

Fear of the Untypical

Emma G. Dukes

University of West Florida

81514 SOW3103

Dr. Ashley M. Toland

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Fear is a human emotion that almost everyone is prone to feel at least once in life. Most of us were taught from a very early age that the sex that we are assigned at birth is the same as our gender and that each gender has roles to fill. A boy must like blue, be masculine and play with trucks. Girls must love blue, be girly and play with dolls. Anything that strays from this norm put onto society is untypical and scares the people who have set this norm onto society.

I found a great definition of gender norms from Gender Roles and Norms: What Are They and How Do They Affect Children by United Way NCA “Gender norms are societal expectations and rules regarding how men and women should behave, express themselves and interact with others according to their gender.” Both genders have associated norms in which they are expected to act. Four stereotypes that I read about from the Planned Parenthood website detail traits that are that women are emotional and that men are aggressive. Certain behaviors are also allotted to a gender, women cooking, cleaning, and taking care of the children, men do the repairs on the house and work on the car. We can see this portrayed across television shows, video games and even targeted advertisements on cable. There are also jobs that are often associated with gender stereotypes such as women being nurses and teachers where the men are doctors and engineers. Appearance is also a heavy burden of stereotypes for both sides. Men must be masculine, tall and strong. Women must be thin and not too tall or short, she has to keep up with herself and wear makeup to look good but not too much as it will look trashy. All of these stereotypes that are associated with gender norms are harmful. “Restrictive gender norms often discourage children from pursuing interests that are “inappropriate” for their gender, limiting their potential and opportunities for exploration.” (United Way NCA, 2023). But over time we are seeing this shift from the norms and many people are being verbally attacked or

worse physically attacked for going against these norms. A woman can achieve any job that she wants no matter if it is deemed manly and a man can achieve any job that he wants no matter if it is deemed feminine.

With time comes change. We, as a society, are constantly evolving as new developments are made within our country and around the world. Some refuse and oppress those that are making the changes and standing up for them. Change causes fear, The University of the People, a nonprofit college in the United States gives us a reason as to why we might have this fear “We fear change because it means that outcomes are unknown. Our brains are designed to find peace in knowing. When we don’t know what will happen, we make up scenarios and, in turn, create worry.” There are some people who accept change easily, those that take a longer time to accept change, and those that refuse to accept change at all. Unfortunately, change is inevitable, there is no stopping time no matter how hard we wish it to. Accepting change and conforming to the new times instead of living in the past will help us come together as a nation. We can cherish the past and learn from it , certainly, but we have to move past it so that we can all be brought together.

People are going to rebel against norms and stereotypes put onto them by society, it is a part of life where we question everything. Respect has to be given to everyone who decides to go against these norms as long as they are not hurting themselves or others. Just because someone might be different from how you may perceive them does not make their life any less worthy than yours or anyone else's. Stereotypes are harmful, there should not be a typical person because everyone is different and that is how we were made. You should be allowed to go against the norm and question things because that is how you learn to be who you are. That is how you nourish a healthy environment for everyone involved.

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