

Analyzing Gender Stereotypes

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Explain sex and gender and the stereotypes associated with these concepts.
- Summarize the theories used to explain gender stereotypes.
- Analyze the process by which gender ideology has been and is measured.
- Formulate the implications of gender role constraint for women and men.

Gender on a Continuum

Once there were only two genders: male and female. Males, typically, were the big hairy ones who left the toilet seat up. Females were the smaller, less hairy ones who put the toilet seat down. They had eyes only for each other. It was easy to tell them apart. These days it's not so easy. Men sport ponytails and earrings and teach nursery school; women flaunt their tattoos and biceps and smoke cigars. Everywhere we look—on television, in glossy magazines, in self-help books—we see not two genders, but something more like a crossbreed, a point on a continuum. (Thurer, 2005, p. 1)

The term sex refers to the physical, biological, and genetic makeup of a person (as stated in Chapter 1). Most commonly, in humans, our sex is either female or male. Gender, however, is the cognitive, emotional, and social construction of how we and others perceive our being female and male, or other. In the field of sex and gender studies, the term *gender* is an indication of masculinity and femininity. Although Thurer (2005), uses the word *gender* to describe sex differences, her point is that, historically, we could clearly delineate girls from boys and women from men; today, however, those delineations are much less clear and do fall on a continuum.

GENDER BELIEF SYSTEMS AND STEREOTYPES

Although there is great debate as to whether expressions of gender are societally constructed, biologically determined, or some combination of both, researchers agree that societies, across cultures, hold gender beliefs that guide our expectations of women and men (Deaux & Kite, 1987). According to Deaux and Kite, these belief systems consist of cultural stereotypes and assigned roles to women and men. **Stereotypes**, generally defined, are overgeneralized and oversimplified beliefs about people in a recognized category. They can be positive or negative, and may or may not have elements of truth that apply to an individual who belongs to the category. Sex (or gender) stereotypes refer to the overgeneralized or oversimplified beliefs that are applied to girls and boys, women and men. Although we may recognize an individual as not fitting the stereotype (e.g., Mary is a woman and “women are emotional,” but Mary is very *unemotional*), we often still hold general beliefs as a means for guiding our understanding and interactions with others.

History of Male and Female Stereotypes

What are the stereotypes of men and women? What does it mean to be masculine? Feminine? Both? Neither? Although researchers have only been investigating these questions since the 1960s and 1970s, societal expectations for women and men have a long recorded history. In early writings documenting gendered expectations, women and men were expected to coexist in two separate spheres, often with greater restrictions on women than men. For example, French historian and politician Alexis de Tocqueville documented American expectations for middle-class women in the 1800s in his book *Democracy in America*, published in 1840 (Kerber, 1988). Interestingly, he argued the dissolution of aristocratic government found in the United States provided the opportunity for women to seek independence from patriarchal restraints; however, Tocqueville also acknowledged that once a young woman entered into marriage, her domain became limited by her domestic responsibilities and dependence on her husband. During this time period, a man’s sphere of responsibility was defined as separate from the woman’s and dealt with the public, or external, working and political worlds.

Welter (1966) acknowledged the role of religiosity in defining men and women’s roles. In her article *The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820–1860*, Welter noted that the characteristics of “true womanhood” were the values and attributes by which women were judged by their husbands, neighbors, and society—piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (p. 152). Each of these values was used to define a woman’s role as mother, daughter, sister, and wife, as well as her difference from men. Piety, or a woman’s religion, was the source of her strength and would keep her from the evils of the world. Welter noted that a woman’s religiosity was a source for education as it would not distract her from her domestic responsibilities.

Purity, according to Welter, was equally important to a woman’s piety. A woman who was considered impure was seen as lesser, unworthy, and a bearer of

guilt. Women’s purity was to be held until marriage, and it was a woman’s responsibility to fend off any man’s advances before marriage. In fact, women were expected to save men from themselves (Welter, 1966, p. 156). Whereas women were perceived as more religious and pure than men, they were expected to be submissive to men in all other matters and to turn to men for protection. Women were to be passive and responsive, but otherwise silent and dependent in nature. The final attribute of the cult of true womanhood as described by Welter (1966) dealt with the expectation that women be preoccupied with domestic affairs. Focusing on the success and well-being of the family, the woman was responsible for keeping the home in good cheer and caring for the needs and health of her children and husband.

What we learn from Welter’s description of the 19th-century women is that men were expected to be their opposite. Their two spheres were separate and in opposition. Similarly, the characteristics of masculinity and femininity, most often, have been defined in opposition to each other. Based on stereotypes, **masculinity** is often associated with assertiveness, task orientation, independence, and being stoic or emotionless, whereas **femininity**, in contrast, is defined by submissiveness, people orientation, emotionality, and dependence (see Table 3.1 for a sample listing of stereotypical masculine and feminine characteristics based on Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972). Other words used to describe masculinity and femininity as defined by traditional stereotypes, are *communal* and *agentic*. Women are often described as **communal** in their femininity (i.e., selfless, concerned with others) and men as **agentic** in their masculinity (i.e., self-assertive, mastery-oriented; Bem, 1974; Block, 1973; Broverman et al., 1972; Eagly & Steffen, 1984).

TABLE 3.1 Sample Stereotypical Sex-Role Attributes Based Upon Broverman et al. (1972)

	Feminine	Masculine (More Desirable)
Competence Characteristics	Submissive	Aggressive
	Emotional	Flat affect
	Subjective	Objective
	Collaborative	Competitive
	Feminine (More Desirable)	Masculine
Expressiveness Characteristics	Gentle	Rough
	Pious	Hedonist
	Tactful	Disregarding
	Reserved	Boastful

Despite the age of Broverman and colleagues’ (1972) research, you can likely still find evidence today, almost 50 years later, of these gender stereotype expressions. What do you think contributes to the extended life cycle of these sex-role stereotypes?

Theoretical Approaches to Sex and Gender Stereotypes

The explanation of sex and gender stereotypes is believed to be based upon two theoretical approaches: the “kernel of truth” theory and social role theory. The **kernel of truth theory**, originally developed as a hypothesis by Prothro and Melikian (1955) with regard to stereotypes, asserts that there are characteristics of the stereotyped group that influence the image or beliefs of that group (p. 3). Prothro and Melikian were interested in understanding the basis of stereotypes applied to different national groups, and suggested that although stereotypes may have some grounding in reality (i.e., a kernel of truth), there are social stimuli or factors that influence the behavior of the group being stereotyped. In other words, according to this theory, sex stereotypes are based on real differences between women and men but have been overexaggerated and oversimplified. For example, the kernel of truth theory would state that women *really are* emotional and men *really are* aggressive, but our stereotypes of these characteristics might be exaggerated to the point of caricature rather than realistic descriptions of each sex, which explains why aspects of the stereotype may not apply to all individuals.

A commonly cited study that supports the notion of the kernel of truth theory is research by Carol Martin (1987). Martin conducted two studies whereby adults and college students rated 32 descriptors as characteristic of the typical female and male college students. Participants clearly divided all 32 of these characteristics based on stereotypical beliefs of each of the two sexes. For example, the characteristic of “leadership abilities” was deemed more characteristic of the typical male college student than the typical female college student. Interestingly, however, when the participants were asked to rate these 32 traits as descriptive of themselves, females and males only differed on five of the traits; that is, females were more likely than males to see themselves as aware of others’ feelings, whiney, and fussy, while male students were more likely than female students to see themselves as egotistical and cynical (Martin, 1987, p. 495). These findings provide support for the kernel of truth theory of sex differences, but show that we tend to exaggerate or overestimate our beliefs when applied to others.

