

Chase Weiland

Miss Kusnir

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Gender Roles

Gender roles are unfair to impose on men, women, and children. Gender roles are roles placed on both men and women to categorize and stereotype the ways they should act. For example, men are told they must be strong, and crying is a form of weakness. Women are told they should be the weaker sex. Gender roles have been around for most of human existence; however, times have changed. Now, gender is looked at as a “spectrum of beliefs and emotions rather than the traditional sense of dichotomy of male and female” (Kerr and Multon 183). We no longer need gender roles because they can negatively affect the youth, they can limit both men and women in society, and they no longer serve a purpose.

Children should not be expected to comply to gender roles and stereotypes because it is very dangerous. “Raising children in societies that adhere to rigid gender roles, with fixed ideas about what should be considered “masculine” and “feminine”, can actually be detrimental to their physical and mental health...” (Culp-Ressler). Children who are pressured to stay inside their preferred gender stereotype are more likely to develop mental disorders. According to Jake Pyne, children who are pressured to follow gender stereotypes are “prone to anxiety, sadness, social withdrawal, self deprecation, and other signs of internalized distress” (4). Unknown to most, gender stereotyping happens on a daily basis. Young children are taught that specific colors and toys adhere to specific genders; pink is for girls, and blue is for boys. If one child

steers away from that stereotype they are reprimanded. For instance, a young boy wanted to buy a pink shirt because pink is his favorite color, but his mother told him no, that pink is for girls. The mother might have believed that what she was doing was right for her son; however, she was actually harming her son's mental health.

Young girls were taught that sports are for boys, and they will never be as good as the boys. When the girls got older, they didn't want to try as hard in sports because they believed that it was not feminine to play sports. They also believed they wouldn't appeal to their boy peers (Culp-Ressler). Instead of teaching girls to excel in activities they enjoy, society is telling them they aren't cut out for sports. Young women and young men across America are subjected to gender norms and stereotypes every day. Media plays a big role in gender stereotyping as it portrays objects, such as toys and clothing, for either a boy or a girl. Children often believe, at a very young age, their clothing and toys determine whether they are a boy or girl (Kerr and Multon 183). Gender stereotyping is very harmful in a child's developmental growth.

Many children believe that how they act, aside from toys and clothing, can determine their gender. If a child acts differently than what their peers view as normal behavior, they can face a bigger risk of danger. "Children who cross the boundaries of what is considered gender appropriate may be at heightened risk for rejection, harassment, discrimination, and abuse" (Gardner 35). Afraid of harassment, many children try to comply with these gender stereotypes. "This constant effort to manage one's everyday life in line with gender norms produces significant anxiety, insecurity, stress and low self-esteem for both boys and girls..." (Culp-Ressler). Gender roles and gender stereotypes should not be imposed on children because of such risks.

Gender norms and gender stereotyping affect children in a multitude of ways. By upholding gender norms, children are holding back on their full potential. Children regulate their behavior in extremely harmful ways just to adhere to gender norms (Culp-Ressler). Gender stereotyping creates many problems for children growing up in today's society. Parents forcing their children into gender roles can harm them greatly. "Adult's manipulation of normalcy may have devastating effects on children. By defining what is and what is not appropriate for little boys and girls to do creates boundaries and leaves room for discrimination" (Gardner 35). Society has created a horrible realm of gender norms that children feel obligated to follow. Children's ability to be themselves is damaged because of such rules and adhering to them can only harm them in the end.

Men and women are subjected a certain way because of gender stereotypes, and unfortunately, that can limit them in society. Whether it be in the workplace or at home, many adults must act according to their gender stereotype. Men are taught from birth that they must show their manliness by use of strength and leadership. However that can be very harmful and limit their range of emotions. "Boys are less able than girls to deal with emotional upheavals that accompany adolescence; recent statistics show that teenage boys commit suicide at five times the rate teenage girls do. Ultimately, a lack of emotional development as a boy makes it difficult for the adult male to develop healthy relationships" ("Gender roles"). As gender roles change, men are having a harder time finding themselves. "The old model of the "macho man" is less acceptable in today's world than it was even three decades ago, and men are struggling to reinvent themselves. Some men are so dependent on the old roles for their identity that they find themselves at a loss when confronted with new expectations" ("Gender roles").

Women are given the role of a housewife and mother. Now it is true that women can be more nurturing; however, this does limit them from escaping the gender roles. Women are still perceived as having the responsibility to be the prime caretakers of the home and family (“Gender roles”). Women often struggle to gain respect in the workplace because they are looked at as less of a leader than a man. Gender roles are the cause of this appalling idea. “In the workplace, men and women are often expected to perform different tasks and occupy different roles based on their sex” (Blackstone 337). Gender stereotyping happens often in a workplace, whether it is towards a woman or a man. Women are paid less than men and are often given paid maternity leave, whereas men are not given paid paternity leave.

