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<p style="text-align:center">The Initialization, Reinforcement, and Implications of Gender Bias</p>

The phrases "real men don't cry" and "women should look flawless" are common stereotypes in our society. Stereotyping consists of a widely held or simplified belief of a group of people, usually based on race, sex, gender, or ethnicity. Today's society holds very specific sets of ideas that have been the forefront in influencing and determining gender roles. The narrowed mindset on how men and women are to dress, express and present themselves, and expected mannerisms is evident.

There are two different ways stereotyping can occur: hostile and benign stereotyping. Hostile stereotyping can be as simple as the assumption that men are aggressive and women are irrational. Contrarily, benign stereotypes include that women are nurturing. However, it isn't the stereotype itself that affects how society works, but the way people accept them, often unknowingly. For example, as this benign assumption of women being nurturing is widely agreed upon, it has asserted women's dominance in being responsible for child care.

There are four different ways to be stereotyped, regardless of the type, either benign or hostile. Personality traits, occupation, physical appearance, and domestic behavior are the four main ways people generally stereotype men and women. As for personality traits, women are termed as docile and complaisant, whereas men are usually characterized as authoritative. A lot of individuals also inadvertently assume women are nurses and teachers and men are engineers, doctors, and construction workers. It is expected that women and men hold very specific appearances. Women are expected to uphold a specific dress code, wearing makeup, dresses, and

heels. Men also have a gender specific dress code, wearing suits, pants, and short hairstyles. Domestically, women are usually expected to take care of the house, including caring for the children, cooking, and cleaning. Men, on the other hand, are generally expected to take care of working and finances.

Gender stereotyping, such as those examples, are exemplified through social media, marketing, the workplace, and in our own homes. For example, The Super Bowl is known for their most memorable commercials; however, a lot are sexist and demeaning. The airing of the Mr. Clean commercial attempted to appeal to women and played on the idea that men don't usually clean. Therefore, when they do, they should be rewarded with sex, as the tagline reiterates, "You gotta love a man who cleans."

Gender Socialization

Where we see the most impact in the childhood development of gender stereotyping is when they are exposed to adults. Children learn these behaviors through the people they are surrounded by every day. Whether it be parents, caregivers, teachers, or even strangers, children absorb the actions and words they see and hear, which include actions and words about gender. In an effort to explore the relationship among children and caretakers, a study was conducted that focused on gender behavior. Children learn through "play time" or "playing." One of the main points to take away from this study is that what children play, they learn. Therefore, playing should never be trivialized. When observing a private childcare center, the researchers focused their interests on determining whether the interactions between child and caregiver were gender neutral, gender stereotyped, or breaking barriers. Over this five-week period, the study showed significant inequities in gender that are usually present in a grammar school setting. Specifically, boys were positively reinforced for their physical skills. Girls, on the other hand, were positively

reinforced for their clothes and hairstyles. Findings also included that boys were given more attention than girls. Consequently, the boys seemed to exert more power and dominance over the girls even when their ratio between the number of boys to girls was equal. While kids are in childcare, they learn what it means to be a boy or a girl, and act on the positive reinforcement given by caretakers, whether it be gender neutral, gender stereotyped, or breaking barriers. Therefore, it is crucial to understand the value in how not only caregivers should treat the children, but how anyone surrounded by children should be attentive in reinforcing gender-fair behaviors.[1]

The actions adults make every single day affect the development of children as young as being in preschool. As another way to exhibit this affect, researchers explored the consequences of adult's gender stereotypes on children. They found that preschoolers, like adults, experience gender backlash from adults if not conforming to the ideal norms created by the adults. Those who violated the "gender norms" established were rated less likable by the adults than their stereotype-conforming peers. Furthermore, when boys exhibited the same characteristics as girls, characterized as being feminine, they were rated substantially less likeable than the other boys and girls. Any boy who violated the gender norms was also rated less positively than the girls. The knowledge that boys and girls are rated based on the way they act or the toys they play with is unfortunate and can impact their lives negatively. However, to know that these judgments can come from well-established adults is even more shocking, as this study portrays. Since adults have their own set of gender norms, they are pushed upon young individuals and are the cause of a lot of their punishment. Through this study, it is important to note that the backlash the adults have faced throughout their lives affects children as young as three years old through the reinforcement of these traditional gender roles.[2]

