

Research proposal

Linguistics, English



Cultural Inscription of Gender When the question “ what gender are you?” is posed, it has the implication that gender is not what one is said to have, but an attribute of what the person is. The feminist approach of gender postulates that it is a cultural interpretation of sex. With globalization and technology impacting on every part of society, perception of gender is also changing. Whereas there are universal points of convergence with regard to the term, there are also differences in terms of who belongs to a particular ‘ gender’.

Kate Hughes conducted study for a period of one year among women studies’ students in an Australian University. The students were from different class and racial backgrounds. Hughes found out that while each had their own perception of the definition of gender, there were also instances when certain aspects varied. For instance, the definition of gender as an entity in each society revealed roles that in this case the females were supposed to engage in. These roles differed from society to society. The implication is that the definition of gender is dynamic and cannot be wholesome. The understanding of feminism as a whole therefore must be approach from a cross-cultural context.

While the study goes a long way in the definition of gender construction in a cultural approach, it does not sufficiently separate it from sex. It follows that in all the sampled societies, roles are divided on the basis on one’s sex. This does not make sense therefore because the question “ what gender are you?” would be no different from “ what sex are you?” The gap therefore lies in the question, is gender merely a cultural inscription? The separation of gender and sex would, as will be seen in the study to be conducted, ease the

perception of how one defines straight and gay people. If gender is to have a cultural inscription, it means that gay people are as dictated by their sex, to remain in their “ respective” genders. However, if sex is not an issue, then gays and lesbians would be viewed as being in the right “ place” as dictated by their identity. These are some of the changing perceptions of gender.

Work Cited

Hughes, Kate. “ I’ve Been Pondering Whether You Can Be a Part-Feminist’: Young Australian Women’s Studies Students Discuss Gender”. *Women’s Studies International Forum*, 28 (1). 37 -49., 2005