighting the importance of recognizing diverse approaches to ethical issues, particularly those grounded in relationships and care (Gilligan, 1982, pp. 45–46).

Gilligan's research underscores the significance of relationships and social contexts in the process of identity formation. She posits that individuals, particularly women, may define themselves about others through their interpersonal connections, challenging the individualistic notions of identity prevalent in some psychological theories. The focus on "voice" in Gilligan's work suggests that individuals, especially women, may express their identity and morality in distinct ways compared to men. Gilligan highlights the importance of embracing a more inclusive understanding of identity and advocating for the acknowledgment and validation of diverse voices and perspectives (Gilligan, 1990, pp. 51–52).

While Gilligan is renowned for her contributions to moral development and her critique of Kohlberg's theory, it is important to recognize that her work primarily centers on morality rather than identity. Some critics argue that Gilligan's emphasis on an ethic of care might perpetuate gender essentialism by implying that women inherently possess a different and more compassionate moral outlook compared to men. This viewpoint has faced criticism for potentially oversimplifying and reinforcing traditional gender roles. Critics have also pointed out that Gilligan's early research primarily focused on white, middle-class women, raising concerns about the generalizability of her findings to women from diverse racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and cultural backgrounds. This limitation has led to discussions about the potential stereotyping of women's moral development, portraying them as primarily concerned with care and relationships, potentially overlooking the myriad of moral perspectives within the female population. However, Gilligan's research has significantly

influenced the discourse on gender and morality, prompting a broader consideration of diverse perspectives in the study of human development. Her work continues to encourage a critical examination of how gender intersects with moral reasoning and identity formation.

### 5. Gender Schema Theory: Sandra Behm

Prominent psychologist Sandra Bem is widely recognized for her groundbreaking contributions to gender studies, particularly through the development of the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). Her research has profoundly influenced the field of gender psychology, offering new insights into the complexities of gender roles and identity. Bem is best known for her formulation of Gender Schema Theory, which challenges conventional notions of masculinity and femininity. She proposed that individuals construct gender schemas, cognitive frameworks that organize and shape their understanding of gender-related information (Bem, 1974, p. 159). Central to Bem's theory is the concept of androgyny, which suggests that individuals can embody both traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine traits. This notion promotes a more flexible and adaptive approach to gender roles, allowing individuals to express a diverse range of characteristics (Bem, 1993, pp. 44–45). To assess these gender roles, Bem developed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), a tool designed to measure an individual's level of masculinity, femininity, and androgyny based on self-reported identity characteristics. Through the lens of Gender Schema Theory, Bem's work highlights how gender schemas influence individuals' perceptions of themselves and others within the context of gender roles (Lips, 2017, pp. 629–630). This framework has provided a valuable framework for understanding the dynamic nature of gender identity and the diversity of expressions within it.

While Sandra Bem did not present an exhaustive theory of identity, her work has left an indelible mark on the landscape of gender psychology. Critics have pointed out that Bem's conceptualization of androgyny and gender identity tends to oversimplify the intricate tapestry of individual experiences and the multifaceted nature of gender (Bem, 1981, p. 359). Some argue that her ideas do not fully encompass the diverse spectrum of gender roles and identities found across different cultures. The Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI), designed to measure masculinity, femininity, androgyny, and undifferentiated traits, has also faced scrutiny. Critics contend that the inventory perpetuates a binary classification of gender (Donnelly & Twenge, 2017), relying on stereotypes that are prevalent during individuals' developmental stages. The inventory's static nature has been criticized for failing to reflect evolving societal views on gender roles and identities.

Furthermore, Bem's focus on identity traits as markers of gender identity tends to overlook the broader social, cultural, and structural influences that shape gender roles and identity. This limitation has been a focal point of criticism against her work. It is important, however, to acknowledge that despite the criticisms, Bem's contributions have significantly advanced the field of gender psychology. Her work has sparked crucial debates and discussions surrounding gender identity and roles. Researchers and scholars continue to build upon and refine her ideas as they delve deeper into the nuanced complexities of gender and identity.

### 6. Intersection theory: (Kimberlé Crenshaw)

Developed by Crenshaw, the concept of Intersectionality is a theoretical framework that examines how different social identities such as race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and others intersect and overlap, creating unique and complex forms of discrimination and privilege. One of her major contributions was to highlight the experiences of black women who faced discrimination not just because of their gender or race, but also as an intersection of both. She argued that legal and social systems often fail to recognize and address these intersecting identities, leading to unique forms of marginalization that are overlooked by uniaxial frameworks (Crenshaw, 1997). According to Crenshaw, intersectionality encourages us to view social identities as interconnected and interdependent rather than separate. It helps us understand how various pressures and privileges operate simultaneously in the lives of individuals. Individual's experience overlapping systems of power and oppression. For example, the black woman faces issues stemming from both racism and sexism, and the combination of these factors creates unique disadvantages.