The kernel of truth theory continues to be applied to sex differences, but is recognized as limited in its explanation of the characteristics associated with women and men. For example, Löckenhoff and colleagues (2014) were interested in assessing perceived sex differences across cultures in the Big Five personality traits of *openness*, *conscientiousness*, *extraversion*, *agreeableness*, and *neuroticism*. These researchers collected survey responses from over 3,000 participants in 26 different nations that included self-ratings and perceived ratings of “typical” female and male adolescents, adults, and older adults. They noted that previous research indicated that women are perceived to score higher than men on agreeableness and neuroticism, and lower than men on extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness; however, women’s and men’s self-ratings in their 2014 cross-cultural research only partially supported these perceptions. Their findings indicated that in nearly every country assessed, women were perceived as higher than men in openness, agreeableness, and conscientiousness as well as elements of extraversion and neuroticism. Löckenhoff and colleagues

explain that the general consistency and cross-cultural support of their findings with previous research (e.g., women were rated as more agreeable than men) suggests that there may continue to be a kernel of truth in these stereotypes of women and men; however, they also acknowledge that their findings do not rule out the roles of biology and sociocultural influences in these stereotypes.

Social role theory, originally developed by Alice Eagly, suggests that the differences seen between women and men can be attributed to the division of labor between women and men. Eagly and Steffen (1984) further suggested that gender stereotypes stem from the observation of women and men in differing social roles in daily life. They asserted that women are viewed as more nurturing and caring of others because they are, most often, the primary caregivers of children. Eagly and Steffen also noted that women are more likely to hold lower-level positions and/or be homemakers than men who are more likely to be employed and of higher status in employment and the social hierarchy. To test these assertions, Eagly and Steffen conducted a series of five experiments and found that our observations of how men and women occupy various groups and the overall social structure underlies our gender stereotypes. In other words, not surprisingly, our stereotypes develop based on our observations and perceptions of women and men and may be considered generally accurate. In American culture, we are more likely to see women as primary caregivers of children and men in high-level executive positions, which affirms our stereotypes of women as nurturing and men as powerful.

Diekman and Eagly (2000) acknowledged that women's and men's roles have become more similar in recent years with women's increased presence in the paid labor force (p. 1172). Although men have increased their involvement in domestic responsibilities with the increase in the number of dual-earner couples, men's social roles have experienced less overall change as compared to women's. Diekman and Eagly hypothesized that as social roles have become more similar, the stereotypes of women should be more dynamic and include an increase in masculine characteristics and a decrease in feminine characteristics. Through participants' ratings of women's and men's roles and characteristics in present-day as well as in different decades (i.e., 1950, 1975, 2025, 2050), Diekman and Eagly found a convergence of stereotypes for women and men. Specifically, participants noted an increasing masculinity in women, and to a lesser extent, increasing femininity in men. These authors concluded that as social roles evolve, so too do stereotypes associated with women and men. So, based upon this research we can assume that as we see more women CEOs and men choosing to be stay-at-home dads, our stereotypes about women and men will continue to change.

Cultural context is an important consideration when applying social role theory to sex and gender stereotypes. For example, Steinmetz, Bosak, Sczesny, and Eagly (2014) investigated the application of social role theory on gender stereotyping in two cultures that differ in their valuing of independence versus interdependence: Germany and Japan. Steinmetz and colleagues described the German culture as valuing individualism and agency, and Japanese culture as valuing communion

regardless of gender considerations. To test participants' perceptions of the average person, female and male, German and Japanese students were asked to evaluate either an "average" woman or man without a specific role condition or an "average" woman or man in a specific male- or female-dominated occupation.

In the German sample, Steinmetz and colleagues (2014) found that men were generally viewed as more agentic and less communal (the communion attribute) than women; however, when men were described as being in female-dominated roles, they were rated as more communal than women. For example, participants from the German sample would perceive Finn, a German man who is employed as a nurse, as more communal than Anna whose employment is unknown. In the Japanese sample, participants perceived men as more agentic than women when the occupation role was not defined; viewed women and men as similar in agency when in male- or female-dominated occupations; and saw no sex differences in the attribute of communion regardless of occupation role definition. In other words, Akio, a Japanese man, and Hitomi, a Japanese woman, perhaps would be perceived as equally communal—a more commonly perceived feminine characteristic—by Japanese participants regardless of their occupation type. These authors note that it is unsurprising that social role theory expectations of gendered behavior differ in a Western (Germany) versus Eastern (Japan) society because the theory suggests we develop expectations based on the roles in which women and men exist within society (see Figure 3.1). Culture-specific values must have important implications for expectations of women and men. The graphs in Figure 3.1 show the differences between Western and Eastern cultures in their approach to gendered behavior. Social role theory addresses how the roles that women and men play in their society—in this case, Germany and Japan—impact their different views on agency and communion.

In an investigation of masculinity, Jones and Heesacker (2012) also argued that gender is socially constructed. That is, our gender is dependent on the situations in which we find ourselves. Specifically, in this study, male participants were either exposed or not exposed to one of six different short video clips that primed traditional masculine stereotypes (e.g., men should not cry), and then completed the Gender Role Conflict Scale (GRCS; O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986) and the Self-Concept Clarity scale (SCC; Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavalley, & Lehman, 1996). These researchers found that when traditional masculine stereotypes were primed by the video clips, men were less likely to report gender role conflict (i.e., belief that gender roles have a negative effect on a person or others). In other words, being primed to think about traditional masculine gender roles affirmed men's comfort with their gender role, leading them not to feel role conflict. Additionally, men who reported having greater self-concept clarity—clearly defined, consistent, and stable definition of self—also reported lower gender role conflict, regardless of priming condition.

Most notably from this study, Jones and Heesacker (2012) suggest, "Understanding gender as something that is *done* rather than *possessed* may assist psychotherapy practitioners in accurately assessing client needs and in developing treatment plans that target how narrow gendered self-expectations may limit client potential" (p. 304).

