Cross cultural gender roles

Conformity

In societies where women contribute to food accumulation eg. Nomadic societies, women are highly valued and according to Schlegel (1986) these women are allowed more freedom and regarded less as objects for sexual and reproductive needs. This means that women occupy a higher position within the social group and therefore have more power and less need to conform to the demands of the powerful member of society.

Historical changes

Williams & Best (1990) said wealth is associated with greater role equality. The greater the socio-economic growth of a society, the less difference there is between male and female roles. Eagly & Wood agree, they analysed cross cultural data and reported that in societies where women had a higher status, male-female divisions of labour was less pronounced.

Treatment of intersex's

Some individuals are born with ambiguous genitalia or external genitals which don't match their genetic sex, this can cause issues in certain cultures such as the UK which have rigid gender demarcation. This isn’t the case in all cultures, in some cultures a 3rd sex is recognised. In India there are over 5 million Hirjas, these are individuals who are neither male or female. In 2005 the Indian passport was updated to allow the classification of a eunuch. Native Americans use the term two spirit to refer to those who had a male and female spirit. These individuals were highly respected because they were thought to have special powers. A child's gender was decided by studying whether they preferred masculine or feminine activities, what clothes they chose to display gender choice at puberty, Laing (1998).

Cross cultural research (IDA)

There are various issues, debates and approaches to this, one issue is that the evidence has mostly been collected by western researchers living in most western countries, sometimes they make use of indigenous researchers to actually collect the data. This avoids a number of differences associated with cross cultural research, eg misinterpretation of what people are saying, however indigenous researchers are still likely to be using tests and other measures developed by western society. These measures are described as imposed ettics.

This means that tests produce results which may be meaningless in a culture other than where they were developed. Berry et al 22 discussed cross cultural research and argued that most cross cultural studies are still driven by the interests of western psychologists using concepts rooted in western thinking about human behaviour. Berry suggested using more genuine indigenous research.

Another issue is globalisation which may contribute to less cultural differences between perceived masculine and feminine roles being reduced through legislation and equal opportunity, this suggests that social influences may be stronger than biological ones.

Another methodological issue raised is it's difficult to gather identical samples to cross-compare against. This means that samples between cultures may be biased, based on sub-cultural values with confounding variables such as socio-economic background or education levels/ This means that the studies lack internal validity which would seriously affect the results.