The influence adults have on the development of gender stereotypes on children is evident through these studies. However, do these children partake in this type of behavior voluntarily or is it only through learned behavior? To further look into this issue, researchers explored children's perceptions of others' social expectations of gender. They did this by examining the different socializations that girls and boys have while playing with toys look further into this issue. Each child was put into a playroom that consisted of a dish set, a tool set, and clothing. They were given different toy demonstrations, either being task-related gender-typed information, task-unrelated gender-typed info, or no additional information before they started playing. Task-related gender-typed information included an explanation that the dish set was for girls and the tool set was for boys. Task-unrelated gender-typed information included noting that the pink set of clothes were for girls and the blue set of clothes were for boys. These different types of demonstrations were crucial in seeing if they impacted children's toy choices. The different types of situational information influenced children's toy choices when they had familiar sources who thought cross-gender typed play was "bad," meaning that it had been taught to them. This exemplifies that children only partake in gender-stereotypical behavior when it has already been taught to them. The information we give to children can affect their cognitive development in terms of what boys and girls think they are able to do. If girls are taught that playing with dishes is what they should do, then it becomes a norm for them. This can impact their future mindset into believing they should be a housewife. This holds true for boys as well. By teaching them they should be playing with the tool set, boys are being limited in what they could potentially perceive as an acceptable occupation in the future.[3]

Gender stereotyping is a learned behavior and it is important to understand how it can affect children's development further as well as the setbacks children may face. When examining

whether elementary-aged kids endorse specific stereotypes about sexualized girls relative to non-sexualized girls, the results support that gender-related biases are evident. Being sexualized can be described as being valued for being sexually appealing, sexually objectified, or having sexuality inappropriately forced on them. When children were asked to categorize two different types of girls, there was a great difference in traits of the sexualized girl versus the nonsexualized girl. Before learning what these differences are, it can already be established that girls' characteristics are biased on how they appear on the exterior. Gender attitudes is a major component in endorsing this. The sexualized girls were described as more popular, nicer, and not as smart as the nonsexualized girls. This suggests that since these gender attitudes are associated with academic abilities, sports participation, and prosocial development, they may be harmful for elementary children who are in the process of developing these abilities and could limit their potential to excel in these areas.[4]

Television/Social Media and their Influence on Gender Attitudes

There are other factors besides adults that promote and endorse this gender bias, such as TV and social media. In this century, social media is the forefront of everyday life for young children and adolescents. Children spend the majority of their time buried in their phone, iPad, or tv screen. Something as seemingly as harmless as television shows can change children's perceptions about the world, affecting how they view other people and themselves. Shows can alter children's beliefs on how they should dress, act and goals they set, including the jobs they aspire to have. Ranging from ages seven to eleven, children were asked to explain what kind of job they aspired to have. According to the results, forty-five percent of the children were influenced by TV/media. Within that forty-five percent, thirty-six percent of boys wanted to be sportsmen and nineteen percent of girls wanted to be teachers. Another report discusses that the

tendency for boys to be attracted to physical and technical occupations, as well as girls having the tendency to be interested in creative and caring jobs is still evident in our society. This shows that there should be a closer tie between employers and schools to ensure that children are able to have an awareness about different career paths they are able to have.[5]

Occupations are not the only negative bias being reinforced through the media. Sexual interaction has been endorsed by the media and various apps between both sexes. Unfortunately, studies discovered that these increasing rates are causing sexual abuse in girls to be considered a norm. This social norm is detrimental to the wellbeing of both men and women and is being reinforced. Social media has negative effects on the lives of children, not only with an increase in gender stereotyping, but specifically in sexualizing men and women, as well as creating these specific sexual roles in men and women. The internet and the ever-growing technological advancements have been negatively impacting the innocence of children and adolescents.

