

How can gender best be explained?

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1. Introduction

The main objective of this book chapter review has tried to boil down the chapter which has written by Mary Holmes (2007), entitled as “**how can gender best be explained**”. Along with, the book chapter has glance about two prominent issues regarding to gender and related scene. From the inception, it offers great accentuate for the views of structuralism and other feminist theorist in associated with gender and attune else alternative way of explaining gender which has stood on foot later. Eventually, in this chapter review the entire main issues have been recapitulated which has followed by its strength and weakness.

Mary Holmes (2007), via her book chapter which is entitled as “how can gender best be explained” was endeavored to demonstrate the way to defined gender by attuning different social theories, as well as its strength and weakness toward understanding gender. Thereby, proponent of structuralism deemed that society is made up of interrelated part of subsystem working together for the perpetuation of the system and this social structure have strong power to determine individual choice. Besides, they believed by the existence of universal truth all over the world. In consequent, advocators of structuralism explain gender inequality is similitude across countries and taken for granted it because of contribute for the cohesion of society. Marxist structuralism is another theories which devote due emphasis on the material inequality of society that affect the social relation and gender relations. Although Marxist explain the severity of capitalism system for those of have-not means of productions, it unable to apparently display how women endowed inferior social position as compare to men. But on the contrary of Marx assumption, Engles endeavor to ascertain that the oppression of women

has emanated from the unpaid work offered for women and engaged in less paid work outside home unfortunately. Hence, the nature of capitalism make women engaged in domestic work, as long as men cover the industrial tasks which have high payment.

Linguistic structuralism is traced by holding the premise of how language create and recreate our social world and apparently enumerate gender. According to Saussure’s meaning are created by men which are more of favored for them without embracing the interests of women. In consequent the concept gender created to display masculine and feminine which holds the meaning superior and inferior respectively. In general, structuralism informs how social structure determines the choices of individual or simply the prescription and the proscription for both men and women in this social world.

Post-structuralism is a reaction of structuralism perspective toward gender related issues, meaning they posited that in this social world no eternal truth rather fluid and amenable for change. Foucault was one of the advocator of post-structuralism theory who deemed that meaning toward social world, especially gender difference is changed across time and place. Hence, the meaning and the socially expectations regarding to gender is shifted as well as changed in this time as compare to the past.

Various feminist theories were emerged and run their assumptions toward the causes and the solutions of gender inequality in fact. Although those theorists handle communal mission to vindicate women from marginalization, they have their own peculiar strategies and understanding of women oppression. Among these, liberal feminism is the one traced from enlightenment thinking or philosophy of liberalism that intended to understand the causes of women oppression and pot their finger

print on the equality of women with men. In a sense that, the previous religious based thinking came to end and superseded by logical reasons. Due to this, human right is not limited to men instead it assure for both men and women, like have the right to have their own property, assign their governor, the right to liberty and the forth are advents to affirmed. Therefore, women should attain the opportunity of education that make free from independence and ascertain their equality as of peer men.

Socialist and materialist feminism were inculcating the concept of Marx thoughts and employed to explain the causes of women marginalization as well as they endeavor to put mechanism of women emancipation. In doing so, Marxist feminists were asserted women inferiority is emanated from the capitalism system which is more favor for men by sparing women. Hence, the nature of capitalism changes the working conditions of women to stay at home in order to offer care for their kid and for other reproductive activities, but men were engaged out there in factory which have high payment that make them to be powerful in economic capacity. Socialist feminists were other prominent feminists that intended to explain the inferior scene of women in this social world. Along with, they deemed the nature of capitalism and the patriarchal nature of social system were susceptible women for marginalization. Here of, its assumption is a synthesis of both premise of radical feminism and Marxists feminism. In consequent, those Marxist feminists and socialist feminists agreed with overthrow of capitalism system and superseded by socialism so as to vindicate women and assure the existence of equality between men and women.

According to Millet (1972), radical feminists propound women discrimination is traced from the socio-cultural production of patriarchy which has allow male domination over females unfortunately. Thus, patriarchy is operated in the overall institutions and advents to implement in every organization. Here of, the mechanisms for vindicating women from suppression is to establishing women oriented institutions, supportive and non-hierarchal which is expected to distinguishing them from men.

Other focal points of this book chapter is glance about the argument of feminists regarding to the nature of women, meaning some of them believed that women were practically equal with men and should treat as of men impartially. However the other asserted that even not natural, there is difference between men and women which is traced from socially constructed though should be recognized, valued and treated as per their desire. According to Evans (1995), the proponent of equality feminists deemed through social reform, providing access of opportunities women can be affirm their right. On the contrary, difference feminists asserted that, the present social systems susceptible women for discrimination and should be totally abolished.

According to Barrett (1992), the cultural turn advents to blame the explanations of structuralism especially, material determination of social life, because it cast away the influences of ideas and culture. In consequent, linguistic turn focus on the influences of culture on the scene of gender and related issues in fact. Linguistic turn began to criticize theoretical universalism that explain women marginalization, rationalism mainly provide male oriented justification by sparing women capability for reason. Eventually, cultural turn endeavor to cast how modernity comes into masculinized and women considered as to be irrational.

As stated by Beasley (2005), queer theory come to fill the gaps of those feminist who believed by binary classification of gender identity, as well as sexual preference can be extended to more than two. Hence, individual can do and undoing gender as per his willingness, meaning men can operates the socially prescriptions of women task by sparing his masculine attributes and the same is true for women in fact.

Generally, the author of this book chapter offers us to understand how gender explained by different feminist theorist and other social theorist stemming from their trace to their intentions and the way of redress mechanism of ending women oppression. Thereof, explanation of gender inequality is began from structuralism which has based upon

materialism premises in earlier and adverts to cultural or linguistic based explanation in a time being.

Strength: In this book chapter, endeavor to demonstrate how various feminist theorists attempted to put their finger print toward the causes of gender inequality and mechanisms of vindicating women from the outrageous oppression. Hence, different social theorists, particularly feminist theorists endeavor to glance about the scene of women oppression, its root causes and forward the way how can make women emancipate from oppressed, like by designing reforming and entirely changing the existing system by superseded by new alternatives.

Critics: - The drawback of this book chapter is, it cannot embraced the entire feminist theories that will give best enumeration about the scene of gender based discrimination and the presence of suppression among in women and the same is true between men across social strata. Notwithstanding structuralist have its own strength, unable to emancipate from blames regarding to gender, because its overly deterministic by sparing the power of individuals or women change the social

structure as well as the expectation of gender instead of taken for granted it. Despite liberal feminist have strength side regarding to gender based discrimination of women, their measurement is unthinkable to eradicate the existing oppression of women without entirely supersede the system in fact. Marxists and socialist feminists also unable to escaped from critics, because they failed to give attention for the presences of inequality among in women themselves as well as within men. Although radical feminists put their scarification to depict gender inequality, they are not able to demonstrate variation of oppression across spatial and ethnicity or simply it has to be universalistic as well as they are highly fundamentalist by sparing the reforming mechanism of gender inequality. Eventually, the two strand of equality and difference feminism were made a mistake while explain gender related scenes. Hence, those the advocators of equality feminism was unable to entirely discard the root causes of gender based discrimination instead merely provide weak solutions for women oppression.

Source: Holmes, M. (2007). What is Gender? Sociological Approaches. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.