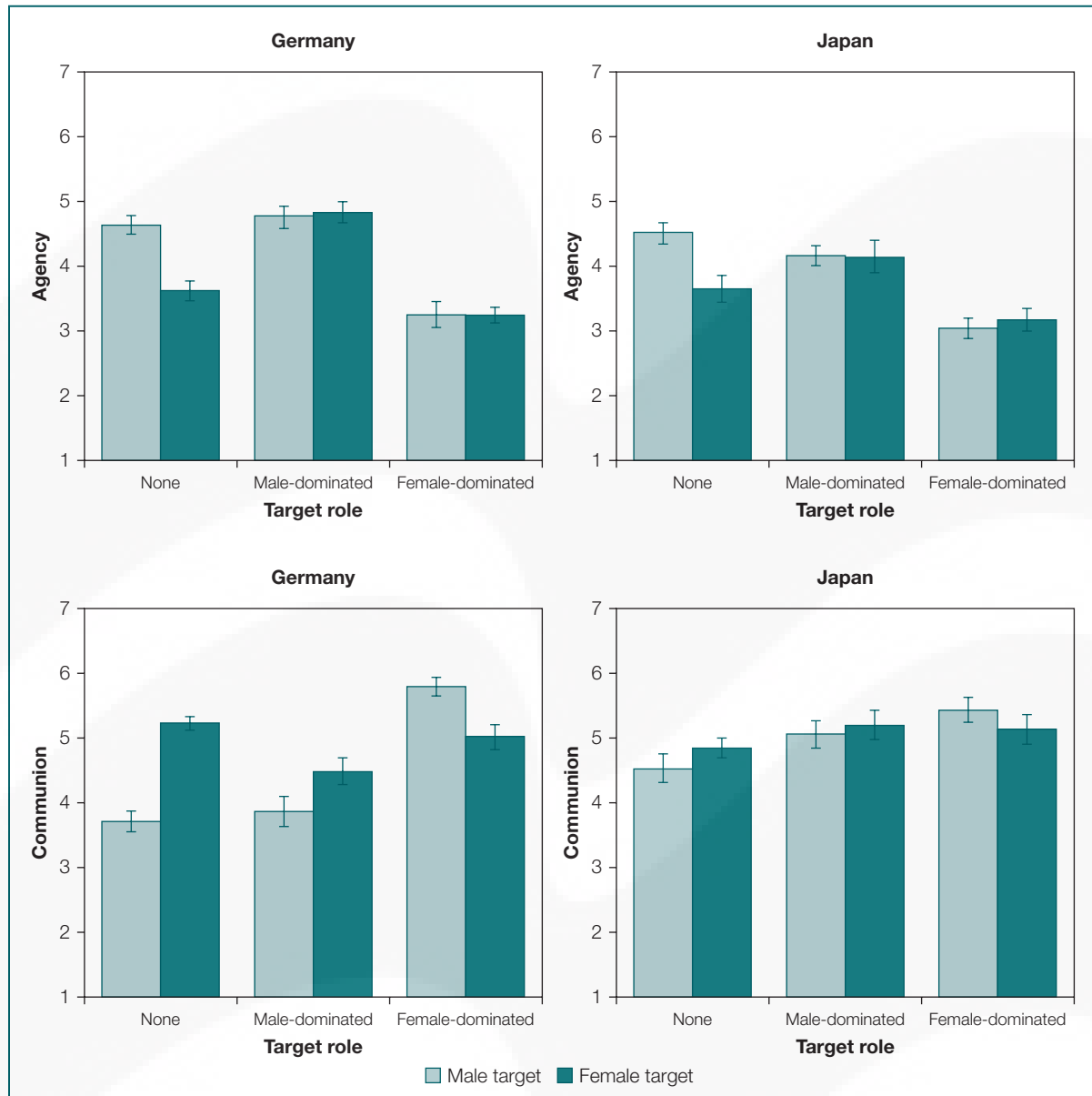


FIGURE 3.1 Mean Agency and Communion Ratings and Standard Errors (Error Bars) by Target Gender, Target Role, and Culture (Steinmetz et al., 2014)

Specifically, according to these findings, a person's masculinity (or femininity) is not necessarily an internal trait, but instead a behavior displayed in a given context. Thus, when helping clients with problems associated with sex or gender, therapists should consider the context as well as the person. So, based on Jones and Heesacker's research, therapists should reassure individuals who do not feel comfortable with the



MYTH BUSTER Women Avoid Competition

Whereas most societies have been founded on patriarchal principles (i.e., male power-centric), there are some societies that are matrilineal or matriarchal (i.e., female power-centric). If social learning theory holds true, then we should expect differences in female and male behavior in patriarchal versus matrilineal cultures. Gneezy, Leonard, and List (2009) were interested in assessing the traditionally assumed masculine characteristic of competitiveness in a patriarchal society (the Maasai tribe in Tanzania) versus a matrilineal society (the Khasi tribe in the northeastern part of India). When presented with a task in which they could compete with another, Khasi women (matrilineal) choose to compete more than Khasi men. Additionally, Gneezy and colleagues found that the women from a matrilineal society chose to compete more often than women in the patriarchal society. Based on these findings, the researchers suggested that societal gender roles shape the characteristic of competition. So, when we see a girl or woman avoiding competition, rather than assume that girls or women are innately competition averse, we need to consider how their societies may have shaped that behavior. ■

constraints of their gender that gender, as an action, can be changed with intention and effort. For example, if Jamil is dissatisfied with social pressure to act masculine, this research would suggest he should intentionally act against the social pressure to express whatever gender expression feels most natural or comfortable.

The Stable, Yet Evolving Nature of Stereotypes Associated With Gender

Regardless of their underlying basis, stereotypes, generally, can have positive and negative content and guide our understanding and interactions with others. Sex and gender stereotypes are no different. Boldry, Wood, and Kashy (2001) investigated the effects of gender stereotypes and evaluation of men and women among the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets. Boldry and colleagues appropriately noted that the stereotype of women sits in opposition of the stereotypes of a soldier. In fact, the stereotype of a successful soldier directly aligns with the expected gender characteristics of men and masculinity—makes decisions easily, independent, self-confident, competitive. These authors also noted that women’s historical and current “token status” in the military may exacerbate stereotyping and result in less positive evaluations of their performance.

Participants in Boldry et al.’s (2001) research consisted of 353 male and 27 female members of the Texas A&M Corps of Cadets. The authors noted that the 7% female participation is comparable to the 6% of women in the corps overall. Participants completed self-ratings and ratings of others on characteristics associated with success in the corps. Participants also rated the “typical and ideal” female and male cadets. Finally, performance measures of GPA, physical training, military science grants, and rank positions within their outfit were assessed. Not surprisingly, this study’s findings confirm the impact of sex stereotypes on evaluation. Male cadets, stereotypical and ideal, were evaluated as possessing more motivation and

! CONTROVERSIAL ISSUES

Is gender contextual?

In their investigation of masculinity, Jones and Heesacker (2012) argue that gender is socially constructed and dependent on cues in the environment. For example, an adolescent boy may act aggressively because his strength is challenged, not because he is an aggressive person. A girl may not speak out assertively in class not because she lacks confidence or the ability to be assertive, but because she knows the teacher only calls on boys in her classroom.

What do you think?

- What contextual cues might inform us on how to demonstrate our gender?
- How might we change gender stereotypes by changing the context of gender, if gender is contextual?
- How does context interact with culture in shaping our gender? ■

leadership qualities even when objective measures of performance did not differ from that of female cadets. Whether or not males are viewed as the ideal cadet, the U.S. government announced in December of 2015 that women can now serve in frontline combat positions. Women will have to meet the same standards of performance as men to compete for these positions.

Although Boldry and colleagues' (2001) research investigated women and men, and did not include those who consider themselves as **transgender**, or those whose gender does not align with their assigned sex at birth, as you can imagine military service for those individuals who are in transition from female to male or male to female, or those who consider themselves on the spectrum, may face even more complications in the military. The American military had become fairly progressive in recent decades in terms of service opportunities for those who are transgender, but President Donald Trump surprised many in and outside the military when he tweeted the decision that "the U.S. Government will not accept or allow transgender individuals to serve in any capacity in the U.S. Military" (see Figure 3.2 for Donald Trump's tweets on transgender service in the military). The aftermath of President Trump's tweets have yet to be settled and are a matter of litigation, but the action further complicates the stereotypes associated with gender and one's ability to serve in a traditionally masculine occupation.

