

# The myths about real men and women argumentative essay examples

[Family](#), [Parents](#)



In today's comparatively progressive society, the value of established and traditional gender roles are increasingly being reviewed and investigated. Given the long-running activities, rights and perceptions attributed to women over the past several centuries, it is not hard to believe that these traditional roles for women (wife, homemaker, sex object, recipient of men's advances and charity) are often ardently defended by societal norms and practices. It is clear that women have certain expectations placed upon them that are reinforced by the society around us - women are supposed to go out and find a man to marry, and to maintain often extremely high standards of beauty. It is clear that traditional gender roles are grounded in patriarchal notions of control, have little positive value in increasing the self-worth of women, both biological and culturally, and should be limited in their emphasis on daily life.

According to traditional gender roles, one of the primary goals of women is to get married and have children in order to continue their family. To that end, there are societal notions of 'real' men and 'real' women which unfairly disadvantage women, typically involving taking on nurturing roles in the home, caring for children and maintaining the household - all activities which limit women's ability to do what they want comparatively to men. Furthermore, generational teachings from parent to child reinforce these gender roles and relay rewards and warnings related to deviating from this path of 'real' womanhood; Jamaica Kincaid's story "Girl" reads like a laundry list of instructions for how to be a good woman. The mother in the story is incredibly overbearing in the poem, always harping on her daughter regarding what she should and should not do. Some of them are innocuous -

" this is how to make a bread pudding / this is how to make doukona," and they mostly have to do with behaving in housewifely or practical duties (Kincaid 526). Frequently, the mother tells her to do something " like a lady and not like the slut you are so bent on becoming"; the mother, in imparting this advice, perpetuates ideas of ' real' womanhood that are deliberately restrictive and judgmental (Kincaid 526). These ideas are poisonous due to their unfair negativity and limiting nature, and should be discouraged in modern society.

Opponents of this argument believe that men and women share distinct biological imperatives that should not be challenged. The perspective of the mother in " Girl" plays into these ideas that men and women must be different; " real" women dress modestly, must find ways to attract men, and must become good caretakers and homemakers. These are the things that the mother in " Girl" tells her daughter to do; she must modify her behavior in order to maintain dignity and learn skills that would make her a better homemaker. In essence, people should behave in ways that are thought to be part of what we as human animals should take as normal – namely, women are believed to be naturally weaker than men, and men are meant to take care of and protect women. To that end, traditional gender roles for men and women involve men being tasked with taking care of women both physically and financially. In exchange for that, they get more power over the relationship and over society.

These ideas, however, invariably place women on a lower rung of the societal totem pole than men, who enjoy all the power of choosing their romantic partner. Making women more childlike and docile allows men to

have greater power over them, and so that perspective is encouraged in societal expectations of “real” women. This kind of double standard is a uniquely American institution; de Tocqueville wrote of the United States in the 1800s, “In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes, and to make them keep pace one with the other, but in two pathways which are always different” (de Tocqueville 521). This shows that these traditions have a long history of existence in America, and contemporary media depictions of these traditional roles continue to this day in patriarchal notions of women needing to stay out of the workplace, etc. These lines that he talks about are the definitions of ‘real’ men and ‘real’ women, which are culturally constructed – the idea of the man as the breadwinner and woman as the homemaker is used by society to help reinforce male dominance of society. The woman in “Girl,” for example, is being taught by her mother to restrict and limit her behaviors in order to please men, when men are not asked to do likewise. Even the perceived differences in biology do not apply as much anymore; there are many women who serve jobs in labor occupations like construction, the military, and others, serving equally along with men, thus making this argument invalid.

There is a certain expectation of skinniness that is held by many men toward women when looking for a sexual or romantic partner; however, with men, there is not the same stigma to be physically fit and thin. While there is still the ideal to be thin and physically attractive, failing those same high standards does not hold the same consequences for men as they do women. This can be found in things like the modeling industry, where products are

sold by sexual images of the idealized female body – thin, beautiful, tan women with long legs. Men often enjoy a particular kind of adoration or respect for being obese; it becomes a personality quirk rather than a flaw. Your average American sitcom features the lovably overweight man married to an inexplicably beautiful wife; these programs show the socially acceptable versions of American couples – fat guys can get attractive women, but not vice versa. Women cannot enjoy this same privilege nearly as much, as it is not offered to them; obese women are stereotypically either extremely sexually undesirable or overly boisterous in media depictions, as if to give them quirkier, 'butch' personalities to compensate for their lack of physical attractiveness. The most prominent overweight women in media typically serve comedic roles; society will never see them as romantic leads, but as sassy larger women who compensate for lack of physical beauty by being aggressively male. These depictions seek to marginalize them, as they do not get the opportunity to be romantic leads in media and be shown as sexually desirable.

In conclusion, there is little to no value in traditional gender roles as they existed in the past in today's society, and should be changed. This can be done through conversation, an increased crackdown on sexist behavior and attitudes, and education of people on matters of women's equality and modern societal expectations. It is important to understand that the kind of society we live in today should not place such an emphasis on outmoded ideas of what women 'are for,' as it has long since been proven that they are capable of doing more than that: " I believe that the social changes which bring nearer to the same level the father and son, the master and servant,

and, in general, superiors and inferiors, will raise woman, and make her more and more the equal of man” (de Tocqueville 520). If these ideas were to be challenged, men and women could both be equal, without having to concern themselves with what “ real” men and women do or look like.

## **Works Cited**

De Tocqueville, Alexis. “ How the Americans Understand the Equality of the Sexes.” From True

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Kincaid, Jamaica. “ Girl.” From True Women and Real Men: Myths of Gender.