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SOC 105 - 002

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### Oppression with Doing Gender

Why do men have to ask the girl on the first date? Why are men expected to pay? Why are they expected to carry the conversation all night? Why do men talk about their successes and riches? Gender roles tell them they have to. Society has drilled it into their brains that this is their role as a man. These dominant actions such as asking a girl on the first date, paying for the meal, opening all the doors, etc. are men fulfilling their gender roles. Gender roles play an immense part in how people of the opposite sex act around each other. Men take on a dominant role and tend to take charge when around a woman. Women are the opposite. Women fall into a submissive role and are viewed as innocent and polite. They are expected to sit there and talk about makeup, nails, hair, etc. Men tend to look at the beauty on the outside and how well a woman would be able to take care of a child, while a woman views success and power as attractive in men. A heterosexual couple goes through all of the stages of a first date. This shows all of the dominance in men and submission in women. They successfully fulfill their gender roles with the company of one another.

Men portray this dominant role and women take on the submissive role on dates because they are “doing gender”. Men taking on the dominant gender role indirectly, and sometimes even directly, suppresses women’s power and authority. Women are given no control and no decision besides if they want to accept or decline the date invitation. Every other decision and action is given to the man. This oppression towards women is something that goes unnoticed by most

expected. Society wants women to think that a man treating them this way is “respectful”, but in reality, it is degrading. It is viewed as “romantic” or “chivalrous” for a man to act this way towards a woman, but in actuality, that could not be further from the truth. It is how men were taught by society to treat a woman in order to declare their superiority.

Think back to a heterosexual couple going through all the stages of a first date. Watching across the street as a man argues to himself if he should go ask this woman out on a date or not. He eventually walks up to her and begins a basic conversation. He asks her how her day was, if she's single and he compliments her. He asks her out on a date, and she says yes; the only decision made by her. He decides on the time and the place of the date and picks her up from her house. He walks up to her front porch to greet her and then opens the car door for her to get in. Once they arrive at the restaurant he opens the car door again, as well as the restaurant door, and begins to talk to the hostess. They are led to the table by the hostess, and then the man pulls out the chair for her to sit down. This is where the date officially begins.

He carries the conversation most of the night by talking about how athletic he is, how much money he makes, how much power he has, and how successful he is. She sits there silently, continuing to acknowledge every word he says to show her listening abilities. Every once in a while she would mention a few things about her hair or her makeup, or even how she helps to take care of her younger siblings. When they are done at the restaurant, he opens the passenger car door for her and drives them back to her house. Once again he opens the car door and proceeds to walk her up to her front porch where he gives her a goodnight kiss. This is where the date officially comes to an end.

assigned at birth, while gender is a socially learned set of behaviors associated with a society. This includes social expectations and the idea of masculine versus feminine. The “existential function of the social” argues that a belief system is needed to make sense of symbolic material. Gender is a role that is developed by the collective consciousness. The characteristics of your body that determine your sex, signal to you and others the role that you should be playing in society. Sex is simply a characteristic of the body, but gender is the set of roles we learn to play when we understand that gendered roles exist, and are hard to escape.

According to the authors, gender is done by “laying claim” to a sex category. This can include short versus long hair, clothes, makeup, attitude, and actions. “Doing Gender” is the performance of a gender role. It reinforces an idea of gender through actions in a particular social setting. “Doing gender” comprises the set of tools that anchor the experience of self to the body. By “doing gender”, fitting into societal expectations becomes a lot easier. It is typically unavoidable and is something that everyone experiences. It is the differences between girls and boys and women and men that are not biological or essential. These differences create the infinite amount of roles that the genders are fit to play into. These roles are necessary for the world to not feel like it is crumbling, and for people to feel like they belong.

As shown in the heterosexual date, men play into their dominant gender roles when around people of the opposite sex, such as women. By taking charge of asking on dates, opening doors, and carrying the conversation the man is doing gender. He is playing into his dominant masculinity. The typical male and female gender roles can only occur in heterosexual couples, not homosexuals. If two people of the same sex are going out one of them will likely obtain the dominant role and one will obtain the submissive role, however, this means that one of them will

his actions on this date. The woman sits there quietly, listening to him talk and letting the man take control. Every once in a while she talks, but only to show what a suitable mother she would be to their children if they ended up together. The man took command over all aspects of the date, besides the decision of if she would like to go or not. By the man “doing gender” throughout the date, he indirectly suppresses the woman’s strength and authority. These dominant actions subconsciously oppress the woman without her even realizing that it is occurring.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” by Charlotte Perkins Gilman is a prime example of a woman being oppressed without knowing oppression is occurring. Gilman is treated very negatively by her husband. He controls her, makes her decisions, and acts as a father figure towards her. He fulfills the dominant gender role directed towards men and pushes her into a compliant gender role. Although the husband may think that he is doing what was best for her, he wasn’t. Gilman was unknowingly being oppressed by her husband. She was observant of what was going on but was not aware that it was not considered to be normal. These dominant actions against them were considered “normal”, as it was the only thing women knew. Women did not have any way to conceptualize their oppression, because there was no language for it.

The heterosexual date is another example of this. The woman on the date is being unknowingly suppressed. When the man does gender by approaching her, asking her on the first date, holding doors open, paying automatically, and taking charge of the conversation, the woman is being oppressed. It pushes the woman into the passive and nurturing gender roles that they are told they need to fulfill. The woman’s gender roles are being polite and motherly, and when the man takes dominance he forces her into this. This is viewed as normal, so the woman

because it is what she was told since a young age was expected, and even romantic. By men and women consistently doing gender, women are pushed into the submissive role, giving men control.

Gender roles are needed in society for it not to fall apart. The ideas of masculine versus feminine create roles that are meant to be played by the fitting character. These roles given by society do not stay the same. “Doing gender” has changed over time, it does not have to stay consistent. The roles expected of each gender depend on the society in which it is taking place. In modern times gender roles have begun to overlap with each other. Men are allowed to be feminine and women are allowed to be masculine. Whereas it used to be that the men doing gender could only be masculine, dominant actions and women doing gender would have to be feminine and submissive. Women used to be unaware that they were being forced into submission by men’s dominant actions, but that is changing. Nowadays with feminist movements becoming more prevalent, women are becoming more aware of their oppression. The issue of having no language to conceptualize their oppression is no longer a problem in the modern world. Women are banding together and working to fight against this oppression. Women now make the first move, ask men on dates, pay or split the bill, etc. They are no longer being forced into submission, but instead, they are taking charge. By doing gender, society is kept in control by separating genders and the characters that they are supposed to be playing. When men act into their dominant role, it indirectly suppresses women’s power and independence. This oppression towards women goes unnoticed because it is viewed as normal in society. This is changing every day and women are becoming more and more aware of this oppression. Soon, women will successfully take a stand against this oppression, and it will no longer exist.