Gender Roles: Social Sciences And Applied Sciences Discipline

The subject of gender has permeated throughout the history of humankind. During this time and still, today men and women are seen as two different sides of the same coin. Gender is centered around the idea between the differences between masculinity and femininity. Both are taught from an early age what they are able and not able to achieve.

Many different factors influence our understanding and view of gender. One of the most influential ones being that of a sociological one. Gender roles are also highly politized, with differences between the two shown in religion as well.

The expectation of the different gender roles is split in the way of mannerisms, social behavior, personality traits, and activities. Many cultures around the world are built on a “him” and “her” culture, where both genders are subject to behavioral expectations.

Social Sciences Discipline

In sociology gender and sex are viewed by many people to be the same thing, but there is a clear distinction between the two. Dr Zuleyka Zevallos describes it best “Sociology of Gender” where she describes sex as harboring our “biological traits that societies use to assign people into the category of either male or female, whether it be through a focus on chromosomes, genitalia or some other physical ascription.” The chromosomes create these biological differences, with females having two X chromosomes, whilst males have one X chromosome and one Y chromosome. Western society has a very rigid understanding of sex as it relates to gender roles. Many aspects of our gender roles are solely based on these ideas. These factors are used in our society today to differentiate men and women from one another.

Gender is far less rigid than sex as it does not necessarily account for a person’s biology. As sex is viewed as the biological concept of men and women, gender dictates the social ideas of gender roles. Gender is known as a social construct, as it is heavily influenced by societal views. These various views and expectations are created through social interactions, as we do and say things to other people. (Zevallos, 2014) In our society today these expectations are viewed as either masculine or feminine. These expectations are taught to us at a very early age influencing our behavior to match that of our society’s views. The most common descriptions for a female are that she should be gentle, caring, sensitive, kind, etc. Males, on the other hand, must ascribe to being insensitive, aggressive, brave, independent etc. These are only a few of the adjectives that describe and differentiate the two and yet they have setup people to fall into these gender stereotype roles.

The sex of a person is built off their biological makeup, whilst gender is the social idea of gender roles. Based on people’s biological traits they are treated differently; their gender is then determined to match social and cultural norms. These behaviors of gender are expectations, which society places onto individuals to act more “feminine” or “masculine”. We are subjected to these expectations from a very early age in many different ways. Traditionally males are supposed to act more independent, aggressive, insensitive, etc. whilst females are ascribed to

be more sensitive, gentle, dependent, etc. All these things add to the setting of stereotypes in gender roles and make it incredibly difficult for people to just be themselves.

Applied Sciences Discipline

Gender roles have always played a large part in politics, where certain groups of people have not had any real representation in our democratic process. Throughout history, women have not participated in democracies as men, with men also holding most positions of political leadership. In the past few decades, we have seen great improvements with women getting involved more in our politics, subsequently getting rid of certain gender role expectations. “Inequalities in political involvement undermine the quality of deliberation, representation, and legitimacy in the democratic process” (Kittilson, 2016). One of the main issues is a gap in participation in politics when comparing men and women. Men have a greater political interest and thus end up more knowledgeable in the process. This gap is created based on the undermining of women in politics. This separation in participations is not only seen in the United States but all over the world. The UN has been helping in the creation of political groups for women in many different countries, allowing the political participation of women to grow ('Elections - Women's leadership and political participation').

In the political world, females are seen as inferior are constantly held back from political involvements. This allows for a separation of interest and knowledge between males and females. It is clear to see the effects that gender roles have on males and females on our political systems. The difference between politics and another discipline is that politics allow for an expression of ideas. Other disciplines describe the effects of gender roles on people in various circumstances.

Diversity Framework

Religious leaders of the largest religions in the world today have all been exclusively male. Only a few years ago restrictions on certain religious roles have been lifted, to allow women in their ranks (Pew Research, 2016). Although these ranks are often held by men, it appears that women are more faithful than men. In the United States alone there are 10% more women who are religious than men. Research has shown this to be the case not only in the United States but in Europe as well. Women universally show a stronger connection to their religion regardless of culture, society, or faith. This gap is getting so large to the point where many U.S. churches that some clergy have changed decor, music and worship styles to try to bring more men into their congregations according to the Pew Research website. In a controversial study, by Alan S. Miller and Rodney Stark, it was proposed that the religious gap between men and women stemming from biological nature. Historically men have had higher levels of testosterone than women, which can lead to more impulsive and risky behavior. This same behavior is theorized to lead men to be less religious. There have been many different arguments for the existence of the gap from biology, psychology, genetics, social influences, and self-involvement (Pew Research, 2016). In their book “Why Are Women More Religious than Men” Marta Trzebiatowska and Steve Bruce make the argument that this gap exists due to social reasons as, the reason this because, as they state, biological arguments rely on faulty gender assumptions and insufficient, contested evidence. They believe that the secularization of men being different social roles made men less religious because they were more exposed to new ideas which undermined their religious beliefs.

The strength of faith comes down to the individual, but as seen in the paragraph above there is a large discrepancy when it comes to the number of women compared to religious men. In comparison to the United States, countries with other belief systems such as Islam do not possess such a large religious gap. Although there is not a single religion in where there are more religious men than women. The smaller gaps are in the 2% margin but do not get any smaller than that. Religion like politics allows for the expression of one's beliefs, although compared to politics, religion is a far more personal experience. Religion is also a set system of beliefs and values, whereas politics are far less rigid.

Self-Reflection

After researching this topic, I further learned how gender roles affect different parts of peoples lives. There has been a lot more research done on this topic than I knew about and it has made me more aware of these expectations that we place on people. Gender roles have always had a great influence on people. In the past especially we have always seen mostly men dominating over women in many different ways. As we are taught how to behave at a very young age and end up having our expectations of people as well. Having all these expectations laid out allows for higher awareness. Knowing one's own biases makes it possible to unlearn them and to challenge them.

From writing this assignment I was also able to see this topic from multiple perspectives, allowing me to read facts about parts of the topic I just had general thoughts about in the past. This has been my first research paper since I moved to the United States and it was an interesting experience. Writing this assignment will also help me for any future research papers, as I now have learned how to find good sources.

Conclusion

Throughout societies all over the world, the enforcement of gender roles has had large impacts on people's lives. We learn what is to be expected of us, only based off a rigid system of biology. Both males and females are supposed to ascribe to behaving in a certain way. These adjectives that describe both men and women can lead to ignorance. Men, for example, are supposed to be strong and independent, leading some people to the false conclusion that women cannot be the same. This categorization only restricts people from expressing themselves truly. Gender stereotypes also allow for gaps in participation to appear in certain fields. This is evident with the lack of women in politics, especially in the past. When it comes to religion more women are of stronger faith than men. Different theories show that it could be linked to biology, whilst others have found ties to a social origin.