

Heteronormativity

Heteronormativity

1. This concept can be traced back to **feminist theories** of the relationship between gender, sexuality and **heterosexuality** in the 70s and 80s
2. **Heterosexuality** is seen as an **institution**
3. Gender is not just an identification with one sex, but **entails sexual desire** be directed towards the **opposite sex**
4. Obligatory heterosexuality **oppresses many 'others'** – not just lesbians and **gay men etc.**
5. Rubin argues that there is a **hierarchical system** of **sexual values** in western society stemming from **religion, medicine, psychiatry** and **popular culture**
6. **Reproductive heterosexuals are at the top** – at the very bottom are transsexuals, transvestites, prostitutes, sex workers etc.

Rewards

1. Rubin argues that society and culture **reward** those **higher** up in the **hierarchy**
2. Those who practice sexual behaviours lower in the hierarchy are subjected to **presumptions of mental illness, disreputability, criminality, restricted social and physical mobility, loss of institutional support, economic sanctions.**
3. As society and culture change over time, arguments are conducted over where to draw the line and to determine what other activities are **permitted** to cross over into acceptability.
4. The sexual hierarchy was no longer understood to represent **heterosexuality** and its **unequal** other – **homosexuality** – based on socially and culturally valued forms of masculinity, femininity and gender roles
5. But is **more complex** and far reaching.

Economics of prescriptive heterosexuality

1. **Heterosexuality**, like motherhood, is a **political institution.**
2. Feminism assumes that most women are **innately heterosexual** – which has had to be imposed, managed, organised, **propagandized** and maintained by force
3. Including physical violence and false consciousness
4. The imposition of **heterosexuality** needs to be challenged

Gender

1. Restricting the meaning of gender to **received notions of masculinity** and **femininity** within the framework of a **heterosexual matrix (Butler)**

2. The normative sexuality fortifies **normative gender**
3. Foregrounding the **casual and structural links** between **sexuality** and **gender**
4. **One is a woman to** the extent that one **functions as one within** the dominant **heterosexual** frame
5. To call the frame into question is to lose something of one's sense of place in gender
6. Butler seeks to answer the question of which expressions of gender and sexuality are acceptable and which are not
7. And how do **presumptions** about **normative gender** and **sexuality determine in advance** what will qualify as the human and liveable
8. This work incorporated poststructuralist approaches to the **destabilization of subject** and **identity categories**
9. Such as **gender, heterosexuality, lesbian**, and the **discursive structures** within which they are formed
10. To expose the limitations and instability of social and cultural norms regulating gender and sexuality

Analytical Category

1. Heteronormativity as an analytical category in gender and sexuality studies has been important
2. To understand the **workings of cultures** and societies beyond the individual attitudes and behaviours
3. It is useful in **deconstructing the heterosexual/homosexual binary**
4. Examining **heterosexuality as an institution** and epistemology that constructs and **regulates homosexuality and heterosexuality** on the basis of normative notions of sexuality and gender
5. Noting that **heterosexuality** and **heteronormativity** are not the same
6. The **operation of a norm as an invisible** and **silent operation** is most effective when it is never exposed

Sexuality politics

1. Forms of **sexuality politics** that do not **contest the dominant heteronormative** assumptions and institutions, But **uphold and sustain** them have been described as the new **homonormativity**
2. Studies of heteronormativity have extended analysis to **different contexts outside the west**

3. To connect sexuality and gender norms with **historical processes of colonization** and **decolonization, race, ethnicity, class and modernity**
4. E.g, Alexander's study of Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas – looks at how **governments** in these states established **powerful signifiers** about **appropriate** and **decent sexuality**
5. In contrast to the kind of sexuality that were seen to **imperil the new, decolonised nation state**.
6. **Powerful feelings** about **sexuality, femininity and masculinity** were mobilised by the **state** to **embody** and **represent** the **nation**

International development

1. In the field of **international development**, the concept of **heteronormativity** has been used to analyse the **heterosexist bias** and **gender normativity** in **post/neo colonial** state **planning traditions** and technologies
2. Influenced by international development theories, institutions and policies funding criteria
3. These narratives share either a **conscious or unintended complicity** with **reproductive heterosexuality**
4. And its central place in modernist international development **conceptions of family life and the nation state**
5. **Norms** vary **across time, place and culture** and are **reproduced, resisted and transformed** by **institutions, groups and individuals** from the most progressive to the most conservative
6. They therefore serve to remind us of the importance of **examining the nature of heteronormativity** as the starting point of research
7. To understanding the complexities of its **working so power** – whether **hidden unintended, contradictory or explicit** in any given context.