

Gender fluidity essay examples

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Gender Fluidity is Sound

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Perhaps gender fluidity provides a mirror image of repeated violation on societal definitions on gender traits. As Linda Stein argued in her art exhibitions, the society is in a state of constant change concerning the ways of defining gender (Penn-Goetsch, 2010). For many years, human roles and behaviors have been defined based on gender lines, and this has been a great influence in determining human interactions and perceptions of being male or female. Gender fluidity makes it possible for individuals to convey flexible and wide ranges of behaviors and interests that may change from time to time regardless of their sexes. Undeniably, the society has forced individuals to believe that their identity formation lies along a specific continuum where gender identity is strongly transfixed. As such, individuals tend to identify their behaviors according to their gender orientation. Despite the establishment of norms according to gender lines, a new breed of individuals who are fluid in their gender identification is emerging in society. These breeds of individuals are firmly grounded to any gender continuum because their experience both male and female interests and desires from time to time. If this notion exists within our society, then we must be ready to accept that gender fluidity is sound and natural.

The concept of gender fluidity is a concept that sits at the core of identity. The ability to understand oneself and others is determined by the acceptance that identity is a dynamic concept that exists within a continuum. Gender fluidity attempts to breakdown the rigidity that surrounds

gender determination to create an open mind frame in which an individual is free to decide which gender they belong to at any given time regardless of their biological sex. It eliminates the rules and boundaries within which individuals are forced to choose their identity. Gender fluidity also removes the expectations placed on one based on accepted gender roles and allows the individual to set their own goals.

Role reinvention

The case of role reinvention provides a perfect example that gender fluidity is a welcomed idea within the society. Many may confuse ‘role reinvention’ with ‘role reversal’ or rather men “feminization” but the availability of more options for men and women is a good paradigm shift in the society because it defines a new social order (Schneider, 2004). For instance, men and women have equal options in matters regarding career choices, shared responsibilities in family upbringing, and freedom of expressions. This idea of reinventing roles shows that gender fluidity breeds a class of individuals with broad-minded vision of success. Men are enrolling to lessons that will enable them to gain knowledge on how they will become better fathers and homemakers, an option that was regarded suitable for women.

Transgendered individuals and transsexuals

There is no doubt that transgendered individuals exemplify a complicity of sexuality and fluidity of gender. Many of these individuals assume different gender identities than those that correspond to their true physiological sex orientations (Transgender and Transsexuals (n. d)). For instance, there are women who live as men, and men who live as women, and as well

individuals who shift between male and female behaviors. Despite the great social stigma faced transgendered individuals, they are often misunderstood. This is largely attributed to negative perceptions concerning masculinity or femininity. Many a times, these individuals retain much of their physical characteristics and mannerisms. Closely related to transgendered individuals are transsexuals, who have altered their bodies through surgical procedures to match their assumed gender identities. Transgendered and transsexuals have defined gender to comprise more than just the mere sum of their genetics and genitals (Transgender and Transsexuals (n. d)). By so doing, they have challenged the social stereotypes in society thereby questioning the prevailing assumptions on gender (Schneider, 2004). This shows that gender fluidity is sound.

Linda Stein Sculptures

Throughout her life, Stein has used her lectures and arts to define her femininity. This can be attributed to the fact that she had to go through a lot before accepting her authenticity and sexuality. In her recent sculptures; the fluidity of gender, Stein has used a variety of armored statues that can neither be categorized as being feminine or masculine (Penn-Goetsch, 2010). Most of these sculptures are harmless, headless, and others have truncated legs thereby making it difficult to categorize them into specific categories. The aim of using such categories is to highlight the different ways of defining gender in addition to outlining the strengths of both sex orientations. In support of gender fluidity, Linda Stein argued that there is no need to nail down a man on grounds of masculinity and as well, there is no need to nail down a woman on grounds of femininity (Penn-Goetsch, 2010). Despite the

inherent gender ambiguities in most of her sculptures, the sculptures challenge most prevailing assumptions or notions regarding the extent of attaching masculinity or femininity to the human body. Based on the works of Linda Stein, it would be nice for the society to accept the existence of gender continuum and gender fluidity. Enlightened individuals would welcome wide ranges of emotions or perceptions that suit their behaviors or ways of living. This entails allowing oneself to be fluid with their gender orientations to extents that suits them.

