

Listening 2

Kind: captions Gender is something some people probably never really think about and something that others think about more than they should have to. I'm not talking about a person's sex which refers to biological differences but their gender, which is a euphemism for the sex of a person. Gender refers to cultural and social differences and the main problems with this are our socially constructed gender roles gender roles are based on what people regard as normal and become the standard of what society believes everyone should conform to. Many people will argue that the segregation between male and female is the natural way of things and that gender is a binary meaning that there are two distinct boxes that gender should fall into : man and woman. In our postmodern world we have come to realize that the reason we have these neat little boxes and these gender norms is because we have created them. Gender socialization occurs through four major agents family, education, peer groups, and mass media. By repeated socialization over time men and women begin to feel that they are acting naturally and as they should because this is what they see and what they know. Gender marketing is the separation of products to appeal to both male and female market. Obviously this creates more sales of these products and they are often able to sell twice as many of these items than if males and females were to share the one item. Often these gender stereotypes can be quite harmful for the development of people's gender identities or can simply encourage already oppressive gender stereotypes. After a baby is born the first thing we do is tell our friends and family if it's a boy or a girl and start treating him or her according to our socially constructed heteronormative society Young boys are given toy trucks and guns whilst little girls are given dolls and dress-ups. In our Western heteronormative society boys are encouraged to be assertive, dominating, and strong whilst girls are expected to be passive, nurturing, and subordinate. The problem with this is that we are hindering our children's development. According to Erika Weisgram a developmental psychologist of the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point every time children play with toys they're getting something out of it they're learning something about the world by segregating these toys we are ultimately deciding not only that child's gender roles but the skills that they would develop. Building blocks develop spatial skills hitting balls and targets is beneficial for cognitive skills and dolls bring out nurturing skills and empathy. So if dolls bring out nurturing skills and empathy why are we not encouraging boys to play with dolls and develop these skills? No wonder there are so many fuckboys in the world. One quick Google search of gender marketing brings up an abundance of articles along the lines of "three-year-old crushes gender stereotypes with badass little girls" or "a teen female scientist tells us about their favorite childhood toys" which is great because as we know women can be anything they want to be. There has been a massive push for girls to be able to use toys that are traditionally male and to encourage them to explore all avenues available to them and follow their dreams. The problem I have with this is that there has not been much of a push for boys being able to use what are traditionally considered girls toys. Even the articles about how terrible gender marketing is use little girls playing with trucks as the example it's rarely the other way around. Boys are heavily stigmatized for blurring these gender lines. Searching "my son likes girly things" into Google brings up results like "my seven-year-old son likes dolls dresses and makeup help" and "my son likes girls things is he gay" which is disappointing at best. In 2014 a nine-year-old school boy was severely bullied for taking a My Little Pony bag to his American primary school and when the school was alerted by his mother they banned his bag stating that it was a trigger for bullies. This decision was later revoked became only a few

Listening 2

short months after an 11 year old American schoolboy attempted to take his own life after being bullied for being a fan of My Little Pony. One positive thing we can take from this incident is the sense of community amongst the bronies who rallied together to pay the medical fees after the attempted suicide and managed to raise 48 thousand American dollars. This kind of gender stereotyping is not always on such a large scale but is often parents pushing their boys to choose the boy item. Why is it that it's okay for girls to use boys toys but not when the roles are reversed? Obviously there are homophobic and transphobic elements to this hostility but perhaps a lot of this stigma boils down to misogyny. Marxist theory expresses that women's oppression is a problem of history rather than of biology a problem which it should be the concern of historical materialism to analyze and revolutionary politics to solve. Don't believe this socialized misogyny is a hatred towards all women but rather a hatred towards feminine things. This prejudice towards effeminate males ultimately stems from a problem with femininity and women in general. When it comes to gender marketing or gender socialization through family and friends the thing that makes boys items masculine is that they are simply not feminine. It turns out this is a much bigger issue than just gender stereotyping and capitalism seems to be the main culprit for gendered marketing. I am NOT suggesting we have a neutral palette of beige for all children's toys. What I'm suggesting is gender blending marketing using images of little boys from marketing typically female toys and vice versa. We need to encourage our boys and girls to explore all avenues available to them and not confine them to oppressive gender stereotypes. You do you, boys and girls.