

Is biology important in  
defining gender  
sociology



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The relationship between gender and biological science is an progressively complex issue. This essay will reason that traditionally in Western Culture, biological science is seen as an of import factor in specifying gender ; but that the outgrowth of a greater cosmopolitan cultural consciousness, recent philosophical, psychological and legal argument has lessened the biological accent in finding gender. It is now understood that masculinity and feminineness encompasses many sunglassess of gray both in a biological and a gendered sense. At face value Sex can be considered a biological term and gender a psychological, cultural and philosophical one. For a clearer apprehension of their debatable relationship this essay will first clear up the footings, gender and biological science ( biological sex ) , concentrating on basic baseline definitions. However, as the developing essay will demo, even the scientific has jobs with the consecutive double star and Manichaeian differentiation of adult male and adult female, perplexing its relationship to gender further.

In most contexts, sex is determined by biological factors and is binary, intending that existences are classified as one of either ' male ' or ' female ' . This is normally ascertained on scrutiny of external genetalia, internal genetalia, sex glands, hormonal provinces and secondary sexual features but besides chromosomal qualities, which are normally 23XX ( for females ) or 23XY ( for males ) . Traditionally, this biological categorization has been heralded as an of import in specifying gender because, although definitions of gender vary, it is by and large considered that gender is " a societal building organised around biological sex. Persons are born male or female, but they get over clip a gender individuality, that is, what it means to be

male or female. Gender is a bundle of outlooks which a society associates with each sex<sup>1</sup> ”

So, the construct of gender was, throughout much of Western history, considered to be synonymous with sex and this remains the instance to a big extent even today. However, if one examines the OED definition of ‘ gender ’ , we see that the word was “ frequently intended to stress the societal and cultural, as opposed to the biological, differentiations between the sexes<sup>2</sup> ” . Gender can be said to hold a much wider spectrum of intending than sex. There are alleged ‘ shades of Grey ’ between the two poles of categorization of sex, though these normally arise when developmental anomalousness result in equivocal external genital organ or in the ownership of an excess chromosome ( eg. 23XXY ) . It is in such instances that the constructs of sex and gender can be said to get down to overlap.

A rare hormonal instability during gestation can impact the physical development of the genitalias so that their form becomes indeterminate. This status is called hermaphrodite and affects approximately 1 in 12, 000 or 60 births each twelvemonth in Britain. Social outlooks of unambiguous gender frequently pressurises a determination to be made sing the sex of the kid, ensuing in surgery to change their genetalia so they can be categorised. This frequently leads to complications for the person in ulterior life because although biologically talking their sex is defined, their internal mental province, their perceptual experience of their ain gender may be at odds with the sex assigned to them, ensuing in gender dysphoria, ‘ men trapped in adult females ’ s organic structures ’ and frailty versa. , so if it is

assumed that gender is linked to sex and biological science even in a biological sense gender can be equivocal.

“ It is true that every society uses biological sex as a standard for the attribution of gender but, beyond that simple get downing point, no two civilizations would wholly hold on what distinguishes one gender from the other ” 3When analyzing gender, it is of import to see non-Western, non-Judeo-Christian positions of gender. There is great diverseness on the universe broad phase, transporting different constructs of what precisely gender is and how many gender groups people can be classified into. The most celebrated ‘ neither-male-nor-female ‘ groups are likely the Hijra of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Hijra are normally considered to be members of “ the 3rd sex ” and as such are neither work forces nor adult females. The bulk of Hijra can be sexually classified as male or as hermaphrodite, although there are some who would be sexually classed as female. Linguistically, Hijra speak of themselves as female and they normally dress as adult females. The ‘ Berdache ‘ of some folks of the North American autochthonal peoples are a farther of import illustration of a ‘ third sex ‘ .

Normally male, the Berdache adopted the frock, businesss and behaviour of the opposite sex. “ It was a motion toward a slightly intermediate position that combined societal properties of males and females. The nomenclature for Berdaches defined them as a distinguishable gender position, designated by particular footings instead than by the words “ adult male ” or “ adult female ” 4.

Separation of sex and gender is, hence, non consistent across civilizations or frequently even within one society. In the illustrations given above, the members of the alleged ' third sex ' frequently fill of import functions in the civilization and even faith of the societies to which they belong. Although there is frequently favoritism against these people from foreigners ( and less often from those within the society ) , the perceptual experience of the people seen to be of the ' third sex ' is seldom that they are ' unnatural ' . Indeed, civilizations in which a ' third sex ' has existed for millenary are now get downing to specify their members utilizing nomenclature borrowed from the West but which is careful to separate between the constructs of sex and gender. The confusion of sex and gender could be seen as the ground the inquiry contained in the rubric of this essay, has been asked at all.

The association between biological science and gender has been disputed by women's rightists for a long clip. While contending for the equal rights of adult females, women's rightists believe that biological statements have helped perpetuate gender inequalities. Being biologically adult female to some is meant to predispose the gender traits of feminineness, i. e. private, domestic, inactive, maternal. " If bing societal inequalities are steadfastly rooted in biological differences between adult females and work forces, so there is small that any sensible individual can make to consequence change5 " , yet Feminists argue that there is no longer a demand for gender functions to be associated with biological map. This is gnawing the biology/gender line doing biological science less of import in specifying gender. Judith Butler interrogates the ' natural fact ' of sex ( biological science ) every bit good as the stationariness of gender. She argues that if sex every bit good as gender

is socially constructed, so ' any effort to impute sex specific attributes becomes impossible " 6. From an foreigners perspective this could be seen as ego defeating.

Possibly a short manner of specifying sex and gender is to state that sex is the physical, outward province which nature and our cistrans have given us, while gender is the internal, mental position of oneself. But this statement degenerates back in favour of biological science. The extremist statement for familial determinism which purports that because are organic structures are nil but a aggregation of genetically predetermined affair and that our individuality lies within our encephalon, simplistically thought of as no more than an organic creative activity, our individuality, our gender must be biological excessively. This seems to be a entirely reductionist position that disregards the nature of human consciousness, the function of the person and the function of society. Earlier definitions of gender in this essay cite the function of civilization and society as critical, irrespective of biological science. Whilst it is of import to entertain an radical biological place, it has obvious defects.

Extremist places lose their entreaty as they fail to embrace the aforesaid ' shades of Grey ' . However, it is of import to acknowledge that one ' s sex is the bedrock on which society ' s perceptual experience of a individual rests. If we were to analyze gender in a societal vacuity, it could be contended that no two people rest on precisely the same point of the gender-spectrum. One ' s gender could be said to be every bit alone as one ' s personality. As it is non possible to build a societal vacuity and we must carry on any scrutiny of sex and gender in a universe full of societal and moral judgements and

prepossessions, it is most frequently the instance that the bulk of people will seek to suit themselves into one of the 'boxes' that society wants to set them in. While it is true that perceptual experiences of gender individuality and what is by and large acceptable to society in the West is altering, most people still do not understand gender and sex as distinct constructs. For this ground, it can be argued that biological science is of import in specifying gender, though merely when gender is viewed through the prism of societal outlooks. As a matter of fact, every society believes that its own definition of gender corresponds to the biological dichotomy of sex. In decision, "to be a adult male or adult female, a male child or miss is every bit much a map of frock, gestures, business, societal web and personality as it is of possessing a peculiar set of genitalia" 7