Advertisements as well-known as Super Bowl commercials present society with extreme gender attitudes that influence how they perceive the world around them. Portraying women as strong, equal counterparts has been the least of these commercials' worries. Instead, they have opted to portray women in a sexual, inferior light. Creating women as sex objects has been the forefront in helping promote and sell products ranging from cars, to beers, to hamburgers. There are many other sexist commercials besides Mr. Clean's advertisement about men who should be rewarded with sex if they clean. Not only has the objectification of women been evident, there seems to be less than twenty-five percent of Super Bowl commercials that actually include women.

Budweiser, a well-established beer company, illustrated a ref being able to tune out a nagging coach, the reason for this being that he tunes out his nagging wife at home. This

commercial illustrates that men who can tune out their nagging wife should be awarded with a nice cold beer. Furthermore, it is not surprising to have models in lingerie for a Victoria's Secret commercial, as that is exactly what they sell. However, lingerie is not the only thing they sell to TV watchers. In order to sell their products, they feed into the idea that women should have a sex appeal for men. In their 2015 Super Bowl commercial, they strongly suggest that women should be waiting in lingerie for men to finish watching the game instead of watching with them. This idea that women should be sexual images is less than appealing to potential buyers of the product. However, time and time again, gender stereotyping is evident among even the most watched commercials of the entire year.

Implications of Gender Stereotypes

Gender stereotyping, being learned from adults, is reinforced through TV, various apps, and other forms of social media. The implications it has on the real world is evident when looking at occupational statistics. The assumption that men are caretakers and providers of the family has been a widely accepted idea. This stereotype, along with others, could be the reason for the gender wage gap. As of 2019, women are paid seventy-nine cents to every dollar men make, looking at the median salary for both genders, regardless of the job type or title/seniority. As seen in this gender wage gap, the gender attitudes are affecting the shape of our nation, where we now implement a false representation of the abilities of men and women. For example, even though women are almost half of the workforce and receive more college and graduate degrees than men, gender attitudes that have been deeply rooted are affecting their ability to succeed and prosper as well as men do.

Analyses of the role gender stereotyping plays in managerial positions for men and women sought to highlight the higher male representation in this position compared to women. It focuses

on highlighting and showcasing one of the many inequalities between men and women in the workforce. They make a key point to explain that the Law has helped to regulate direct discrimination based on gender, maternity, or sexual identification, but it is the indirect discrimination that remains a huge problem in our society. There are actually different types of discrimination seen among genders, such as vertical and horizontal segregation. The majority of the unequal representation of managerial positions is due largely to the disconnect between labor and family requirements. Therefore, it is important to urge for the development of flexible jobs that provide enough benefits to help solve this problem. Many statements have tried to describe why there is so much discrimination regarding this issue. The researchers gathered and analyzed data collected through a questionnaire and hypothesized that most of the top management positions would be held by men and that women would be at the lower levels of management. Their results showed that in the top-level management positions, there was a 4:1 ratio men:women in these positions. Ninety-six percent of the subjects agreed that women have the abilities and skill set that men do to hold these top positions, which shows they are aware of the inequalities. However, most subjects reasoned that there are less women in top positions due to the traditional role of women as mothers and caretakers. This research highlights the existence of stereotypes in the workforce and still substantially influence society.[7]

As most of society may agree that gender biases must be stopped, a lot of people unknowingly maintain these traditional gender norms. There can be gendered wording in newspaper articles and can influence people's perceptions of occupations without even knowing. Researchers have documented analyses that gendered wording commonly used in job recruitment materials can maintain gender inequalities, specifically in a male-dominated workplace. The first studies demonstrated that there are subtle word differences in a randomly

sampled set of job advertisements. These results showed that there are greater masculine wordings, such as leader, competitive, and dominant, for male-dominated occupations. The next study sought to understand the consequences that highly masculine wording had on people's perceptions of who dominated that occupation. When the advertisements had more masculine wording than feminine, participants in the study perceived more men than women in the occupation. Moreover, participants who were women were finding the job less appealing. For companies looking to hire and that showcase their jobs through newspapers, it is exemplified that in these job advertisements, they use to their advantage the gender stereotypes that are held by society. They use this feeling on belongingness, instead of perceived skills, to attract potential workers. This portrays how society allows companies, through the use of advertising, to maintain this traditional gender division that has been created and cycled through generations.[8]