Over the years as I have taught my Psychology of Gender course, both male and female students have voiced a version of this statement: "Yes, stereotypes for women and men may have been a big deal and were an affecting factor in the past, but it's *so* different today." Is it? Diekman and Eagly (2000) argued that as social roles for men and women become more similar, the stereotypes applied specifically and directly to women and men are eroding. Their research tested various elements of gender stereotypes and found that participants acknowledged sex differences are decreasing, and that stereotypes applied to women have experienced greater change

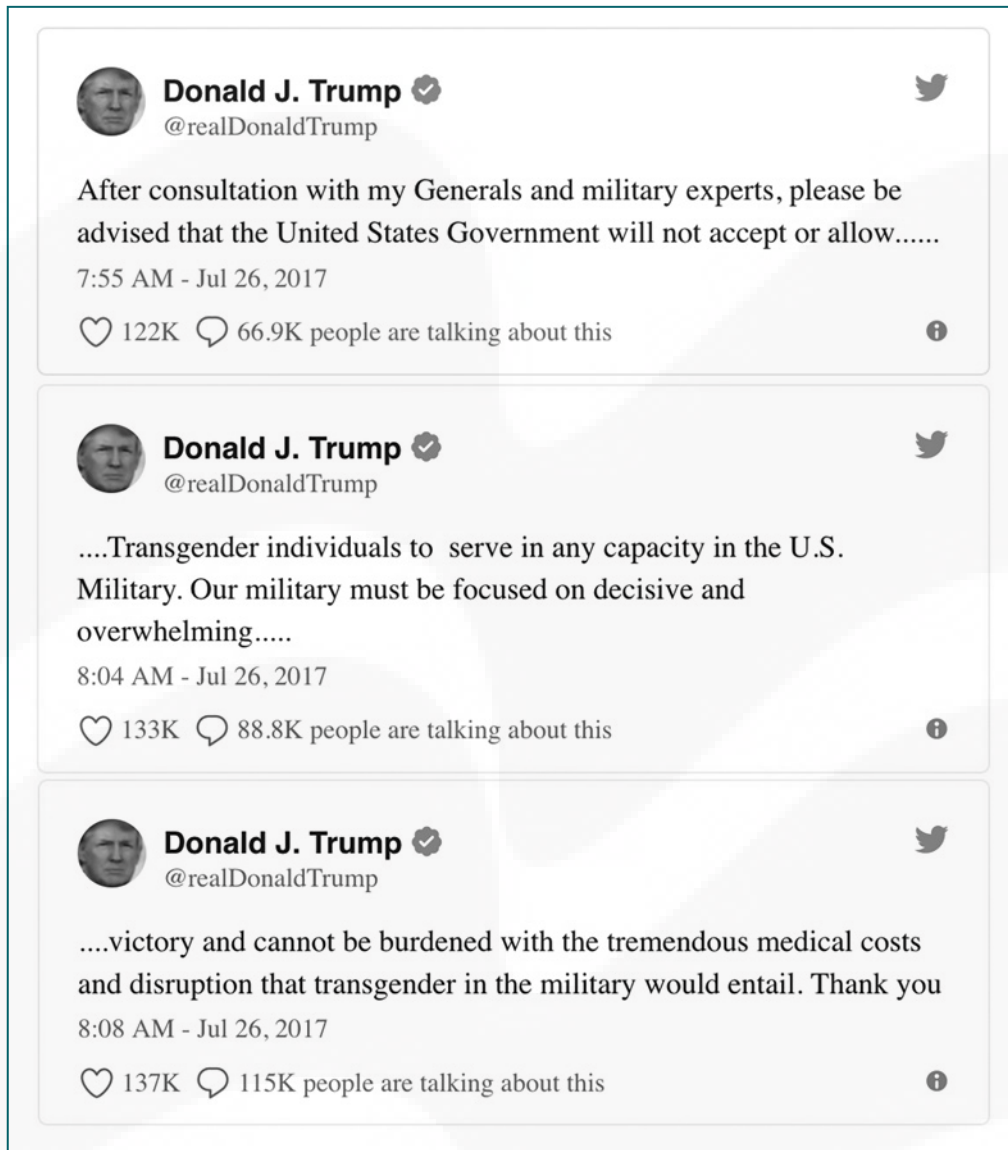


FIGURE 3.2 President Donald Trump surprised many in and outside of the U.S. military when he tweeted an official decision that individuals who are transgender are no longer allowed to serve in the armed forces.

Source: Twitter

than those applied to men. Meaning, women are being given much more flexibility in their expression of gender—masculine or feminine—but men are still fairly constrained by the gender role of masculinity. This assertion is true within most of America; however, we cannot assume this finding applies to all countries and subcultures within those countries.

Cross-cultural research by Garcia-Retamero, Müller, and López-Zafra (2011) attempted to investigate the malleability of stereotypes associated with gender. More specifically, they were interested in how gender stereotypes of people in Spain have changed depending on the population of where they reside. Garcia-Retamero and colleagues noted that gender stereotypes about women have become increasingly dynamic, whereas the stereotypes of and roles assumed by men have remained fairly static over the years. Similar to what has occurred in the United States, much of the change in perceptions and stereotypes of women in Spain relates to the organized women's movements, discussed in Chapter 1, that have led to the greater equalization of the status of men and women. Garcia-Retamero et al. (2011) explained that similar changes in social values and norms have affected Spain in recent years as well, but with more change happening in urban than rural settings. After surveying participants from eight regions in Spain, these researchers found that both women and men perceived present-day women as more masculine than women from the past, with the additional expectation that women in the future would continue to be more masculine. Participants' perceptions of men (past, present, and future) were much more stable. In other words, perceptions and stereotypes have changed; however, these researchers found that change was greater for women than men, and was more common among urban-residing participants than those residing in less populated rural regions. Garcia-Retamero and colleagues also noted that their findings are consistent with research in other countries including the United States and Germany.

Although Garcia-Retamero et al.'s (2011) study found support for cross-cultural gender and sex stereotypes, it is problematic to assume little variation across race, ethnicity, culture, and subculture. An additional concern about sex and gender stereotypes is that these concepts as described by previous research are rooted in the context of White middle-class Americans. In other words, our understanding of these stereotypes is somewhat limited by the types of samples previous researchers have obtained, and the lack of focus on the impact of culture in shaping these stereotypes. Gender roles and expressions must be considered in the complexity of other social categorizations of culture, race and ethnicity, class, and sexual orientation.

Sex and Gender Stereotypes in the Media

Sex and gender stereotypes are pervasive in most forms of media. For example, Rubie-Davies, Liu, and Lee (2013) researched contemporary portrayals of the sexes from different ethnic groups in New Zealand television commercials. These researchers acknowledge that stereotyping among males and females in advertisements has diminished over the years; however, "the persuasive nature of television advertisements and the brief but repetitive exposure of each advertisement have resulted in the gender roles being stereotyped to appeal to target markets (p. 179). Historically, females and males have been portrayed in traditional roles (e.g., women supportive to men; men being more active and outdoorsy). In their content analysis of over 3,000 television advertisements on major television channels in New Zealand, Rubie-Davies et al. noted that although the gender role stereotype gap has narrowed, men were

still frequently portrayed in a stereotypical manner (e.g., with cars, enjoying alcoholic drinks) and in more prominent banking and finance commercials, while women were portrayed within domains associated with femininity (e.g., household appliances, beauty, and fashion). Their findings revealed more differences in ethnicities than gender. Specifically, White actors were represented more frequently in all categories of commercials. The implication of this research is affirmed by the social role theory explanation that the more we observe gender expressed in commercials, for example, the more we believe in the stereotypes of women and men.

