

Well-behaved women seldom make history – Introduction to stereotypes

The word “**stereotype**” is defined by Merriam and Webster’s online dictionary as:
to believe unfairly that all people or things with a particular characteristic are the same

Gender Stereotyping

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The gender stereotyping of men and women has a profound impact on our society. Due to the advances made in recent years to establish equality between the sexes, society reflects fewer attitudes that support discrimination and inequality between men and women. However, even though we are liberated in our beliefs and attitudes, many of our actions are still influenced by gender stereotyping and misconceptions about men and women that have been passed down through the generations. In spite of their stated values, a surprising number of people today relate to each other based on a gender stereotype.

We learn prejudicial attitudes at an early age from observing the stereotypical roles that people in our families assume. As we progress through school, these attitudes are reinforced by our classmates and peers. They are also supported by the unspoken biases of our teachers and by the arrangement of educational programs.

The media is guilty of exploiting the differences between men and women and of exaggerating gender stereotypes of men and women to sell products.

The residuals of these sexist prejudices in our lives today portray men as masterful, powerful, paternalistic and uncommunicative, and women as emotionally responsive and communicative, yet childlike, helpless and incompetent. These distortions of the sexes are divisive, and interfere with our being intimate and loving in our close relationships. The social pressure exerted by these attitudes is as damaging to couple relationships as racial prejudice is to relations between people of different ethnic backgrounds.

Each gender stereotype confuses people’s thinking about the differences between men and women. These timeworn attitudes overstate the qualities that distinguish men and women, and place the two sexes in artificial categories.

Common Gender Stereotypes of Men:

Men are tough and powerful.

Men are unfeeling and insensitive.

Men are logical, sensible and rational.

Men are afraid to commit in a relationship and form an attachment.

Men are primarily interested in their careers or vocations.

Men do not have a primary interest in marriage and parenthood.

Common Gender Stereotypes of Women:

Women are helpless and childish.

Women are sensitive and intuitive.

Women are scatterbrained, unstable and irrational.

Women can easily form deep emotional attachments.

Women do not have a primary interest in their careers or vocations.

Women are primarily interested in a long term relationship and parenthood.

When we look at the way society sees men and then at how it views women, we can see that society actually pits men and women against each other.

Some Gender stereotypes that pit men and women against each other include:

Men are tough and powerful, not helpless and childish like women.

Women are sensitive and intuitive, not unfeeling and insensitive like men.

Men are logical, sensible and rational, not scatterbrained, unstable and irrational like women.

Women easily form deep emotional attachments, they aren't afraid to commit in a relationship and form an attachment like men are.

Men are primarily interested in their careers or vocations; these are not secondary interests as they are with women.

Women are primarily interested in a long term relationship and parenthood; these are not secondary interests as they are with men.

In actuality, there are many more significant things that men and women share in common than divide us.

Some truths about both men and women are:

Most men and women are feelingful and emotionally expressive. Most also struggle with their defenses against feeling.

Most women and men are interested in business, finance, scientific ideas, mechanical matters, politics and abstract ideas.

Most men and women are interested in domestic activities such as design, cooking, childrearing and fashion.

Most women and men find satisfaction in having a career or vocation.

Most men and women have a strong desire for a lasting affiliation with the opposite sex.

Most women and men have a strong interest in procreation and parenthood.

Most men and women have a very strong desire to be in love with each other.