

Reading Response

Gender as an Institution

Kimmel begins with stating his argument plain and simple. He believes that power is held by groups and not individuals. This was a great lead into his main point of gender being creating their own gender standards and concepts. In his example that followed, of the political powers and institutions to which they belong, he stated that some jobs just require a certain kind of behavior and not a certain gender. Politics is said, by Americans, to be more of a masculine job, and we proceed with our system accordingly. Most think that a female politicians femininity will be shown and get in the way of our country's well-being and that is why politics is such a male dominant profession. What we don't realize is that men can be feminine as well, which creates an imbalance in the political sexes. Kimmel then wraps his example up by stating: "Men *and* Women have to express certain traits to occupy a political office, and his or her failure to do so will make the officeholder seem ineffective and incompetent." This "Institution" concept, along with others, is very important in Kimmel's writing; it is one of the three themes of gender.

Identity, Interaction, and Institution are the three themes that gender revolves around. These are all very complex ideas to grasp, but the way that I understood it was that our experiences and personality traits help us define our identity (to ourselves, no one else really knows how you truly feel). Interaction deals with the way(s) we go about accomplishing things as well as our relationships with other human-beings as human-beings (not gender specific). As for Institution, it is shaped by the gender differences and inequalities that always exist in the workplace along with the way the world wants us to act as determined by profession. Kimmel uses a very fitting example for this, a topic that we have periodically talked about in class, Public and Private restrooms. We have talked about this enough that I could go into great detail, but Kimmel's main points are: us males and females as being both separate (based purely on physical features) but equal in public and yet at home it is perfectly normal. And Kimmel ends the example with a very interesting phrase, "the physical separation of men and women creates the justification for separating them - not the other way around," which basically means that we have accepted this separation as a society and it is the social norm as of now.

Later on in the article, Kimmel talks of decision making of what sex the observer determines by primary and secondary characteristics. Primary sex characteristics being the ones present at birth, and secondary sex characteristics being the changes we see at puberty. When we look at someone our minds automatically want to place them in one of the two groups we have set up as a society, male or female. There is really nothing we can do about this subconscious analysis, it is there and it will most likely always be. But then the question arises, "what if they are hiding their *TRUE* selves?" Not everyone is how and what they appear to be, because some men are very feminine and some women are very masculine, and also there is always the possibility of them having the opposite sex organ. We shall never actually know unless we ask them to show us, and that puts us all into awkward social situations. In another part Kimmel

stresses the importance of gender certainty. He points out that not knowing for sure make us feel unstable and it makes us feel as though we lose (somewhat) our grasp to this world. "Gender Vertigo" the basic two conceptions, male or female, which we all believe are certainties in this world, are actually more uncertain than what we thought.

A Sociology of Rape is the next main section header and it talks about how men are more prone to be men that want to see their masculinity in work and establish their dominance over the less powerful. And Kimmel points out that where women are valued and honored rape rates are exceptionally low. I don't necessarily think that that is the case. One reason being that millions of males also get raped each year as well; Kimmel says nothing about this fact. But instead of reporting a rape the men do nothing because they see it as "unman-like" and are afraid to jeopardize their own status as a man. And two, at least half of the top 10 countries where women feel the most respect are countries where they treat their women like property such as middle-eastern countries and china. Since they are the man's property they feel like it is their job to cater to his every want and need. Not all rapes are between people that people that don't know each other too well, millions of rapes indeed are between married couples. And if the man wants it in these countries... the woman will give it to him regardless.

This was a rather extensive reading with a lot of topics and I haven't even hit most of them. But I believe I covered most of the tough, large points that Kimmel described. I would like to talk to you about some more sometime if you want to as well.