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# Social Construction Of Gender And Its Effect On The Global Society

According to mainstream standards, gender is either of the two sexes, when considered with reference to cultural and social differences. Gender is important in mainstream societies as it is what allows us to determine who is allowed to do what and how they are allowed to do it, whatever “it” may be. Gender allows males and females to be separated socially and culturally. It allows humans to function simply and follow a predefined charted course without questioning it, as this is what is considered normal. Whilst most societies accept these ways of thinking, for some, it simply does not work. In this essay I will discuss the problematic way in which mainstream society constructed gender and how this social construction affects the global society.

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie acknowledges in her book *We Should All be Feminists*, that men and women are physically and biologically different, but also acknowledges the fact that socialisation exaggerates these differences. Generally society allows children to express and present themselves as they please as many people will consider their deviation from social normalness as a phase rather than a genuine feeling. When these children begin to reach puberty and experience physical changes, society expects them to conform to social normalities. This catalyses the effects of gender based violence as it breaches the general rules and regulations of gender in society. This is often when the terms “gender” and “sex” are confused. “Sex” refers to the identity you are assigned based on your physical attributes.

“Gender” refers to the way in which a person, themselves, identifies, regardless of their physical attributes. It is assumed that everyone’s sex and gender intersect and work together harmoniously, however, many people’s sex and gender run parallel and will never meet. Transgenderism, androgyny and the concept that gender is a spectrum is a very foreign idea to many western societies and is frowned upon in many mainstream societies. Gender, in certain societies such as the Native Americans, is considered to be fluid and can easily change in a person’s life. If a family desires a son, but the mother gives birth to a daughter, it is not uncommon for the child to be raised as a son. If a boy prefers to engage in typically female activities, generally the parents of that boy would decide that their son is now their daughter. The Native Americans also have a “third” gender called “two-spirit” which refers to people who have both male and female qualities in them. In this society, gender is fluid and does not operate on a strict binary gender system as many societies do.

By acknowledging these societies that do not have the same concepts of gender as

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mainstream societies, it is proven that gender plays a different role and is accepted in each society differently. This also emphasises the fact that gender does play a large role in how people perceive themselves, and others, in all societies, regardless how it is interpreted. "Gender has increasingly become used to refer to any social construction having to do with male/female distinction, including those constructions that separate "female" bodies from "male" bodies. The latter usage emerged when many came to realize that society not only shapes personality and behaviour, it also shapes the ways in which the body appears".

The very concept that some societies understand and embrace gender fluidity begs the question; Why do some societies accept this fluidity whilst others reject it so intensely? The hegemonic male is a white, middle class man who sticks to the social "normalities" of his society. When this man finds someone or a group of people who challenge these "normalities, he will become aggravated, if not violent, towards these people. This could refer to a number of things, such as: women empowerment, the empowerment of people of colour and the empowerment of people who do not agree or identify with the gender system that society has put in place for them. The gender system that mainstream society has put in place constantly evolves, but always has a certain category of humans put on top, the hegemonic male. This hierarchical system puts everyone who is not a straight, white, middle class male in an inferior position, and when the inferiority challenges the people with the power, the people with the power will strike back with the use of vertical homophobia, meaning that the people with power high up within the society discriminate against said groups of people.

In conclusion, society has categorised people into groups depending on their physical attributes and freedom of expression is extremely limited and could even be considered a privilege. The simple fact that not all people identify with this way of thinking proves that society has concisely constructed this in an attempt to organise society in a way that is easy to control. The mere existence of societies that do not have the same concepts of gender as mainstream societies proves that gender, in general, is a mind-set that has been constructed and normalised. The fluidity of gender makes gender seem to be an irrelevant concept as the label "man" or "woman" does not affect how you perform as a human on an ethical or emotional level. Gender, itself, is problematic as it is the direct cause of gender based violence, and has a huge impact on homophobia as well. Gender was created by humans, simply as a way of taxonomizing humans, in order for the construction of modern day society to function as it does.

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