The Concept of "Sex" and "Gender" in Psychology

T. B. Norimbetov

Associated Prof Department of "Social and Humanitarian Disciplines" of the Almalyk Branch of TSTU Named after I. Karimov

D. S. Yusupov

Prof. Department of "Social and Humanitarian Disciplines "of the Almalyk Branch of TSTU Named after I. Karimov

Abstract

In the modern process of teaching students of a higher educational institution, it is necessary to study them in some terms of psychological knowledge. Although these terms are not often used in teaching students, they need to distinguish between the philosophical-methodological and scientific-practical meaning of these terms. These terms are "sex" and "gender". The distinction between these terms is very important for university students.

Key words: Sex, gender, ontogenesis, sex psychology, sex differences, "masculinity" and "femininity", "sex role", "sex-role expectations", "gender identity", "gender making", "gender performance"

Introduction

In conducting classes in a higher educational institution, it requires clarification of not only some philosophical and worldview, but also terminological issues. One of these issues is the relationship between the concepts of "sex" and "gender".

"Sex" is one of the most complex and ambiguous scientific categories. In its most general form, this word denotes a set of mutually contrasting generative (from Lat. Genero - I give birth, I produce) and related features. However, these signs are not the same in different species and imply not only reproductive properties, but also the entire spectrum of sexual dimorphism, that is, the divergence of anatomical, physiological, mental and behavioral traits of individuals of a given species depending on gender. Moreover, some sex differences are contrasting, mutually exclusive, while others are quantitative, allowing for numerous individual variations.

For a long time, the gender of an individual seemed unitary and unambiguous. However, in the XXI century, it turned out that sex is a complex multi-level system, the elements of which are formed at different times, at different stages of individual development, ontogenesis. Hence - the division of the category of sex into a number of more detailed concepts: genetic sex, chromosomal sex, gonadal sex, internal and external morphological sex, reproductive sex, etc. After the birth of a child, the biological factors of sexual differentiation are supplemented by social ones: on the basis of the genital appearance of the newborn, his civil (passport, obstetric or ascriptive, i.e. assigned) sex is determined, in accordance with which the child is brought up (gender of education), etc. All these circumstances are superimposed on the child's life experience and his self-image, as a result of which the final sexual and sexual identity of an adult is formed. Some of its aspects are set biologically, while others depend on culture and upbringing (sexual socialization), and they may differ in another. Moreover, the differences in the social behavior of men and women cannot be reduced to biology. In the first two decades of the twentieth century. Few studies of the psychological characteristics of men and women have usually been classified under the rubric of "psychology of sex", with "sex" often identified with sexuality. In the 1930-60s. "sex psychology" was replaced by "sex differences": these differences were no longer limited to sexuality, but for the most part were considered innate, given by nature. At the end of the 1970s, as the range of studied mental phenomena expanded and biological determinism weakened, this term was replaced by a softer one - "sex related..."
differences”, and it was assumed that these differences could at all have no biological basis (Jacklin, 1992). Conceptions about masculine and feminine qualities, as well as ways of measuring them, changed accordingly. In the reproductive process (continuation of the race), a man and a woman act as opposite, alternative, mutually exclusive and complementary principles. Many other differences seem less definite, variable, even optional. Specific men and women are different in their physical appearance, and in their mental properties, and in their interests and occupations, and our normative ideas about "masculinity" (masculinity) and "femininity" (femininity), although they reflect certain realities, in general are nothing more than stereotypes of public consciousness. With the advent of special psychological tests to measure masculinity and femininity in the 1930s, this problem became particularly acute, and three important circumstances emerged.

First, specific men and women have different degrees of masculinity and femininity. They can be more or less masculine, feminine or androgynous, combining masculine and feminine qualities.

Secondly, male and female properties are multifaceted and multidimensional. A "masculine" physique can be combined with "feminine" interests and feelings, and vice versa, and much depends on the situation and field of activity (a business woman can be gentle in bed and aggressive in business).

Third, our ideas about masculinity and femininity, like the psychological tests that measure them, rest not on rigorous analytical theories, but on everyday common sense and everyday experience: we call some traits or properties feminine simply because empirical material they were more often or more strongly manifested by women. But this may not depend on biology, but on the environment and upbringing. The changes taking place before our eyes in the social position of women and men have undermined many habitual stereotypes, prompting us to consider these differences and variations not as pathological perversions (perversions) or unwanted deviations (deviations) from the implied norm, but as normal, natural and even necessary. The social sciences, primarily sociology and anthropology, developed in the same direction (for a detailed analysis of historical and anthropological data, see Kon, 2003).

The complication of the problematics demanded terminological clarifications from science. In the 1960s and 70s, the social and psychological aspects of the relationship between men and women were described in terms such as "sex role", "sex role expectations", "gender identity". These terms clearly said that we are not talking about natural, but about social, interactive relations, norms, etc. But the adjective "sexual" carried a long train of unwanted meanings and associations. First, the word "sex" and its derivatives are usually associated with sexuality, although many, even obviously biological, processes and relationships are not associated with it ("sex" as a phenotype and as an activity are completely different phenomena). Secondly, this terminology, knowingly or not, assumes that sociocultural differences between men and women are only a superstructure, a form of manifestation, or a way of formalizing fundamental, basic, universal differences due to sexual dimorphism ("anatomy is fate").