Kay and Furnham (2013) similarly conducted a content analysis of British television advertisements for age and sex stereotyped messages. Specifically, they hypothesized that compared to men, women would be portrayed as younger, domestic product users, in dependent roles, making opinion- rather than fact-based arguments, less likely to make end comments suggesting authority, and less likely to do voiceovers in commercials. These researchers also suggested age-related differences in media portrayals. In an analysis of over 250 advertisements, Kay and Furnham found that females continued to be presented in a traditional, gender-stereotypical manner as compared to men. Men continued to be shown as authorities or experts, and women were more likely to be displayed as consumers (p. 182); however, there was no difference in women's and men's making of fact- or opinion-based statements. Men were found to do more voiceovers than women, but women were found to make more end comments than men in the advertisements evaluated. These findings further affirm the lessons we learn about gender through media exposure, even if these lessons do not mirror our everyday life.

Tragos (2009) noted that as American culture blurs gender expectations for women and men, popular media has reasserted traditional masculinity through shows such as *Monster Garage* and *American Chopper*. These two television shows demonstrated a reclaiming of manhood through the brotherhood



Source: Discovery Communications



Source: E Networks

Research suggests that masculinity, or hypermasculinity, is being reasserted through television programs that show men's dominance over land and others. The series *Gold Rush* gives a good example of competition between men and their teams in the masculine occupation of mining for gold. The same could be suggested about messages girls and women receive regarding femininity from television programming such as *Keeping Up with the Kardashians*, a show that is focused on dramatic relationships and fashion—aspects typically deemed feminine.

bonding of building cars and motorcycles with hard work and a tough exterior. Tragos argued that these TV reality shows are in response to the new expectations for today's American man to embrace his sensitivity as well as strength. "In a time of ambiguous notions about what it means to be a man, hypermasculinity is one attempt to reclaim traditional notions of manhood" (p. 546).

Although the shows mentioned by Tragos are a bit dated, gendered television shows continue to exist for men to reclaim their masculinity through hardship and physical triumph in real life or fictional dramas (e.g., *Goldrush: Alaska*, *American Ninja Warrior*, *The Walking Dead*). Television executives offer women shows that play to stereotypical feminine genres as well. Reality television programs such as *Keeping up with the Kardashians* and *The Bachelor* portray women as focused on their outer beauty and as dependent on men. Interestingly, although women still often play secondary roles to men in television, some more recent series (e.g., *Madam Secretary*, *VEEP*, *Game of Thrones*, *Orange Is the New Black*) portray women in leading roles that defy stereotypical expectations.



Critical Thinking Check

To what degree have the historical stereotypes of women and men changed over time? What are possible explanations for these stereotypes? And what is the role of the media in presenting or influencing gender stereotypes? ■

MEASUREMENTS OF GENDER

Interest in the similarities and differences between women and men dates back to early philosophers (e.g., Plato and Aristotle); however, the formal investigation of masculinity and femininity as traits by which women and men can be measured began in the 1930s. Catherine Cox Miles and Lewis Terman developed the construct of masculinity and femininity. Terman, a researcher interested primarily in the topic of intelligence, found no significant differences in women's and men's intellect, and thus in collaboration with Miles developed the Attitude Interest Analysis Survey (AIAS; Terman & Miles, 1936). This test consists of multiple measures (e.g., word associations, inkblot associations, introversion/extroversion). Masculinity and femininity, based on Terman and Miles's measurement, were conceptualized as bipolar concepts on a single continuum. Men and women were distinguished from each other based on their being defined as opposite on this masculinity–femininity (M–F) continuum (see Figure 3.3). Terman and Miles's scale was utilized to determine incongruence between one's biological self, being male or female, and one's "psychological sex," masculinity versus femininity, and predicting marital problems (Hoffman, 2001). An especially problematic issue with the AIAS was that it was intended for use with adults, but was normed on students in elementary through high school (Lewin, 1984a).



FIGURE 3.3 The First Conceptions of Masculinity and Femininity Were Represented on a Bipolar Continuum. This image of the Masculinity–Femininity Continuum portrays the belief that early researchers, such as Terman and Cox Miles, held regarding the opposite nature of masculinity and femininity.

Although Terman and Miles acknowledged the limitations of their scale, others built upon the notion of gender as being a bipolar continuum (see Figure 3.3). The next, most notable, measurement of masculinity and femininity was imbedded in the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI; Hathaway & McKinley, 1943). Because the MMPI was developed as a clinical tool for diagnostic purposes, it is important to recognize the Masculinity–Femininity (Mf) scale was designed specifically with the intent to detect whether men identified with the characteristics of the opposite sex. In the instance of the MMPI, the distinction between sexual orientation and gender roles/gender identity were conflated. Similar to norming concerns with the AIAS, the Mf scale of the MMPI was validated with a criterion group of only 13 gay men (Lewin, 1984b).

Although this approach to validating the portion of the MMPI is problematic because of the small number studied and the biased sample, there has been some revision of this scale and additional subscales (i.e., Masculine Gender role and Feminine Gender role scales) in subsequent revisions of the MMPI; the Mf scale is still utilized in gender research. Two additional psychological tests of the time that integrated masculinity–femininity scales are the Strong Vocational Interest Blank (SVIB; Strong, 1943), used as a measure of vocational interests, and the California Psychological Inventory (CPI; Gough, 1964). The CPI included a masculinity–femininity, or Fe, scale utilized as a clinical test to measure the extent to which women and men break from traditional conceptions of gender roles because at the time of this scale’s development, those individuals who did not conform to traditional expectations of women and men would be deemed sexual deviates. Much changed in the United States shortly after President Eisenhower left office in 1961: the Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, the Summer of Love, the Stonewall riots, and traditional expectations on the CPI no longer fit many Americans who did not consider themselves sexual deviates, though others might.

Anne Constantinople (1973) was among the first to challenge the single bipolar dimension of masculinity and femininity. She asserted that previous measures of the masculinity–femininity construct had three basic untested assumptions: “(a) that it is best defined in terms of sex differences in item response; (b) that it is a single bi-polar dimension ranging from extreme masculinity at one end to extreme femininity at the other; and (c) that it is unidimensional in nature and can be adequately measured by a single score” (p. 389). Constantinople did not disagree that masculinity and

femininity were useful constructs for understanding women and men, but that the measurement did not lead to a useful understanding of behavior. She also, insightfully, acknowledged that these scales present “clear-cut and persistent sex-role stereotypes” (p. 403), and scores are influenced by demographic factors such as a social class, geography, education, and age. Although Constantinople clearly pointed to concerns and potential flaws with the earlier scales, she did not offer a solution, but rather noted that further research needed to be done.

In response to concerns about the traditional Mf scales, Broverman and colleagues (1972) developed their own sex-role questionnaire. Using undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses as participants, Broverman et al. asked students to list the “characteristics, attributes, and behaviors on which they thought men and women differed” as a means for beginning their scale development (p. 61).

Based on further testing, Broverman et al. were able to establish the characteristics deemed as stereotypical of the sex roles (see Table 3.1 discussed earlier in this chapter). Interestingly, the researchers noted that in several different studies they conducted, the masculine characteristics were considered generally more socially desirable by participants than the feminine characteristics. The most desirable stereotypically masculine characteristics were those centered on the issue of competency, and warmth-expressiveness for femininity. Additionally, at the time of the development of their survey (1972), Broverman et al. noted that these sex stereotypes were not only recognizable but also approved of by “large segments of our society” (p. 67).