Gender roles and social expectations

The human norm has led to the categorization of roles to fit the confines of particular genders. Sadly, the male species is considered to possess characteristics that qualify them to be more normal while the female species is outlined to be deficient of particular characteristics (Barbie and Joe, 2007). Such points of reference provide a justification that gender roles follow a defined patriarchal order. It is from such societal expectations that specific gender-based roles are constructed. For many centuries, individuals have learnt their roles from the perceived genders of individuals with similar traits (Barbie and Joe, 2007). It is emphatically crucial that we develop acceptance within the social structure and embrace abilities to fit self-fulfilling behaviors. This entails welcoming the idea of gender fluidity and allowing it to shape the manner of defining relationships in the contemporary society.

The conservative assignment of gender is a combination of biological determination coupled with socially constructed ideas of what males and females should do (Talbot, 2003). The biological state is determined at birth

by a mere inspection of the genitals. One is then identified as male or female. This is permanently recorded in the birth certificate. The male or female child then becomes a boy or a girl and later man or woman through a series of physiological, social, and environmental factors. This uniform classification of humans is however shaken by the emergence of individuals who fall outside the accepted definition and assignment of gender.

Biologically, there are children who cannot be defined as either male or female. Others feel uncomfortable being classified within their sex. These individuals often referred to as transgender are evidence of gender diversity supported by nature. This diversity is well documented in history and across cultures. There should be no restriction to changes in identity for these individuals who can fit in any gender they choose. The freedom for personal determination should be left to the individual without restrictions based on natural or academically designed classifications. This is the concept of gender ambiguity, which promotes personal determination, but within the socially determined code of conduct.

Celebrities and Gender Fluidity

Individuals display different styles of self-expression through fashion sense, body language, and interests. The difference in behavior is influenced by gender identity, culture, age, race, and even class (Kimmel, and Aronson, 2007). Gender identity is an innate feeling of the gender one belongs. This is usually independent of anatomy although it is more common for females to identify themselves as girls and males as boys. However, more people are identifying themselves as transgender or two spirited which means they feel

both male and female at the same time. Show business and pop culture have become major influences on behavior and self-expression. Celebrities create trends in fashion and mannerisms every day. The more deviant they appear, the more popular they are. Lady Gaga who is an award-winning musician and eccentric fashion icon rallies her fans to be proud of their uniqueness because they were born that way. Nicki Minaj an accomplished female rapper has undergone plastic surgery to enhance her feminine features but still raps with the aggressiveness of a male performer.

Celebrities are more open to the concept of gender fluidity than the rest of the population. This is because of them rose to stardom by being bold and aggressive. They are not bothered by societal norms or popular opinion. Willow Smith, the daughter of Will Smith is often seen dressed in more masculine clothes than would be acceptable for girls. Social media is another emerging phenomenon, which is shaping opinions across the globe. Stories and photos of a boy named “ the princess boy” who loves pink and dresses like a princess stirred a lot of debate. More parents are willing to allow their children to self-express through clothing, preference of color and other mannerisms. These parents are choosing the happiness of their children over social conformity and ridicule. This is arguably the beginning of a new generation of tolerant individuals. This is because children learn classism, racism, sexism, and intolerance from their parents (Talbot, 2003). Parents who are more tolerant of alternative identity models will raise children who are willing to embrace their identity and that of others regardless of what it may be. Parents should be careful not to impose their own beliefs on the

children because it is possible for others to fit within socially constructed gender identities.

The shift towards permission of a wider gender spectrum is being witnessed in the health and educational sectors. The psychiatric manual has been under review in order to change the procedures used for diagnosing gender issues (Herrmann, 2002). Historically, individuals who did not fall within the accepted genders were classified as psychiatric cases. The revised manual will acknowledge transgender and other non-conforming gender identities as normal. The education system should be adopted to include a wider spectrum of identities that may exist outside the female or male categories. The school system should nurture the children to become whomever they wish without any discrimination. In an ideal educational system, there should be no defined set of expressions for females or males. The system should allow self-expression and discovery for all children while teaching them tolerance.

