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Gender and Society

Essay 1

### Codes of Gender

Gender is the physical ability, that we as humans, use to recognize an individual as either a male or female. “It’s absolutely fundamental to our ability to interact with them,” said in the film *The Codes of Gender*. Gender is how society places individuals into categories so that other individuals understand how to carry on social interactions. When people cannot identify and place someone into one of these categories, they don’t know how they should treat them going further. Males and females carry different characteristics, males tend to obtain masculine traits while females tend to obtain feminine traits. Codes of gender illustrate how culture reflects and “shapes normative ideas about masculinity and femininity,” said an outside source.

Goffman argues that gender is not something that is natural, gender is something that is learned through society and obtained through attributes and characteristics. Sex is something that is assigned to humans at birth, sex is our biological makeup in our genes. Sex is separated into two categories: Male and female. While within gender is made up of many different categories: nonbinary, transexual, etc. Gender is socially created, not natural. Goffman is interested in how these codes are created and maintained within society. Gender is how we as humans want to be recognized by others. We perform gender, we are not born with a gender. Codes of gender are so deep that they are hard to recognize until they are interpreted and pointed out. One of Goffman's main goals was to make things visible that usually go unnoticed and unrecognized.

Goffman argues that the best way to see these codes within society is to look at the culture; through advertising. He explains that advertisement is a tactic that the media uses to try to illustrate as the real world; what they advertise is looked at as what is normal. Advertisements tend to embellish women with femininity; this could be as simple as women touching things in commercials very softly because women are supposed to be gentle, weak, and delicate but when men are in commercials they are shown in ways that illustrate masculinity. Men are supposed to be strong so they are pictured as constructing the world to fit their desires rather than adjusting to what is.

When men and women are presented together in advertisements, women are portrayed as drifting away mentally while men are portrayed as powerful and the protectors. Women are linked to childhood by presenting themselves in similar poses to which children would while men have to leave their childhood behind and grow up, they have to change. Women are portrayed as young girls in the poses they recreate, but making it sexualized since they're older, and how they have their makeup done like dolls almost like a fantasy. One of the consequences of this is that young girls are then sexualized like adult women, it's a code of seduction or also known as the Armani code. Masculinity is the ideal of being man, masculinity is defined as what it is not through culture. Masculinity is about being an adult, being strong, having control, and much more. Advertisers do not create these images through thoughts, they create advertisements through images that already exist within cultures and societies.

Codes of Gender define what is masculine and feminine. Each of these categories consists of so many characteristics which are presented through each sex. Through these categories, we are able to identify an individual and know how to interact with them. Goffman argues that one of the main ways in which codes of gender are portrayed is through

advertisements that present women with feminine characteristics and men with masculine characteristics.