In the early 1970s, researchers began to question the notion of masculinity and femininity on a bipolar continuum and began developing measures of gender that recognized the complexity and interaction of femininity and masculinity. Sandra Bem (1974) developed the Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI), a scale still used frequently in research. The crux of the BSRI is that individuals can possess varying degrees of *both* masculinity and femininity, and the combination of those varying degrees ultimately can assist in categorizing people into one of four quadrants of gender.

The BSRI consists of 60 characteristics for which participants self-evaluate on a scale of 1 (*never true or almost never true*) to 7 (*always or almost always true*). These 60 characteristics can be broken into sets of 20 items that are stereotypically feminine (e.g., yielding, dependent, soft-spoken, loves children), 20 that are stereotypically masculine (e.g., self-reliant, acts as a leader, individualistic), and 20 “neutral” items (e.g., helpful, conscientious, sincere). These 20 neutral items were developed as a measure of social desirability. Bem originally suggested scoring such that masculinity scores were compared to femininity scores whereby the greater score could lead to classification of that person into the category of masculine or feminine; however, if the scores on these dimensions were close, the person could be labeled as **androgynous**, or possessing both feminine and masculine characteristics. The conceptualization of androgyny was deemed as psychologically beneficial, ideal even, because of the ability to exhibit behavioral flexibility.

Bem (1977) later adjusted her scoring using **median splits**, which is a statistical technique of organizing data from smallest to largest and then splitting in the middle; numbers above the midpoint are considered “high” and those below the midpoint “low.” This technique recognizes that there are instances when individuals who score low on both dimensions of femininity and masculinity (low–low) are quite different from those who score high on both dimensions of femininity and masculinity (high–high). Individuals who score high–high continue to be labeled as androgynous, and scores from those who score low–low are now categorized as **undifferentiated**. Undifferentiated individuals, according to Bem (1977) do show some similar characteristics to those who are androgynous by resisting social pressure to conform to gendered expectations, but show few traits of either femininity or masculinity. Men who are categorized as masculine and women who are categorized as feminine based on these median splits are referred to as **sex-typed**. That is, the person’s sex and gender match. **Cross-sex-typed** individuals, however, are those for whom their gender and sex do not match.

Bem’s BSRI allows for the concepts of masculinity and femininity to exist as separate dimensions. When taken as an individual assessment, the person can see whether they score high or low on each dimension of masculinity and femininity; however, when taken as a group or sample assessment, researchers can divide participants’ scores with median splits that allow for the separation of participants into the categories of masculine, androgynous, feminine, or undifferentiated as illustrated in Figure 3.4.

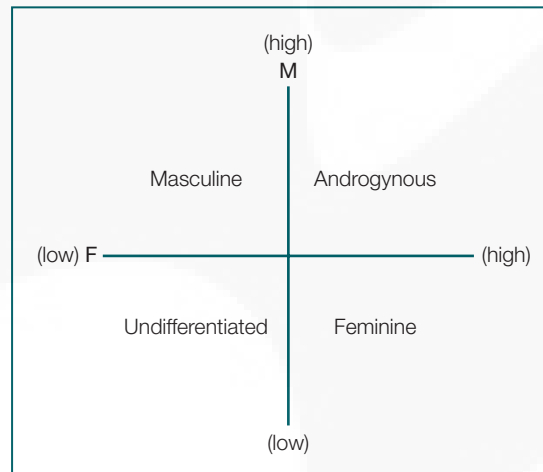


FIGURE 3.4 Dimensions of Bern’s BSRI This graphic demonstrates the conceptualization of masculinity (M) and femininity (F) on separate continuums, giving the ability to categorize gender, according to Bem (1977).

Around the same time that Sandra Bem was working on her inventory, Spence, Helmreich, and Stapp (1974) were also developing a multidimensional measure of gender role ideology called the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ). Similar to the BSRI, participants self-evaluate and ultimately end up with a score that leads to categorization of masculine, feminine, androgynous, or undifferentiated (a term that Spence and colleagues developed prior to Bem). Although there are clear overlaps between the PAQ and BSRI, there are also important differences. Hoffman (2001) noted that the BSRI included only items deemed more desirable for one sex over the other (e.g., independent as desirable for men, compassionate as desirable for women), whereas the PAQ included items desirable for both sexes but typical more of one sex than the other (e.g., self-confidence, awareness of others' feelings). The PAQ also included a third scale, labeled M-F, "developed to represent those characteristics whose social desirability varied according to whether an individual was male or female" (Hoffman, 2001, p. 477). For example, the attributes of aggressiveness, submissiveness, and need for security have varying levels of acceptance based on whether the person responding is female or male. In other words, it is seen as more socially desirable or acceptable for a woman to be submissive than a man, and a man to be more aggressive than a woman.

Janet Spence (1991) wrote an article to clarify the distinctions between the two measures of gender. Specifically, she argued that the theoretical framework for the BSRI is that individuals can be both (or neither) masculine and feminine, and was deemed by Bem as a sex-role inventory based on a desire to acknowledge the interrelated gender concepts as they relate to sex typing. The PAQ, instead, is built upon the framework of gender identity as related to personal traits and role expectations. Spence also acknowledged that neither scale fully recognizes all gender-related attributes and behaviors dictated by gender or sex roles. Another important difference Spence noted was that the PAQ allows for socially desirable characteristics for both masculinity (e.g., confidence, strong) and femininity (e.g., sensitive, devoted), whereas the BSRI femininity scale includes more socially undesirable characteristics (childlike, gullible, shy).

Although there have been additional gender measures developed since the 1970s, the BSRI and PAQ continue to be among the most widely used instruments for measuring femininity and masculinity. For example, Hyde, Krajinik, and Skuldt-Niederberger (1991) examined androgyny across the life span using the BSRI and found, over a 10-year period, an increase in the percentage of women self-reporting being feminine and men self-reporting androgyny in the oldest age category (over 61 years). Using the BSRI, Hyde and colleagues were able to suggest that with age, both men and women become more feminine.

Concurrent with the women's movement and research on androgyny in the 1970s, researchers were consistently finding that masculinity in men and women is correlated more strongly with positive emotional and psychological outcomes (Bem, 1977; Cook, 1987; Sharpe & Heppner, 1991; Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1975); however, other researchers (e.g., Helmreich, Spence, & Wilhelm, 1981) have suggested that this research finding is more likely the outcome of how masculinity has been measured with the PAQ and BSRI focusing on positive characteristics of

instrumentality (i.e., autonomy, independence, assertiveness). Hence, researchers and clinicians have since suggested that we may have overestimated the positive nature of masculinity and underestimated the negative consequences of the role confinement the gender role of masculinity asserts.



Critical Thinking Check

How has gender research evolved from the 1940s to today? Why do you think that masculine characteristics seem to have a higher percentage of positive characteristics and outcomes even today? ■

PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH SEX STEREOTYPING

Whereas stereotypes can be positive (e.g., girls are responsible) or negative (e.g., boys are aggressive), the consequences of sex and gender stereotypes most often are recognized as negative. With any stereotype, knowledge of a particular individual can be lost or ignored. For the individual experiencing or being judged by sex or gender stereotypes, there can be negative impacts on self-esteem, self-confidence, body image, mental health, and relationships with others. Sex and gender stereotypes can affect how we perceive and treat others. Often, as perceivers, we fall victim to the **self-fulfilling prophecy**, whereby we treat individuals based on our beliefs and in ways that elicit expected behaviors. For example, if I expect boys to not show emotion when they get hurt, and I see a boy get hurt, I am not likely to try to comfort him in a way that would allow him to show emotion. I might say, “Shake it off, you’re okay.” However, if I see a girl get hurt, I might treat her quite differently based on my stereotypes about girls showing emotion; “Oh, poor darling, are you okay?”