Intersectionality recognizes the complexity of identity, moving beyond simplistic categories to acknowledge the diverse ways individuals experience and navigate their social spaces. People are not simply categorized as female or male, black or white, but rather exist as a complex interplay of various identities. This approach has been influential in shaping social justice activism, promoting a more inclusive and holistic method of addressing discrimination. Strategies advocated by intersectionality consider the intersecting identities of individuals, recognizing the unique challenges they face. The theory of intersectionality, developed by K. Crenshaw, has profoundly influenced our understanding and approach to issues of identity, discrimination, and privilege, especially within the realm of gender psychology. It encourages a more nuanced and comprehensive perspective, highlighting the interconnected nature of different social identities (Crenshaw, 1997).

However, the application of Crenshaw's intersectional theory in practice poses challenges due to its inherent complexity. The intricate web of intersecting identities makes it daunting for individuals and organizations to fully grasp and effectively address the nuances of discrimination. This complexity may impede the practical implementation of intersectional approaches. An additional critique of intersectionality is its focus primarily on the intersection of gender and race, overlooking other significant dimensions such as disability, age, or ethnicity. A more comprehensive cross-sectional analysis is warranted, encompassing a broader spectrum of social categories.

Moreover, intersectionality's emphasis on identity categories runs the risk of reinforcing essentialist views of identity, potentially overshadowing crucial factors such as individual agency, cultural context, and the fluid nature of identity. However, it is crucial to note that these criticisms do not diminish the valuable contributions of intersectionality. Instead, they highlight areas where refinement is needed and where its application could be expanded. Scholars are tasked with exploring ways to further develop and align intersectionality to effectively address evolving issues in gender psychology and social justice.

## 7. Developmental Perspectives: Eric Erickson, James Marcia

Erikson, a significant figure in developmental psychology, provided valuable insights into the formation of identity, including its gender-related aspects. His theory of psychosocial development, spanning the entire lifespan, views the establishment of identity as a pivotal element of human growth. Central to Erikson's approach is the notion of the "identity crisis," a term he coined to describe the psychological conflict adolescent's encounter. According to Erikson, the development of identity entails resolving conflicts between personal aspirations and societal expectations. He stressed the significance of attaining a stable and consistent identity as a cornerstone for healthy psychosocial functioning. In the field of gender psychology, Erikson's theory is applied to comprehend how individuals navigate the intricacies of gender identity during adolescence. A gender identity crisis involves a process of introspection and integration of gender roles, stereotypes, and societal norms. Adolescents grapple with questions surrounding their gender roles, sexual orientation, and societal pressures, endeavoring to establish a coherent and authentic sense of self (Erikson, 1968, pp. 33–34).

Erikson underscored that effectively resolving the identity crisis results in the cultivation of a robust and affirmative sense of identity. Specifically concerning gender identity, this entails individuals reconciling with their gender, comprehending their position within societal norms, and amalgamating these facets into a cohesive and genuine self-conception. It is crucial to recognize that while Erikson's contributions laid a foundation for comprehending identity development, subsequent research in gender psychology has broadened our insights into how gender identity emerges and transforms. This expanded understanding considers variables such as cultural influences, intersectionality, and the fluid nature of gender (Erikson, 1996, p. 66).

Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, particularly focusing on the stage of identity formation, has left a lasting impact on the field of psychology. However, this theory is not without its limitations. One significant drawback is its limited universality across diverse cultures. The stages and expectations delineated by Erikson predominantly draw from Western, middle-class contexts, thus failing to accurately capture the experiences of individuals from various cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, his theory tends to present a somewhat stereotypical portrayal of gender roles and expectations, neglecting the multifaceted nature of gender identities and experiences. Another critique lies in the linear progression proposed by Erikson, suggesting that individuals move through each stage in a fixed sequence. This oversimplification does not fully account for the intricate and non-linear nature of human development, as individuals often traverse these stages more fluidly. Additionally, the defined age boundaries of these stages are subject to question. Identity development is a gradual process that does not strictly adhere to the age categories proposed by the theory, as individuals encounter identity-related challenges and resolutions at varying stages of their lives (Bauer, 1972).

Erikson's theory, while valuable in its emphasis on psychosocial and environmental factors, falls short of fully incorporating the role of biological factors such as genetics and neurobiology in identity formation. Scientific evidence across relevant fields demonstrates the significant impact of these biological aspects on shaping one's sense of self. Another limitation of Erikson's theory is its failure to adequately address the vast array of individual differences in identity and its development. Individuals are diverse, each with unique experiences that contribute to their identity formation. The theory's heavy focus on adolescence and young adulthood also overlooks the ongoing development that occurs in later stages of life. Despite its criticisms, Erikson's contributions to psychology are



noteworthy, particularly his attention to social-emotional aspects of development and the consideration of the lifespan. However, these critiques underscore the necessity of a comprehensive and culturally sensitive approach to understanding the complexities of identity development.

