

Gender Stereotyping of Occupations as a Function of Perceivers' Sex, Age, and Familiarity with the Occupation

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Problem: Public perceptions of particular occupations as "masculine" or "feminine" are of interest as "equal employment opportunity" legislation has led to increased sexual integration of many occupations which were previously held predominantly by either men or women.

The present study examines the strength of gender stereotyping for ten occupations chosen to represent the masculinity-femininity spectrum. Based on implicit personality theory and past research on social stereotypes, it is hypothesized that males show stronger gender stereotyping than females, older persons show more gender stereotyping than younger persons, and that greater familiarity with an occupation leads to less gender stereotyping of that occupation.

Method: Ten occupations were rated by 227 subjects (98 males) on a 52-adjective Likert-type rating scale designed to indicate gender stereotyping. Subjects ranged in age from 18 to 56 years and were selected to represent a broad range of occupations, including those rated. Subjects' familiarity with each occupation was rated on a Guttman-type scale.

Results: Occupations were stereotyped in order from masculine to feminine: Bus Driver, Business Executive, Physician, Computer Programmer, Real Estate Agent, High School Teacher, Librarian, Nurse, Secretary, and Fashion Model.

The strength of stereotyping was significantly positively correlated with subjects' age and sex (males showing stronger stereotypes). Greater familiarity with an occupation was associated with significantly less gender stereotyping of that occupation, except for fashion models.

This empirical support of the study's hypotheses implies some success of public-policy efforts toward reducing sex-role stereotypes of younger persons, but also indicates the tenacity of these stereotypes, especially for men.

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