Prejudice, Discrimination, Sexism, and Harassment

When we use negative stereotypes to guide our understanding of and interactions with others, we are likely to exhibit prejudice, discrimination, sexism, and harassment. **Prejudice** is a negative opinion or belief held about a group of people. An example of sex or gender prejudice would be the belief that women are not physically strong. Prejudice can lead to **discrimination**, or differential or negative treatment of a group of individuals within a group. The discrimination women or men experience is often referred to as sexism. **Sexism** specifically refers to the prejudice and discrimination based on sex or gender. **Harassment** occurs when discrimination is applied aggressively or with intimidation. Intersectionality compounds their negative effects.

Brinkman and Rickard (2009) noted that many college students experience gender prejudice and discrimination daily. Specifically, gender prejudice in the college setting, according to these authors, can include sexual harassment, demeaning comments, academic discrimination based on one’s sex, offensive

humor, or sexual objectification, among other experiences. Brinkman and Rickard acknowledged that gender prejudice is more often experienced by women, but men too can experience such attitudes and discrimination. For their research of everyday experiences, Brinkman and Rickard had undergraduate students keep an online diary for 14 days. Because people often do not describe their experiences as gender prejudice, participants simply responded to a checklist of possible gender-stereotyped events and then answered open-ended questions to further describe their experiences. Somewhat surprisingly, male and female college students experienced more than two gender prejudice events, on average, per day. Although women and men experienced approximately the same number of gender prejudices per day, men were less likely to be the direct target of prejudice. Moreover, women reported higher levels of distress associated with these events. These researchers also found that men were more likely to be the perpetrators of gender prejudice against women and men.

U.S. law recognizes the illegality of sex stereotyping when it leads to formal discrimination in employment (e.g., in hiring, promotions, access, and distribution of resources; Leskinen, Rabelo, & Cortina, 2015). Leskinen and colleagues were interested in whether women's deviance from traditional stereotypical femininity led to gender harassment. These researchers suggested that women are in a catch-22 because advancement in their careers may require the adoption of masculine traits (e.g., assertiveness, self-reliance, self-promotion), and expression of those masculine traits puts women at greater risk for prejudice and harassment in the workplace. More than 400 women, aged 22–67 and from a variety of occupations, completed a set of surveys that measured personal characteristics and workplace experiences. Findings revealed that women who described themselves as more aggressive and less feminine, and those who worked in male-dominated fields such as electricians or electrical engineers, experienced more frequent sexist remarks. Self-reliant women, who described themselves as less traditionally feminine in experience and appearance, also experienced gender stereotyping and harassment in female-dominated domains (e.g., education and health care).

Gender Role Strain and Conflict

Gender roles, or the societal expectations of behavior and emotional expression typically based on one's assigned sex at birth, guides our understanding of ourselves and interactions with others. When we use sex and gender as categorical characteristics to define people, we see the correlated effects of stereotyping that were discussed previously. The bigger concern is what happens when individuals do not fit into those categories? Pleck (1981, 1995) developed the conceptual framework of **gender role discrepancy strain** (GRDS) applied to boys, and men's experiences with gender roles. Pleck (1995) argued that gender role discrepancy strain occurs because gender roles and stereotypes can provide inconsistent expectations, and when men violate these expectations, they may be condemned by others and experience psychological consequences. For example, a man who cries or shares his feelings is likely to be called names and chastised by other men.

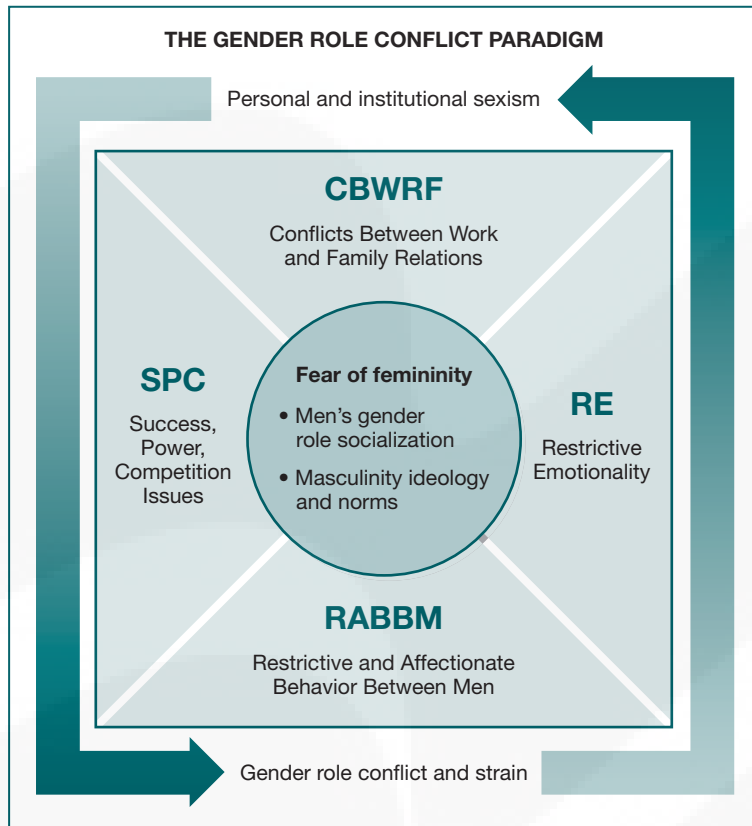


FIGURE 3.5 Gender Role Conflict O'Neil and colleagues developed a gender role conflict (GRC) paradigm as a way to understand and illustrate fear of femininity, which they argue is at the core of the gender role conflict men experience.

Data from O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b, 1990; O'Neil et al., 1986.

When gender role stereotypes exist, there is potential for **gender role conflict**, conflict between expectations of a gender and an individual's natural tendencies or behavior that results in negative consequence for oneself or others (O'Neil, 1981a, 1981b, 1990; O'Neil et al., 1986). O'Neil and colleagues have presented a gender role conflict (GRC) paradigm that illustrates fear of femininity at the core of GRC. Additionally, as seen in Figure 3.5, the domains in which GRC is typically found include success, power, competition (SPC) issues; restrictive emotionality (RE); restrictive and affectionate behavior between men (RABBM); and conflicts between work and family relations (CBWFR).

The research on the negative effects of GRC has focused more on men being constrained by the rigidity of masculinity. For example, in a study of male students enrolled in psychology classes at a large Midwestern university, Sharpe and Heppner (1991) found that men who experienced GRC experienced lower self-esteem, depression, and some limited negative effects on relationships. More recently,

O'Neil (2012) suggested that GRC can be experienced by men of different ages, races, ethnicities, nationalities, and sexual orientations (p. 492). Additionally, O'Neil noted that there has been support for the evidence of GRC in more than 20 countries outside of the United States. Whereas gender role conflict is experienced across the life span, experiences of GRC tend to differ with age—younger boys and men, compared to those who are older, experience gender role conflict within the realms of success, power, and competition issues.

