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Argumentative Essay: Society's Limiting Gender Narratives

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Society's Limiting Gender Narratives

Societies portray stereotypes in various ways. The ways individuals perceive each other have the influence of oversimplified assumptions pertaining to people. These assumptions stem from particular traits, some of which include sex, age, and race. They stem from socially constructed practices, norms, and beliefs. Religion and culture have a hand in these beliefs, norms, and practices, which portray underlying power relations. Some stereotypical beliefs tend to be rigid. However, time causes them to change; challenges and opportunities come about due to this change.

It is not always that stereotypes are inherently negative. However, the fact that they are assumptions that have no regard for personal and inherent opportunities, environment, and abilities tends to make them prejudicial. Negative stereotypes bar individuals from using their abilities to fulfill their potential. They limit the opportunities and choices that people have. The products of these negative stereotypes are direct and indirect, overt and covert, and recurrent discrimination in gender. These products have adverse effects on the *de facto* and *de jure* substantive equality, which ought to be a guarantee to all women. They transform into practical laws, practices, and policies that harm women. Consequently, there is a profound effect on women's physical and mental integrity. The laws, policies, and practices, deprive them of equality in knowledge, and in exercising and enjoying their fundamental rights and freedom (Miss Representation, n.d.).

The workplace is one place that has gender limiting narratives at play. There is a gap in wages among individuals of different genders. Females always receive a lower pay as compared

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to males. It does not make sense that two workers do not receive equal payment for the same number of duties, which carry equal weight. This is a result of a societal narrative, which dictates that men are superior over women. It is unjust to female workers, because they may be the only breadwinners in their families. It limits the amount of resources available to them to perform other projects and take care of their families at the same time. This hinders development in society (Suddath, 2013).

There is also occupational segregation. Society deems some professions inappropriate for certain genders. Nursing is one such profession; it is believed to be a female job just like construction is a male job. Nursing requires caring for patients and cleaning them up among other duties. These duties are similar to the household duties, which women perform at home. They require care and gentility; these are attributes that women carry. The profession, therefore, seems to fit women rather than men. Consequently, most male individuals do not get into the nursing profession for the fear of scrutiny from society (Rewrite the Story, n.d.).

What is more, most young boys end up with personality disorders, because society dictates to them what is masculine. In the event that they do not fit in that bracket, they sink into depression and resort to drugs use and other behavior disorders. *The Representation Project: The Mask You Live In* portrays this issue clearly. Times are now changing, and society has become more recipient to men performing feminine duties and vice versa. People are more confident to follow their dreams and passions. Freedom of expression and identity improves personal confidence levels, which promotes a happier society (The Mask You Live In, n.d.)

Society stipulates that men ought to be the providers in their families. Successful men gain respect from their families and society in general. Every man wants to have that success to attain everyone's respect; this puts immense pressure on them. In the past, providing for the

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family meant having a home, food, and some clothing. In the present consumer society, providing for a family means to be able to purchase all the luxuries that the technological advancement has brought about. Television, smartphones, computers, tablets, and cars are important symbols of success today. Teenagers, in particular, always want to have the latest models of these gadgets to show off to their peers. This requires money; parents have to work to provide for that. Expensive gadgets attract more attention, respect, and adoration. Consequently, parents work long hours; they forego the simple joys of life, such as parenting and intimate respectful relationships. The cost is that some families end up breaking, or some children do not have good upbringing (Clinton & Steyer, 2012).

Women also complain of rare promotions to leadership positions and glass ceilings in various professions. The base of this narrative in work places is that men should be the decision makers in families, and there are duties and levels of recognition beyond which women cannot go. For instance, a man in a leadership position is a boss, whereas a woman in a leadership position is bossy (Suddath, 2013). According to society, men are the heads while women are the necks. A woman taking up a man's position attracts labels. This practice denies the economy the chance to improve, because it could be that a female is more qualified for the position than man is. As a result, a less qualified individual ends up lowering the performance and productivity level for a company, which translates to the entire economy. The film *Miss Representation* shows that the media portray women in leadership positions in respectable ways. The perception of women from the past should not be the same in the current society (Miss Representation, n.d.).

Some cultures, particularly in African countries, endorse forced marriages and female genital mutilation practices (FGM). Old men marry young girls, and parents allow it, because they get rich from the bride price of their daughters. This culture disrupts the education of young

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girls and shatters their dreams for the future. If there were role models from these communities to give girls a direction in their lives, more girls would not want to get into early marriages, to take care of homesteads and bear children. Given a chance, girls could possibly have grown to be influential members in society to bring positive changes and development. The film *Miss Representation* campaigns for the media to give a positive portrayal of women in power, so that more girls would be able to seek to become like them (Miss Representation, n.d.).

It is clear that gender discriminations and stereotypes that are the results of certain societal narratives are costly to society in terms of impeding democracy and development, denying human rights, and endangering peace and security. Most individuals acknowledge that empowering women and gender equality in various aspects is for the good of the community. Some narratives, therefore, should not be a tool for individuals to discriminate against each other. This especially applies to the gender limiting narratives in society.

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