

Defensive othering in gender why do we do it?

In order to answer this question we first need to understand the concepts of Gender and defensive othering. The concept of gender as we have talked about is simply how one chooses to express their femininity or masculinity in the eyes of society. Defensive othering is the idea that while it is agreed some stereotype applies to one group that one is a part of, it does not apply specifically to oneself. So the question is why does this happen within gender especially? Well if looked into you'll find many factors that can contribute to this that we have covered but the main ones to discuss as reasons why this happens are feminism and toxic masculinity and using these things to separate themselves from certain ideologies.

How do these concepts explain why we have defensive othering? Well to begin with feminism the idea that women have been oppressed and objectified by men, has directly been influenced by toxic masculinity that term meaning the ideology that men have where they feel that women are lesser than themselves and objectify them. Toxic masculinity has been in place and passed down for as long as patriarchal ideologies and views have been. This has influenced many things in our society around these views today. For example today you can find multiple podcasters, youtubers, and influencers that claim to be alpha males, top of their workforce, making so much money, they get so many women, cheating on those women is ok since they are an alpha man, etc. These forms of media are then consumed by younger men who view these ideologies as admirable and look up to them and continue this cycle by passing these ideologies down to their own children in some cases. Which has influenced feminism to this day.

and gone through many waves. The first wave being realizing and putting a label on the oppression women were going through, the second wave being fighting for voting rights and women's suffrage, and the third in modern society has been trying to keep the gains that have been made thus far. The gains women have made have seemed to be disrupted in multiple ways, one being with the previous example just mentioned of the various media forms that have perpetuated harmful and sometimes dangerous stereotypes to men. Another is the idea that all feminist women are “woke” , “aggressive”, and “liberal” and have crazy ideas, which completely diminishes the credibility of what the women are saying. This again is perpetuated by the media. The final way that feminism has been disrupted modernly is by girls internalizing these types of stereotypes and putting them on other girls. This is where the topic of defensive othering comes into play.

Defensive othering comes into play with both the genders in this sense since men have put out these ideologies and some women have adopted and believe them. This leads directly to the type of “pick me girl” ideology of not being like the other girls and the rest of the “group.” This is direct defensive othering of themselves. They do this with statements such as “I don’t wear makeup”, “I’m not like other girls”, “I like my natural beauty to shine through.” This is harmful to women as it is a total backwards slide from the ideologies of feminism and togetherness that it was intended for.

“Nice guys” in order to get away from that toxic masculinity labeling that makes women wary of men. However, they act in the way of the “pick me” girl. They guise themselves as nice but perpetuate the same kinds of ideologies that are harmful as well. They make statements such as “Oh I’m not like other guys I won’t treat you like that.” but then if their behavior doesn’t reflect this and the woman points this out they’ll say “oh women are all the same” “this is why nice guys can’t find good girls.” This perpetuates the same behaviors as toxic masculinity while completely defensively othering themselves. So why do both genders do this?

In conclusion I believe that both genders do this in order to try and differentiate themselves from the harmful parts of the stereotypes on both ends. They agree that the stereotypes are true for others of their gender but those same things don’t apply to them because it would look bad on them. However, they don’t realize by doing this they are directly internalizing the stereotypes and presenting the same ones themselves. It is a cycle that sets back both parties and will continue to be if we keep this practice of defensive othering of ourselves.