Men and women are often placed into specific gender roles. They can limit men not only physically, but emotionally as well. Gender roles, as detrimental and limiting as they can be, are changing. “Although men are generally open to the successes enjoyed by the women they share their livestock with, some still find it hard to celebrate a woman’s triumphs because they feel it diminishes their own” (“Gender roles”). Even though our generation and society are making great changes in gender stereotyping, men and women still face limitation. In one study with Dr. Glasser, “Women did not control the moral codes and psychological mindsets in their environment or how other people would treat them.... Their choices were to do what was expected by society or to change what they were doing in order to change their circumstances. Due to external controls, women did not have options to impact the larger society in order to meet their own need for power” (Gardner 33).

Gender roles are an outdated exaggeration of how men and women should act, so why do they exist? Gender norms have been around for a huge portion of human existence. “Before the

industrial era, it was almost unthinkable in American society, for women to work outside of the home” (Gardner 33). Gender stereotyping has also played a role in many other cultures and religions. Women were expected to be the housewives and care for the home and family, whereas the men were expected to provide for the family. If women went outside their gender norms they were ostracized and condemned (Gardner 33). Gender roles might have been somewhat important in the past, but they are no longer necessary today in the 21st century.

It is known that men and women have many different physical attributes. In fact, many studies conclude there are differences in women’s brains than in men’s. Studies show that women have a stronger left brain which gives them a better ability for speech and articulation. Men show strength in the right side of the brain which gives them an advantage at aiming or moving objects (“Gender roles”). Although men and women share differences, physical differences are the only ones that are scientifically proven. It is not proven that men can be better leaders, and it is not proven that women are better housekeepers. Gender roles arise from these small differences. They are “oversimplified understandings of males and females and the differences between them” (Blackstone 337).

According to Sarah Gardner, “Gender norms are something society created” (33). Men and women live with gender stereotypes on a daily basis. Magazines, tv commercials, and books influence what is considered normal: staying inside these gender norms. As being something society created, gender norms are very dangerous for everyone. Many Americans are beginning to question why we follow such outrageous rules. Many are starting to see that gender roles are not necessary and we no longer need them. They understand that “...gender roles are created by

the interactions between individuals, communities, and their environments” rather than a biological explanation (Blackstone 335).

In today’s society, there is no need for gender stereotyping, and a few kids are starting to realize that. According to Jake Pyne, there has been an abundance of children who psychologists claim as “Gender Independent”. These kids challenge everyday gender norms, and they simply do not care about what others say. Other kids categorized in this group rejected “boy” and “girl” all together (Pyne 1). Not only kids see an unimportance, adults do as well. According to Jake Pyne, educators have disclosed that they are “badly in need of new tools for teaching about health and the body behind narrow and normative understandings of sex and gender possibilities” (5). The need to reinvent these society created norms has dramatically increased.

Gender roles no longer serve any purpose in today’s society. Gender roles and stereotypes are outdated. Many adults are starting to steer away from traditional gender norms. In fact, many adults are raising children with non traditional ideas of gender. These kids are “more likely to believe that an individual’s behavior is not or should not be determined solely by her sex” (Blackstone 338). Adults are even beginning to work together to break the stereotypes. Marital partners are learning to negotiate successfully to create a healthier marriage, and managers are taking employees aside to let them know when they're being inappropriate. It will take some time to implement many changes, but it should result in better workplaces, relationships, schools, and lives (“Gender roles”).

Why would getting rid of gender roles be a positive thing? Gender roles, as stated previously, are very harmful and very outdated. Many studies on Gender Independence have shown that teaching children about non traditional gendering can be a positive thing. “...the

language of Gender Independence provides a strategy for reframing gender variance as part of the diversity of human life; as in fact, a potentially positive trait” (Pyne 5). Getting rid of these norms will create a more positive life style. Children wouldn't have to fear being picked on for wearing the opposite gender's colors. Women wouldn't have to fear being leaders. They wouldn't have the dilemma of the right to choose their career paths, but still fear they are still ruled by the same gender expectations their grandmothers had (“Gender roles”). Men won't be confined to their emotionless stereotypes. Gender roles are no longer needed and we are better off without them.

Gender roles are an unnecessary guideline for men and women; however, many countries disagree. Depending on certain religions, men are the superior being. The women who follow these religions are subjected to be submissive and follow certain guidelines. These guidelines determine how a women should act, dress, and speak. Many men and women in America are not as strict with gender roles, but they still believe they should exist. They believe that women cannot be leaders and men should not stay home. Gender roles are viewed as a religious rule that many people follow; moreover, many countries disregard the value of women or men as a whole.

Women, men, and children should not be subjected to adhere to gender norms and stereotypes. Gender roles can be very harmful for children and can be detrimental for their physical and mental well being. Gender roles limit both men and women in society and limit their abilities to grow out of them. These roles have been around since the dawn of time, and they no longer serve any purpose in today's society. Why should children, men, and women be forced to follow rules, that society has created, that only hurt, limit, and harm them in the end?

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