Sexual Fluidity

Sexual fluidity is another concept closely related to gender fluidity. This concept breaks down the rigidity of sexual classification as being homosexual or heterosexual (Pulerwitz, and Dworkin, 2006). Sexual fluidity defines the changes in sexual orientation across the range at different times and in varying situations. An individual can be sexually oriented as asexual, homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual at the same time or in different variations in their lifetime. A heterosexual person can suddenly become homosexual or bisexual while a homosexual can decide to become

heterosexual. These changes are attributed to the fact that sexual desire and attraction can change over time. An individual's sense of identity could also change leading to a shift in sexual orientation. The desire and identity of the person are not always in congruence. Sexual orientation is just one aspect of the individual's orientation (Pulerwitz, and Dworkin, 2006). The more an individual engages in personal discovery, the more they shift their orientation to match their new identity.

The argument that some individuals were born gay is now losing credibility. This is because at a young age, children are aware of their gender identity but not their sexuality. Sexual orientation is a construct of environmental factors. Sexual orientation is also fluid and can change over time to reflect the shift in the individual's sense of sexual attraction (Pulerwitz, and Dworkin, 2006). The traditional argument for the fight for equal rights for gays, lesbians, and transgender will have to change to accommodate the idea that sexual orientation can evolve over time. Gender fluidity allows for greater freedom of expression and puts less pressure on the individual to conform to any sexual orientation be it mainstream or unacceptable. The biggest challenge with sexual fluidity is that it could encourage sexual deviance. Individuals could argue that they are only sexually attracted to children or family members. Pedophilia and incest is unacceptable in society and is classified as a crime in many jurisdictions. The decision on where to draw the line between individual sexual freedom and sexual deviance is an appropriate topic for further academic debate and research.

As society adopts changes to the traditional social structures, gender roles will adjust to meet the demands of the new outlook. After the two world wars, it is now commonplace for women to go to work and provide for the family. More women are taking up professions, which were predominantly masculine such as military service and engineering. Same sex marriages are now commonplace and many children are being adopted and raised within this family structure. Science is quickly adjusting to gender identity crises by developing sex change treatments for transgender individuals. Transgender can legally change their identity to their new gender identity and sexual orientation.

Globalization has brought greater awareness of the different cultures and beliefs of the people of the world. People are slowly adopting other cultures through a change in lifestyle and thinking. The socially constructed gender roles are therefore slowly adjusting to globalization. A greater acceptance of gender fluidity will allow for smoother transitions from one societal view to the next. There will be no rules of conformity or any pressure to live up to the standards of one culture over another. Gender fluidity is the answer to the end of discrimination and bias based on standards set by the majority who in the actual sense may be hiding their true identity for fear of ridicule.

Conclusion

There is no doubt that the concept of gender fluidity is one of the misunderstood concepts in society. Not only does it eliminate the rules and boundaries governing individuals' choice of identity but it also helps in reinventing the roles based on gender thereby allowing individuals to behave

according to their inner conscience. Proponents of gender fluidity such as Linda Stein, through her art exhibits, have shown that it is possible to convey flexible and wide ranges of behaviors and interests irrespective of ones gender affiliations. Equally, the existence of individuals such as transsexuals, transgendered individuals and the legalization of homosexuality, lesbianism, and same-sex marriages is a clear proof that gender fluidity is a concept that is becoming accepted in society. Reinvention of roles and transparency of responsibilities irrespective of gender affiliations is another positive measure towards gender fluidity. As society adopts changes to the traditionally accepted social structures, gender roles are slowly changing to adjust to the needs of the transformed society. Finally yet important, the influence of renowned personalities and celebrities and their manner of displaying different styles of self-expression through fashion sense, body language, and interests is another proof that gender fluidity is sound and acceptable within the society.

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