

Gender and sexuality



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Studies on the gender and sexuality has for long time been considered by many social scientists as important analytical tool to understand difference between men and women. Gender has been used as a form of categorizing member of society based on sex and referred to as cultural as well as social creating differences between men and women in a societal setting.

Traditionally, sex has been described in basis of biological entity.

On the other hand gender has been described as differences and resemblance between sexes. ??? the term ??? sex??? refers to the different anatomical, biological and sexual characteristics of men and women, the term ??? gender??? refers to social distinctions??? (Thompson, 2001 para 2). That is sex is more of natural thing while gender is associated with cultural difference exhibited by man and women. Sex/gender system forms the basis in which the society is founded.

Therefore, sex/gender system is set of common ideas regarding how man and women behave, think, feel, desire, react, among others. Sex/gender systems forms the basis in which man and women play different role or duties in the society. Western ideas of sex/gender system Above introduction in this paper can be said to be consistent with western idea of sex/gender system. Western culture translates the concept of sex and gender in terms of dichotomies. ??? The notion that there are two, and only two, sexes that are distinct from one another without any overlapping or surplus and can be defined as opposites, is a Western way of thinking rather than a biological fact??? (The Swedish Research Council??? s Committee on Gender Research n.

d para 7). Western society have the following assumption about gender i. . there are only two genders, gender if fixed and exhibit no alternative, Genitals are the vital signs of gender, the male/female dichotomy is natural and being masculine or feminine is natural and not subject to choice. Western ideology on sex/gender identity unlike other social ideologies for example Asian system are not flexible to heterosexuals, lesbian and gay, bisexuals, transvestites and hermaphrodite. Despite Western dichotomy thinking on sex and gender, sex distinctions are no entirely clear cut.

For example people have been born with ambiguous genitalia or in other words hermaphrodites. Disclosers of this biological fact have been safeguarded by cultures which ensure our bodies are covered. But in the societies where bodies have been bared to be seen without limitation and body privacy not part of the culture, case of hermaphrodites have been spot reported and such people accepted that they are. Even in the Western culture these cases could have been there but went unnoticed due to being kept secrets.

Today ambiguous genitalia reported in the west are fixed by help of surgery immediately after birth hence not easy to be noticed. Biological sex is entirely about genitalia i. e. involve X and Y chromosome as well as their hormonal aspect. Incase a kid shows signs of developing a micro-penis or false vagina they have been given hormones in puberty.

This show not matter the western culture dichotomous way of viewing sex and gender the case of bi-sexual has been there but ignored. Children in western culture have been able to learn from young age norms of feminine

and feminine. Culture provided clear responsibilities and behaviors of men and women making it possible to be able to guide the children from early age. Meaning if there is no such cultural guidelines behavior of children would be different and not guided by their biological sex.

As opposed to western culture on dichotomous way of viewing sexuality and gender, many non western cultures accommodated individuals their sex never matched to majority sexed body. In other societies like those of traditional South Asia the majority of the both adult and adolescent males and relations both with women and with a minority of passive adult men who had relations both with women and with a minority of passive adult men who had been socialized into a lifelong third-gender role that combine elements of male and female behavior??? (Trumbach 1998 pp 4). This was done through establishment of traditions that accepted and naming of this kind of people for example Berdache in First Nations cultures and katheoy of Thai are among many other cultures (Tatum 2002). This brings us to gender and sexuality and third gender. Third gender or gender liminal and third sex are terms used to describe people who are neither men nor women.

They are present in the societal setting which regards more than two genders contrary to the western culture. Different cultures recognizing third sex or gender provides for intermediate which may be inexistence between men and women. Meaning that, these cultures looked forward to incorporate fact that man spirit could have been incorporated together with woman spirit in one person. That possibility of cross or swap gender giving rise to an independent category of people different from male and female.

To this respect, Western culture has been inadequate in describing the gender and sexuality issues as compared to Asian gender and sexuality.

While western culture viewed gender and sex in two dimension Asian culture for example Hijra of India and katheoy of Thai among other cultures giving a well defined categories of these individuals. Compared to Western culture third sex and gender have been described as transgender, intersex, gay and lesbian but has not been given a clear categorization alongside the dichotomous categorization. Many scholar on this subject have been feeling Western culture is inadequate when it come to try to understand traditional third gender especially in the Asian context through use of western models.