To get rid of these associations and overcome biological reductionism, scientists introduced the concept of gender into science (English gender, from Latin gens - gender). In English, this word denotes a grammatical gender, which has nothing to do with gender. In some languages, for example in Georgian, there is no grammatical gender at all. In other languages this category applies only to animate beings. Thirdly, as in Russian, along with masculine and feminine, there is a neuter gender. The grammatical gender of the word and the gender of the creature it designates often do not coincide. The German word "das Weib" (woman) is neuter; in many African languages the word "cow" is masculine, etc. Contrary to popular belief, the word "gender" was borrowed from grammar and introduced into behavioral sciences not by American feminists, but by the outstanding sexologist John Money, who, when studying hermaphroditism and transsexualism it was necessary to distinguish, so to speak, general sex properties, gender as a phenotype, from sex-genital, sex-erotic and sex-pro-creative qualities (Money, 1955). Then it was picked up by sociologists and lawyers. At the same time, it has always been and remains
In psychology, gender is used in a broad sense, meaning any mental or behavioral properties associated with masculinity and femininity and presumably distinguishing men from women (previously they were called sex characteristics or differences). In the social sciences, and especially in feminism, "gender" has acquired a narrower meaning, denoting "social gender", i.e. socially determined roles, identities and spheres of activity of men and women, which depend not on biological sex differences, but on the social organization of society. The central place in gender studies is occupied by the problem of social inequality between men and women. As well as the global shifts in the gender division of labor taking place before our very eyes. The category "gender" is also used in our social science, including the education system. It provides for the introduction of special courses on the study of the basics of gender knowledge, gender policy, methods of a gender approach in the management of educational processes into educational programs for advanced training and professional retraining of management personnel, teachers and teachers. For teachers of higher educational institutions, it is proposed to introduce general theoretical courses "Fundamentals of Gender Theory" and "Theory and Methodology of Gender Studies". Timely recommendations!

Disciplinary differences in psychology persist, speaking of gender properties and relationships, as a rule, they discuss the traits and characteristics of individuals, while sociologists and anthropologists talk about gender order, gender stratification of society, gender division of labor and other social functions, gender relations of power, etc. etc. They are far from the same thing, so you should always pay attention to the context. In psychology, the term "identity" is sometimes used and even replaced by the word "identification", which is completely incorrect, because the first term denotes a structure, and the second - a process. The word "identity", in connection with E. Erickson's theory, has been used in Russian psychological and sociological literature since at least 1978 (Kon, 1978), and maybe even earlier. Since gender is not a natural given, but a social construct, it presupposes self-awareness and self-determination. “Gender identity determines the degree to which each individual identifies as male, female, or some combination of both. It is an internal structure created during development that allows the individual to organize the self-image and socially function according to her/his perceived gender. and gender. Gender identity determines how an individual experiences their gender and fosters a sense of individual identity, uniqueness and belonging. "(PAHO / WHO, 2000) appropriate socialization, "typing" or "coding". An active participant in this process is the subject himself, who accepts or rejects the roles and behaviors offered to him, up to "recoding" or "reinstalling" gender identity.

Ethnographic data also speak of the "removability" of gender identity: many cultures not only recognize the presence of people of the "third sex", but also create special social niches and identities for them (Herdt, 1994). Additional scientific categories are needed to describe these complex processes.

Gender role refers to the normative prescriptions and expectations that the respective culture places on "correct" male or female behavior and which serve as a criterion for assessing the
masculinity / femininity of a child or adult. Gender roles and, moreover, behavior oriented towards them are not necessarily unambiguous. They always contain elements of a game, a theatrical performance. Interacting with other people, the individual presents them with a certain image, "depicts" a man, woman or a being of an indefinite gender, using clothes, gestures, and manner of speech. This is denoted by terms such as "gender display", "doing gender", "gender performance". These phenomena are described in detail in feminist literature (Introduction to Gender Studies, 2001; Bern, 2001), but initially, back in the 1960s, they were discovered and described by sociologists (E. Hoffman), including in the study of gender dysphoria (H. Garfinkel). The boundaries between disciplines in this area are much more mobile than narrow specialists think, who do not think about the origin of their own terminology and are unaware of what they say in prose. Behind the new terminology there is an increased attention not only to social factors, but also to the individual psychological characteristics and self-awareness of the subject, which vulgar biologism, like vulgar sociologism, are equally inclined to underestimate. The use of the terms "sex" and "gender" often depends on a context. When discussing biological processes and species properties, it is quite appropriate to talk about field and sexual dimorphism. On the contrary, the expression "sexual dimorphism of parenting strategies" is perceived by a psychologist or anthropologist as incorrect (it tacitly implies that the differences between paternal and maternal behavior are biologically determined, which is contrary to cross-cultural data). Within reproductive biology, there are only two sexes. However, if you determine the sex according to the structure of the genitals (this is how the sex of the newborn is determined), then we can talk about five sexes: 1) the owners of the female genitals are women, 2) the owners of the male genitals are men, 3) the owners of mixed genitals are hermaphrodites (herms), 4) owners of predominantly female, but with male elements, genitals - feminine pseudohermaphrodites (farms); and 5) owners of predominantly male, but with female elements, genitals - masculine pseudohermaphrodites (merms) (Fausto-Sterling, 1993). If we take as a basis not the structure of the genitals, but the orientation of sexual desire, we get 5 types of gender identity: 1) male, 2) female, 3) male-homosexual, 4) female-homosexual and 5) transsexual. From the point of view of reproductive biology, this classification, which "equates" sexual minorities with "normal" men and women, seems ridiculous (Belkin, 2000). But there are real problems behind it. Any human behavior, including reproductive and sexual, is somehow connected with his self-awareness and gender identity. The term "gender" seems to be more heuristic than "sex", although no one denies the influence of the corresponding genetic, hormonal and other biological factors.

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