Transgender Stereotyping

As the extensive stereotypes between cisgender individuals, those who identify as the sex they were born as, has been made evident, there is another division of gender bias, more specifically transgender stereotyping. Those who are transgender people, individuals whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with their birth sex, also receive backlash for the way they identify their gender. They may experience the stigmatization through the application of gender stereotypes. Researchers conducted two studies to understand and discuss distinct ways transgender people receive these stigmas. The first study indicated that cisgender individuals devised attributes that had a unique yet extremely negative qualities, such as "mentally ill" and "confused," to transgender populations, but not cisgender populations. The second study rated these unique qualities of the transgender people more negatively than cisgender individuals. Although this is relatively new information and society is still trying to

understand and grasp the concept of transgender stereotyping, this research sought to broaden and enhance the knowledge of nontraditional transgender identities.[9]

Not only do transgender people receive bias in their everyday lives, they also receive gender discrimination in the workforce. When examining the amount of gender influenced bias in the workforce, researchers decided to assess whether qualified men and women who were transgender were rated less positively than qualified men and women who were cisgender. They measured each applicants' perceived competence, likability, and hirability. It was hypothesized that transgender individuals would only receive bias against likability and hirability, but not for their perceived competence. The results indicated that besides being acknowledged as equally competent, transgender men and women were, in fact, rated less likable than cisgender applicants. Through this study, the extensive gender discrimination in the workforce against transgender individuals has been made evident. In a follow-up study, the same researchers tested the efficacy of how an imagined intergroup contact (IIC) would alter the biases seen in the previous study. IIC is a mental simulation of social interaction with a member or members of an outgroup category, such as being transgender. The goal of IIC is to improve attitudes, emotions, behavioral intentions, and intergroup behaviors toward stigmatized groups. They split their subjects into two groups, the IIC intervention group and the control group, who did not receive IIC. They found the control group saw transgender and cisgender people to be equally competent, but rated transgender people less likable and less hirable. Of importance, the IIC intervention group exhibited a significant reduction in gender identity differences. They were more likely to take the perspective of the transgender individuals and forming positive intergroup relationships, showcasing a possible way to combat gender influenced bias in the workforce.[10]

The negative biases seen, such as the attributes listed in the previous studies, could be the cause of a number of problems for transgender people, such as feelings of anxiety, depression, suicidal thoughts, or gender dysphoria, which is the psychological distress from identifying with the opposite sex than the one given at birth. In the twenty-first century, the rate of self-harm and suicide are higher than in the general population, about forty percent of transgender persons endorse suicidality.[11]

Challenging Gender Inequality

Looking at these statistics, the words and attitudes people within society use to identify an individual can seriously impact the way they think about themselves. In today's society, strides are being taken in order to not only decrease the gender stereotyping taken place, but also reverse the mindsets that people have developed. Programs, such as the Me Too Campaign, have made strides in having women's voices heard in regards to sexual assault, which could be contributed to gender attitudes of women seen as sexual objects. Nonetheless, these ideas and attitudes are learned behavior. Whether these stereotypes are taught by parents, teachers, caregivers, or strangers, they affect how children develop the ideals they hold and believe in. In reinforcing gender norms, social media takes the forefront through music, commercials, and ads. The media feeds on the attitudes established at a young age, further diminishing the true potential men and women can have without gender biases. These learned behaviors hinder our characteristics and abilities as men and women. With this in mind, it is extremely crucial for society to gain knowledge about stereotyping. It is important to not only learn about ways one can eliminate bias among young individuals, but also being able to identify them in the media. With extensive knowledge on gender stereotyping, in the future, society may be able to provide equality for individuals, including the gender wage gap still present today. Being informed is the first step to

diminish gender biases, whether they be cisgender or transgender biases. It is time to recognize

that gender stereotyping, although seemingly innocuous, have serious consequences, impeding

on the opportunities and life experiences of individuals, and work towards breaking this cycle of

gender norms. Gender equality can be a beautiful goal attained, providing acceptance of people's

individuality, improved freedoms, strengthened families, and gender-related peace among

societies.

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