

Free article review on problems with patriarchy and the pronoun solution

[Sociology](#), [Identity](#)



Jennifer Conlin, writer of “ The Freedom to Choose Your Pronouns,” explores gender fluidity in teenagers and college aged students. She asserts that this is just another way teenagers are trying to go against the grain, but she also pairs this with showing that this is not just an American trend. During an interview, she recalls an individual’s example of gender fluidity by saying, “ Maybe one day you wake up and feel more like a boy.” While this does not quite define the complexities of gender expression, it is one example that is easy for the general public to understand. Ritch Savin-Williams also explains that teenagers are trying to say, “ You don’t know me by looking at me, Assume nothing.” In addition, she makes very specific claims with regards to the audience and the speaker. Most specifically is how Conlin brings the gender non-conforming teenagers to the forefront and gives them a wider voice without trivializing them. While Conlin does not place these teenagers and their pronouns into a wider context beyond the fact that Gay-Straight Alliances are increasing at many schools across the country, this is a movement among teenagers (and college students) and, as such, it is the schools in which these points exist so strongly.

Trinh Minh-ha’s article, “ Difference: ‘ A Special Third World Women’s Issue’” explains why alternative gender pronouns are necessary as well as why this is not just a “ rebellious teenage” action. Minh’ha explains that the “ male model” is the base of everything—everything not male is an “ other.” The female identity is flexible and more relational for men. Men constantly need to assert their gender (if a man cries, or cannot get back up because they are injured they are immediately branded a pussy, for instance). And, according to the patriarchy, while men desperately cling to their status as “

men,” women can never escape their female identity.

In Callum Angus’, “ Why Every Man Should Learn To Cook,” however, he gives a more personal approach to dismantling gender roles and stereotypes. When he was forced to present himself as a woman, he rejected all “ female” assigned homemaker roles, and was completely rejected any sort of femininity. Despite the fact he grew up in a home where his father did 90% of the cooking, he still saw cooking as a traditionally female role he wanted nothing to do with. Ironically, after he transitioned his body to a man, he realized the misogyny of rejecting labels (even if he does not actually admit it was misogyny). While Conlin’s article explores how others are using nonbinary and third gender pronouns, and Minh-ha’s article explains the theoretical aspects of why the female identity is a misogynistic, patriarchal concept, Angus puts it in practical term, by sharing his own personal experience. He does not claim that being a proud, hyper femme is a bad thing, but it should be a person’s choice, not because you need to conform to gender roles.

The main purpose of these articles are to be informative to someone who might not be aware of the differences between gender identity and sexual identity. Over and over these three articles attempt to not only tear down gender roles, but seek to break the gender binary. In Conlin’s case, she adds some language that has nothing to do with gender, which goes along the trope that the general public (as represented here by the media) does not understand the difference. She states that “ bi-curious” and “ polyamorous” are two words teenagers are using to express themselves, but these are words that have existed outside of the teenage slang for years. In Angus’s

case however, he did not realize until much later in life, post-teenager years, that he was trans, already refuting Conlin's article. Both Angus and Minh-ha explain why gender stereotypes are harmful, and Conlin shows it.

In many ways, the intended audiences for these articles are adults and not young people. Especially from the way that Conlin speaks, it seems that she is informing an audience of a situation that adults may not be aware. While Angus may have a general article for the public, younger individuals might have a harder time grasping some of the language and concepts, and her piece was very much written for an academic audience. In Conlin's article, she notes that "Teenagers are by nature prone to rebellion against adult conventions." Because teenagers do not need to be aware they are "rebellious," it makes sense for this paper to be addressing older people specifically. Many adults, as Conlin notes from an interview with Loan Tran, are very traditional. And in Angus's piece, he shows the harm that some young people take away from gender roles, as they can be so against tradition it further empowers the patriarchy and hurts women. They simply may not be aware of the movement among some young people to defy gender roles and traditional gender labeling and instead try to make their own way with their preferred gender pronouns. Furthermore, Conlin points out that young people do not need to restrict themselves to male (he, his, him) or female (she, hers, her) pronouns and can instead use gender neutral pronouns (they, theirs, them), or even, "numerous made-up ones now in use, including 'ze,' 'hir' and 'hirs.'" To many people of older generations, creating pronouns is probably something incredibly new, indicating why Conlin takes time to answer and explain.

In addition to older people, individuals within the LGBTQ+ community might not been fully aware there are ways to express your gender identity outside of the male/female binary. Angus, once more, shows that having an article like that when he was younger might have helped him come to terms with either a trans identity, or maybe even something different (especially considering he is a gay transman). Queer people in small towns may not have access to the terminology explained, especially in Conlin's piece. Finding a label, means finding a community, and gets individuals on the road to accepting themselves. Beyond that, these articles might also serve to break down outdated gender roles as explained in both Minh-ha and Angus's piece—no longer are girls forced to feel feminine, and boys, masculine by their genitals. Having the ability to label themselves differently, and have a community is empowering and makes one less lonely. These are some of the core values of feminism—that men and women can be equal, and express themselves without ridicule. Having the language to support this (ze, hir, etc., pronouns) would help break the gender role binary for many. This article should strongly resonate with what many feminists are fighting for, especially third wave feminist. Gender roles are harmful because they box people into specific expectations that may not reflect the real person's wants and desires. Feminism is about advancing women, but in particular it is about destroying harmful gender expectations. In many ways, these teens choosing their pronouns are a realization of this goal.

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