While the term third sex and gender have been use to mean apart from the two generalized sex and gender according to Western culture, socialist further described many gender from third to even fifth gender. To understand subject of third sex lets analyze various studies in biological perspective. Incase an animal show elements no defined differentiated sexually i. e.

in terms of male of female is referred to as hermaphrodite and incase of human being it is known as intersexuality. Third sexuality and gender vary from population to population depending on how the sexuality and gender is understood. Various studies suggest that more than two and adjusted to five sexes would be more appropriate in understanding human bodies. Biologist urges that there exist more than to gender in hundred of animal species hence a major possibility of human being having a third gender and sex (<http://www. partapuoli.>

com/Texts/Gender_third_sex. htm n. d) Anthropologists studies in gender categorization in some societies have been marred difficulties of gender categorization into two gender framework adequately. On the other hand feminist studies begun to focus on the biological sex and social gender an aspect going beyond the initial categorization of the two sex and gender. This drive us to the point that the western sex/gender culture is in adequate since various analysis concur with the ideal of third sex/gender adopted by various ancient Asian communities (Hearn n. d).

India society gives a good example of a society that has regarded the third sex. According to (Dutt 2008), Hijra in the Indian culture is considered to be third sex representing neither man nor woman. Hijra people are physically male or can exhibit behaviors of two sexes and some are female giving evidence on existence of third sex and gender as opposed to dichotomous description use by the western culture. Hijra refer themselves to be feminine linguistically and use women garments.

Although their behaviors favor feminine way of life they rarely have genital modification despite being called eunuchs in English. In the Indian different cultures exhibited a similar form of sex/gender categorization, in southern part India there were superstitions guiding people on believe of ability to transform one's sex. Indian southern community had men who worn female clothing and performed a similar role to entertaining for example in ceremonies and wedding a similar role like one done by hijra. The other form of third gender in India society was Kothi according to Dutt (2008).

Kothi are men but take a feminine work in sex with men but as compared to hijras they do not come out in the to be known since they did not have a defines community like hijras. Comparing hijra and Kothis to the western gender and sexual classification shows no match. Any occurrence of third sex in the western culture is faced with transsexual or transsexual modifications but hijras never attempted to change hence no direct match. In the Indian culture Kothi and Hijras are considered to be different gender.

Kothi dress like women even in public place and even speak like women. Normally their partner are ??? normal??? masculine men who penetrates them and often marry but their relationship especially sex life is secrete from the society. There is no law that recognizes this kind of marriage but in the Indian culture Kothi and Hijras have romantic partners. Thai sex-gender system exhibits a major counter to Euro-American biases on issues of gender classification (Esterick 2000).

Kathoeys is name used to describe third sex in Thailand. Thailand society in general perceives Kathoeys as a third gender including Kathoeys themselves although some take them to be either men or women. Researches conducted on this subject matter in Thailand shows that Kathoeys have come openly to accept themselves besides the community recognizing. More evidence to the existence of Katheoys is the fact that some schools in Thailand have gone to an extent of allocating extra separate room for Kathoeys for purpose of resting without mixing with the other gender. For example in Chiang Mai School, Katheoy student were required to wear male clothing at school and provided with special sanitary facilities.

Comparing Thailand third gender and that of western culture shows no much acceptance in the culture as it has been part of culture in Thailand. In Europe third sex/gender culture could have started in 1700AD in Europe when the culture exhibited people who were leaning towards homosexuality making then to be described as third sex. In comparison to Thailand context European third sex/gender did not come out well as it was overshadowed by the dichotomous viewing of sexuality and gender. This confirms the argument that Western ideas of a sex/gender system are inadequate when describing Asian systems of gender and sexuality (Roscoe, 1995). It is untrue to say there have been no third sexuality and gender western culture as it society has tried to portray.

Like other places in the Asia, traits of third sex/gender have been there but have been suppressed through political and religion rebukes hence seen as if it never existed. For example in there have been a minority of men from ancient Europe who have been affiliated to homosexuality ???... in all places of an effeminate minority of males exclusively interested in other males and use this presumption to misinterpret the evidence for homosexual behavior in the ancient Mediterranean world and in European society before 1700??? (Trumbach 1998 pp 5).

Issue concerning third sex and gender in Europe has been defeated by the competing morality in the Christian community which championed only for bisexual which would spread to the whole of Europe but this was just running from the reality since according to Trumbach this has not change the situation as third gender may be natural. This is because the lesbianism homosexuality continued to grow even without societal reorganization. Asia
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society recognizes existence of third sex/gender and Western culture provide no description it despite its existence in their community (Weber, 2000). In conclusion, the Western ideas of a sex/gender system are inadequate when describing Asian systems of gender and sexuality since it is silent on the issue of third sex/gender. Western ideologies on this subject only consider human sexuality and gender in two faces. This is not adequate since even in its social setting there is some prevalence of third sexuality for example existence of homosexuals and lesbians.

Insistence on dichotomous description to sexuality and gender makes Western idea not adequate. Bibliography <http://www.thingsasian.com/stories-photos/2022>

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