Canadian psychologist James Marcia expanded upon Erikson's work on identity development proposes a framework that specifically examines identity exploration and commitment during adolescence. In the 1960s and 1970s, Marcia's "identity status theory" became influential in developmental psychology, including the study of gender identity. His theory outlines four identity statuses representing distinct approaches to the process of identity formation:

- Identity diffusion: Individuals in this status have not yet explored meaningful alternatives and have not committed to any particular identity. They may appear indifferent or confused about their feelings.
- Foreclosed identity: Individuals in this status have solidified their identity without prior exploration. Their choices are often influenced by external factors such as parental expectations or societal norms.
- Moratorium identity: Individuals in this status are actively exploring various options and alternatives but have not yet made a final commitment. They are in a state of active questioning and investigation.
- Achieved identity: Individuals in this status have successfully navigated the process of exploration and commitment. They have explored different options and consciously committed to a specific identity (Marcia, 1980, pp. 171–172).

When James Marcia's theory is applied to gender psychology, it provides insights into how individuals navigate the formation of their gender identity during adolescence. The process of exploration and commitment in the realm of gender involves questioning societal norms, exploring various gender roles, and developing a cohesive understanding of one's gender identity (Marcia, 1993, pp. 14–15). For instance, an adolescent who is grappling with their gender identity may experience a period of moratorium, actively engaging in exploration and questioning of both societal expectations and personal feelings regarding gender. Through introspection and exploration, they can eventually arrive at a clearer and more authentic understanding of their gender identity.

It is crucial to acknowledge that James Marcia's theory allows for the fluidity and adaptability of identity development, recognizing that individuals may revise and

reassess their identity statuses over the course of their lives, especially in response to significant life events or new experiences. However, Marcia's identity statuses (identity achievement, foreclosure, moratorium, and diffusion) oversimplify the intricate process of identity development by categorizing individuals into distinct and inflexible stages. In reality, the formation of identity is often more nuanced and dynamic, with individuals potentially moving fluidly between statuses. Additionally, these stages may not fully encompass the experiences of individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds or those in collectivist societies where identity development differs. The theory assumes a linear progression through identity statuses, yet research indicates that individuals can oscillate between statuses or even experience multiple statuses concurrently.

Marcia's theory places a stronger emphasis on individual cognitive processes while minimizing the role of social and structural influences that shape identity. Social and cultural factors, such as socioeconomic status and systemic inequalities, significantly impact identity development. The model fails to adequately consider the experiences of individuals with marginalized identities, including those related to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity. It does not fully capture the distinct challenges faced by individuals navigating these facets of identity.

James Marcia's theory predominantly focuses on the development of identity during adolescence and early adulthood. However, a more comprehensive theory of identity must encompass life-span development, including how identity evolves in adulthood and later stages of life. While some empirical studies have supported Marcia's theory, there are challenges in both the development and measurement of identity statuses. The reliance on self-report assessments may introduce biases and limitations in accurately capturing the dynamic nature of identity development. Despite these criticisms, James Marcia's framework of identity statuses remains a valuable contribution to the understanding of identity development. Researchers and psychologists continue to build upon and refine his work as they delve into the intricate complexities of identity formation across different generations and contextual settings.

## CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of psychological concepts related to gender identity reveals the complexity and multifaceted nature of this phenomenon. By examining various theories and perspectives of prominent psychologists, it becomes evident that gender identity is formed by the dynamic interaction of several factors among which are important

biological, cognitive, social, and cultural factors. From this research the following conclusions can be drawn:

Gender identity is not a monolithic concept; rather, it encompasses a variety of experiences. Individuals manage their gender identities within the context of their unique cultural, social, and personal circumstances.

An intersectional approach that considers how different aspects of identity (such as race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status) intersect and influence each other is critical to understanding the broad experiences of individuals within different gender identities.

Traditional gender models, often based on binary frameworks, face criticism for oversimplifying the diversity of gender identities. This criticism applies to theories that support rigid gender roles and do not conform to the evolving understanding of gender. Social and cultural factors play an important role in the formation of gender identity. Stereotypes, expectations, and cultural norms help construct gender roles and influence how individuals perceive themselves and others within the gender spectrum.

Biological factors, including hormonal influences and neurological processes, interact with cognitive processes to contribute to the development of gender identity. However, the interaction between nature and nurture is complex and not fully understood.

Prominent theories such as those put forward by Erikson, Freud, Bandura, and others are not immune to criticism. Common criticisms include cultural bias, oversimplification, and neglect of some aspects such as biological factors or intersectionality.

Psychologists such as S. Bem emphasize the importance of androgyny and move away from traditional gender roles, allowing individuals to express their gender identities in ways that match their authentic selves.

To comprehensively understand gender identity, it is important to address its fluid and dynamic nature. Identity is not static and individuals experience changes or evolutions in their gender identities over time. Therefore, the analysis of psychological concepts related to gender identity highlights the need for inclusive, culturally sensitive, and intersectional approaches. Recognizing the complexity of gender identity allows for a more inclusive understanding that respects and acknowledges the diverse experiences of individuals across the gender spectrum.

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