Gender studies: gender stereotypes qualitative research essay

Gender roles are likely to make people develop various stereotypes. For example, there are roles that are uniquely and separately designated for males and females. On the same note, masculinity refers to physical characteristics of a man, and therefore, if a female has masculine features, she may be perceived indifferently in society. This explains why the media has a tendency of branding people with masculine features to be gays or homosexuals. In most cases, the print media and radios do not have capacities to stereotype people.

However, televisions and movies have highly been used to categorize people as gay, feminine or muscular in a negative manner.

The media has for a long time been associated with creation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) themes. Meem, Mitchell and Jonathan (2010) observe that the study of LGBT is important because it enlightens people on how society has become dynamic.

The media has also been perceived as the center where negative perceptions about this group of people are created. As a result, there are numerous stereotypes associated with this category of people in the modern society. Out of the many categories of media broadcasts, television and movies are widely known to reinforce negative perceptions on people who belong to LGBT category.

Stereotyping people can be harmful because it can transform slight assumptions on people to perceived realities (Meem, Mitchell & Jonathan, 2010).

Such stereotypes are capable of perpetuating inequality and social prejudice in society. However, it is imperative to note that stereotyping through the media is sometimes inevitable. In the case of television, stereotyping occurs through advertisements, news bulletins and entertainment. For films, stereotyping has been used as a form of marketing. The stereotypical codes give TV and film audiences a common and quick way of understanding a particular person.

In most cases, stereotypical codes focus on ethnicity, social role, sexual orientation, occupation, race and gender. Most often, the groups that are being stereotyped may not defend themselves. They are usually the minority and raising their voices may make little impact. However, there are some measures which have been instituted to help reduce stereotyping.

There are those who have a common tendency of thinking that the way people think and cat can be uniform across the globe (Carroll, 2009). This is not true because people are diverse and their mindsets also vary. This is mostly applicable in homosexuality whereby gays and lesbians are viewed to be outside the mainstream or dominant culture.

The dominant culture in this case refers to marriage and love relationships between people of different gender. With the emergence of gothic culture, it is probable to categorize them as being weird or abnormal. Same sex marriages and behavioral patterns are prevalent in virtually all cultures. As Carroll (2009) documents, " same sex behavior is found in every culture, and its prevalence remains about the same" (p. 290).

Media is a viable source of information in society such that televisions and films are very influential due to both sound and visual effect. These two mediums of communication are crucial in symbolic annihilations of lesbians and gays.

According to Vollmer (2003), films and TVs tend to avoid integrating gays and lesbians in their programs for fear of offending advertisers, target audiences as well as investors. This kind of portrayal is not desirable because it denies them their human rights. The fact that they belong to a new generation culture does not mean that they should not enjoy their rights.

With their visual effects, the two mediums of communication cultivate a perception that homosexuals are bad elements in society. They should not be given a chance to be heard if they have views to rise. Due to fear of loosing audience and revenues, these two mediums of communication edit their programs to extent that audiences place homosexuals under the category of abhorred people.

The issue of sexual orientation has been used as an indicator of villainy and deviance in children's movies (Vollmer, 2003). If children are to be shown movies that portray homosexuals as bad characters in society, then, they would grow up hating them. A negative perception is cultivated in such children.

Such kind of stereotypes can instigate violence in society. For example, a gay male may not be welcomed in a party. It is only a question of ethics. Homosexuals are also put as either victims or villains in movies. They are

depicted as belonging to a weird or foreign culture that cannot be tolerated. It is rare to have a movie that has the main character being gay or lesbian.

If a girl begins to demonstrate some signs of male characteristics, she is referred to as a ' tom-boy'. It is like a taboo to show such kinds of signs in a girl. On the other hand, if a male does not have masculine features, he is seen as an outcast. All of these perceptions are obtained from the media, and especially televisions and movies.

According to Mehta and Hay (2005), media houses have for a long time helped to construct and reinforce stereotypical ideas about masculinity and men. From what is portrayed in the media, it is possible for people to dismiss others on the basis of whether they have masculinity or are feminine (Ferrey, 2008).

Televisions and movies through their visual effects help define ' a real man'. During advertisements, there are some particular aspects of man that are portrayed. A man who fails to have certain forms of male features may not be shown on TV or may not be considered for a film (Cohen & Hall, 2009).

Moreover, the marketing companies have started to object men in the same manner women have been objected them for long. The fitness of a man, his muscles and general outlook count a lot in determining whether he is to feature in a program or not.

A research study titled, Attitudes toward stereotypical versus counter-stereotypical gay men and lesbians indicates that 662 confessed gays,

lesbians and bisexuals had contended with victimization in the society (Cohen & Hall, 2009). 20% of those reported having faced criminals because of their sexual orientation.

In the year 2005, Federal Bureau had reported 1, 171 hate crime offenses of people perceived to be of homosexual orientation. This is the kind of segregation that has existed in the society. The major problem is because media and mostly electronic media show homosexuals as people who have undertaken ' abnormal' directions of life. They are not part of the mainstream culture.

The only solution to this is for governments to put up institutions that can help people understand that everybody ought to enjoy unlimited human rights. Forums can also help eradicated the notions cultivated by media about gay and lesbians and institute in the minds of people a culture of tolerance.

To recap it all, it is imperative to note that gender stereotypes are discouraging the minorities to invest in businesses (Ferrey, 2008). No particular person should be segregated on the basis of masculinity. However, the contemporary society seems not to be careful on categorizing people on gender and most importantly on femininity and masculinity. The best solution out of this tricky situation is to invest in education of young generation on how to accept all categories of people in society.

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