In an effort to examine cultural and psychological effects, Liu and Iwamoto (2006) examined GRC in Asian American men. Liu and Iwamoto explained that little focus has been given on Asian American men's enculturation or adherence to Asian cultural values and their experiences with GRC (p. 153). Some cultural expectations for Asian men, emotional control and success for familial recognition, mirror expectations for American men; however, other characteristics, such as being polite and obedient, are counter to the expectations of American men. To understand the intersection of Asian cultural values, GRC, and self-esteem, Liu and Iwamoto had Asian men complete a series of surveys. Findings revealed that Asian American men who adhered to Asian cultural values experienced greater GRC and psychological distress and lower self-esteem.

Previous research has investigated not only the effects of GRC but also associations with other personal characteristics. McDermott, Schwartz, Lindley, and Proietti (2014) investigated the relationship between GRC and religious fundamentalism as predictors of men's homophobia. These researchers had undergraduate males complete a series of measures to test a hypothetical model whereby GRC would mediate the relationship between religious fundamentalism and homophobia. Interestingly, their proposed model was not supported. Instead, they found that GRC and religious fundamentalism are statistically independently related to homophobia. Specifically, religious fundamentalism and the subdomains of GRC including restrictive emotionality and restrictive and affectionate behavior between men explained more than half of the variance in men's homophobia scores.

Our beliefs and stereotypes about sex and gender may be based on elements of truth and observation of real sex differences, but often they are actually broad generalizations about those differences. While it is difficult, if not near impossible, to undo the effects of a lifetime of socialization within a gendered society, it is worthwhile and enlightening to make efforts to reflect on the extent to which our evaluations of ourselves, and others, are distorted by the gendered lenses we have been taught to use or by intersectionality. Regardless of how we measure or define gender, our beliefs about ourselves and others are affected by cultural and contextual factors and are powerful in shaping our perception and interactions with others.



Critical Thinking Check

What common challenges are associated with gender stereotypes? How might culture shape the experience of these challenges? ■

SUMMARY

- Stereotypes are overgeneralized and oversimplified beliefs about people in a recognized category. Sex or gender stereotypes refer to the overgeneralized or oversimplified beliefs that are applied to girls and boys, women and men. These stereotypes can be positive or negative, and serve as a means for guiding our understanding and interaction with others.
- The two main categorizations of gender stereotypes for men and women are masculinity, which is associated with assertiveness, task orientation, independence, and lack of emotion, and femininity, which is described by submissiveness, people or relationship orientation, emotionality, and dependence. Masculinity has also been defined as agentic, or self-assertive and mastery-oriented, and femininity has been described as communal—selfless, concerned with others. These stereotypes often are defined in opposition of each other.
- The explanation of these sex and gender stereotypes falls into two theoretical categories: “kernel of truth” theory and social role theory. The kernel of truth theory asserts that sex stereotypes are based on real differences between women and men but have been overexaggerated and oversimplified. The social role theory is based on the belief that gender stereotypes stem from the observation of women and men in differing social roles in daily life.
- Historically, gender was measured as subscales of other clinical measures of mental health. Lewis Terman and Catherine Cox Miles developed the construct of masculinity and femininity and the Attitude Interest Analysis Survey (AIAS). Terman and Cox Miles’s concept of gender was bipolar, with masculinity and femininity serving as endpoints on a single continuum. As measurement of gender progressed, Sandra Bem and others acknowledged that masculinity and femininity were characteristics that fall on separate continuums. Bem developed the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) that allows for categorization into four genders: feminine (high femininity, low masculinity), masculine (high masculinity, low femininity), androgynous (high masculinity, high femininity), and undifferentiated (low masculinity, low femininity).
- Sex and gender stereotypes can affect how we perceive and treat others. As perceivers, we often fall victim to the self-fulfilling prophecy, whereby we treat individuals based on our beliefs and in ways that elicit expected behaviors.
- When we use negative stereotypes to guide our understanding of and interactions with others, we are likely to exhibit prejudice, discrimination, and harassment. Prejudice is a negative opinion or belief about a group of people. Prejudice can lead to discrimination, or differential or negative treatment of a group of people or individuals within a group. Sexism specifically refers to the prejudice and discrimination based on sex or gender. Harassment occurs when discrimination is applied aggressively or with intimidation.

- Gender roles are the societal expectations of behavior and emotional expressions, typically based on one's assigned sex at birth. When women or men feel they do not personally fit the roles or expectations for their sex, they may experience gender role conflict. Gender role conflict has been more heavily researched in males than females, but can exist for both sexes.

KEY TERMS

Agentic – Stereotype associated with men, reflecting characteristics of self-assertiveness and mastery orientation.

Androgynous – Gender role described as possessing high levels of both feminine and masculine characteristics.

Communal – Stereotype associated with women, reflecting characteristics of selflessness and concern for others.

Cross-sex-typed – Individuals whose gender and sex do not match (i.e., masculine female and feminine male).

Discrimination – The differential or negative treatment of a group of people or individuals within a group based on prejudicial beliefs.

Femininity – Gender descriptor, most often associated with women, defined by submissiveness, people orientation, emotionality, and dependence.

Gender roles – Societal expectations of behavior and emotional expression typically based on one's assigned sex at birth.

Gender role conflict – Conflict between expectations of a gender with an individual's natural tendencies or behaviors that results in negative consequences for oneself or others.

Gender role discrepancy strain – The psychological strain or stress that occurs when gender roles and stereotypes provide inconsistent expectations.

Harassment – Discrimination toward an individual or group that is aggressive or includes intimidation.

Kernel of truth theory – Theory that asserts sex stereotypes are based on real differences between women and men that have been overexaggerated and oversimplified.

Masculinity – Gender descriptor, most often associated with men, defined by assertiveness, task orientation, being stoic or emotionless, and independence.

Median split – Statistical technique of organizing data from smallest to largest and then splitting that data in the middle, with numbers above the midpoint considered “high” and below the midpoint considered “low.”

Prejudice – A negative opinion or belief held about a group of people.

Self-fulfilling prophecy – The process by which our beliefs influence how we treat others, which in turn elicits those expected behaviors from those others.

Sex-typed – When one's sex and gender match (i.e., masculine male and feminine female).

Sexism – A form of prejudice/discrimination that is based on the characteristic of sex or gender.

Social role theory – Theory that asserts sex and gender stereotypes are based on the social roles women and men fill in our society.

Stereotypes – Overgeneralized and oversimplified beliefs about people in a recognized category.

Transgender – The feeling or belief that one's gender does not align with one's assigned sex at birth.

Undifferentiated – According to Bem (1977), a gender category of individuals who show few traits of either femininity or masculinity.

LINKS AND LOGIC

<http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/gender-stereotypes-definition-examples-quiz.html>

The Education Portal offers definitions of gender stereotypes, research information, and a quiz to test your understanding.

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/user/agg/blindspot/indexgc.htm>

The Implicit Attitudes Gender Test allows you to test your subconscious attitudes, beliefs, and potential prejudice toward women and men.

<http://eige.europa.eu/content/gender-stereotypes>

The European Institute for Gender Equality provides information, outreach, and ideas for the elimination of gender inequality.

http://www.cracked.com/article_19780_5-gender-stereotypes-that-used-to-be-exact-opposite.html

Some gender stereotypes have changed over time.

<http://garote.bdmonkeys.net/bsri.html>

The Bem Sex Role Inventory can be found online and in interactive form.

<http://www.psychologyofmen.org/gender-role-conflict/>

This site provides information about gender role conflict and other issues in the psychology of men.