

The (not so) Changing Man: Dynamic Gender Stereotypes in Sweden

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Theoretical Background

Social Role Theory states that gender stereotypes follow from an observed division of labour between men and women, which results in a dispositional inference; i.e. if social roles involving caring are carried out by women, women must have caring qualities (Eagly & Wood, 2012).

Past research (e.g. Diekmann & Eagly, 2000) have shown that the female stereotype is dynamic and changes with women's role occupation. The male stereotype has been shown to be less dynamic, possibly due to less change in which roles men occupy.

Sweden provides a possible exception due to a comparatively high degree of parental leave taken by fathers. Furthermore, Sweden has a gender balanced work force participation and strong anti-discrimination legislation.

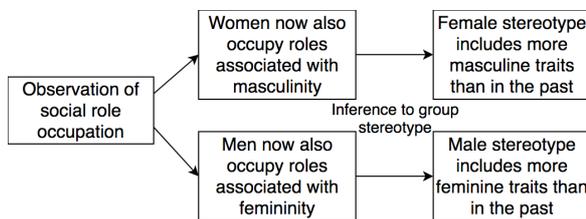


Figure 1. Gender stereotype change in Sweden as predicted by Social Role Theory

Study 1

Sample, design, and measures:

- 2 (Target Gender: women/men) × 3 (Time: 1950, 2017, 2090) between-subjects design
- 399 participants (51% women, 46% men, 2% non-binary, 1% missing data)
- Role nontraditionalism: estimated percentage of counter-stereotypic women and men in gender segregated roles
- Stereotype content: perceived femininity/masculinity, positive and negative

Results:

- Higher nontraditionalism for 2017 than 1950, no difference between 2017 and 2090
- **Overestimation of present-day role nontraditionalism**
- Women higher in masculine traits (both positive and negative) in 2017 than 1950, mediated by increased agentic role-occupation.
- **Men did not differ between times, and stereotype content was not predicted by estimated role nontraditionalism**

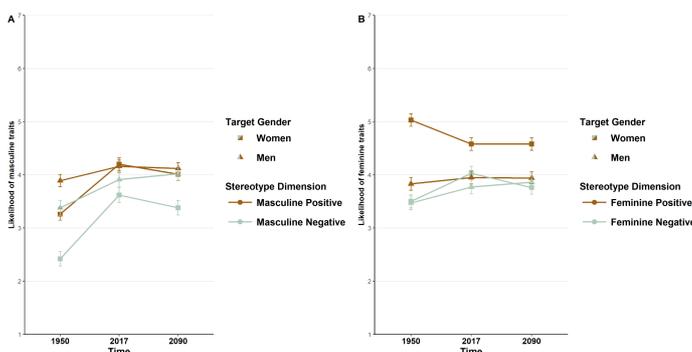


Figure 2. A) change in masculine characteristics over time, B) change in feminine characteristics over time by target gender and dimension valence. Note: Error bars represent standard errors of the means.

Study 2

Aim: Does providing facts about role change in Sweden influence perceptions of role nontraditionalism and/or stereotype content?

Sample, design, and measures:

- 2 (Target Gender: women/men) × 2 (Time: 1950, 2018) × 3 (Framing of Role Change) between-subjects design
- Framing of role change: Changes in women's labour market participation, changes in men's participation in unpaid labour, control group
- 648 participants (74% women, 24% men, 1% non-binary, 1% missing data)
- Role nontraditionalism
- Stereotype content: perceived femininity/masculinity

Results:

- Higher nontraditionalism for 2018 than 1950
- **Overestimation of present-day role nontraditionalism similar to Study 1, framing of role change had no corrective effect**
- Women higher in masculine traits in 2018 than 1950, mediated by increased agentic role-occupation and decreased communal-role-occupation
- **Men decreased in masculine traits from 1950 to 2018, not mediated by increased occupation of communal roles. No change in feminine traits.**

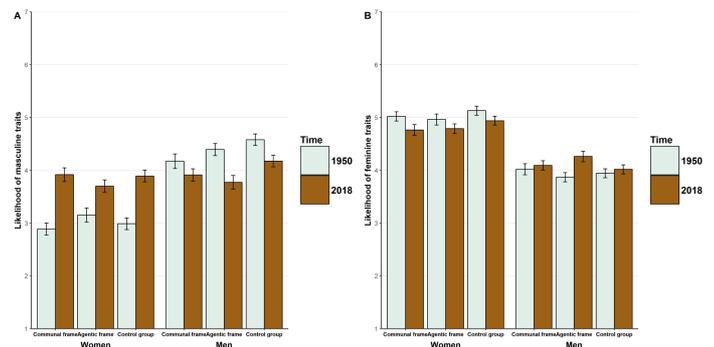


Figure 3. A) change in masculine characteristics over time by framing of role change and target gender, B) change in feminine characteristics over time by framing of role change and target gender. Note: Error bars represent standard errors of the means.

Discussion

- When women increase their participation in roles previously dominated by men, masculine traits increase in the female stereotype
- **Perceived increase of men in roles previously dominated by women had no effect on degree of feminine traits in the male stereotype**
- **Participants consistently overestimated the degree of social role nontraditionalism present in Sweden today**
- Changes in role occupation and gender stereotype content was not expected to continue in the future: Sweden seen as already gender equal?
- Different mechanisms underlying changes in female and male stereotype content

References

Diekmann, A. B., & Eagly, A. H. (2000). Stereotypes as Dynamic Constructs: Women and Men of the Past, Present, and Future. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 26(10), 1171–1188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167200262001>
Eagly, A. H., & Wood, W. (2012). Social Role Theory. *Handbook of Theories of Social Psychology: Volume 2*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd. Retrieved from http://sk.sagepub.com/reference/hdbk_socialpsychtheories2. doi:10.4135/9781446249222

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