# The good, the bad, and the male:
# Men, but not women, avoid own-gender stereotypical judgments of affective valence.

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**Abstract**

We examine gender differences in the endorsement of gender-stereotypical judgments of the affective valence of social concepts. Sociological as well as social psychological theories indicate that individuals are inclined to behave in ways concordant with prevailing roles and corresponding stereotypes. Recent debates suggest gender biases in the social desirability of gender-stereotype endorsement. We use words with apparent gender differences in perceived affective valence and ask participants to (a) rate the valence of each word, (b) estimate how, in general, same-sex individuals would rate the word, and (c) estimate how, in general, opposite-sex individuals would rate the word. Results show that female participants' self-ratings align with their estimated ratings of the majority of women, whereas male participants' self-ratings notably deviate from their estimated male majority ratings. We interpret these results as a consequence of a declining esteem of stereotypically male attributes in society.

Keywords: *Emotion, valence, gender, stereotype, social roles*

# The good, the bad, and the male: Men, but not women, avoid own-gender stereotypical judgments of affective valence.

Biological sex is often referred to as one of the most basic sources of social identity in contemporary societies (Wood & Eagly, 2009). The manifold differences rooted in social and cultural framings that frequently go hand in hand with biological sex are usually referred to as gender (Wharton, 2005; Brannon, 2010). The concept of gender refers to – among other things – social roles and generalized expectations related to being male or female and to corresponding behaviors that represent common conceptions of gender identity and gender roles (Lindsey, 2010; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). Under conditions of salient gender identity and gender role expectations, women and men tend to perceive the self as similar to or dissimilar from idealized same-sex individuals in terms of psychological (e.g., attitudes, traits), behavioral (e.g., motor behavior, physical appearance), and socio-cultural (e.g., social norms, roles) attributes. Perceptions of similarity or dissimilarity are usually based on stereotypical information about same- and opposite-sex individuals (descriptive gender norms) as well as on normative information on what is socially expected and adequate (prescriptive gender norms) (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Wood & Eagly, 2009; Prentice & Carranza, 2002). In this respect, gender stereotypes can be conceived of as "the descriptive aspects of gender roles, as they depict the attributes that an individual ascribes to a group of people" (Eisenchlas, 2013, p. 2). Endorsement of and conformity to existing gender stereotypes account for a large number of social and behavioral differences between men and women (Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, & Redersdorff, 2006; Granié, 2009). Moreover, it is common that the

violation of gender norms, i.e. deviating from gender stereotypical patterns of behavior, for instance in occupational contexts, is to some extent subject to informal sanctions, such as social rejection or ostracism (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Carver, Yunger, & Perry, 2003).

Given these normative aspects of gender roles and stereotypes, it is a largely unresolved question how men and women attitudinally and behaviorally relate to gender stereotypes, in particular those reflecting their own gender. Although research has addressed this question with studies inspired by self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987), stereotype-avoidance theory (Wegner, 1994), and social identity theory (Hogg, 1985), these studies predominantly focus on identification with explicit gender stereotypical attitudes and beliefs. However, few studies have addressed differences between men and women in endorsing what they *subjectively believe* to be stereotypically male or female attitudes (e.g., Leander, Chartrand, & Wood, 2011).

The present study addresses these questions by investigating gender-specific judgments of the affective valence (i.e., the perceived positivity vs. negativity) of different social concepts. Our study circumvents the issue of exogenously describing and activating gender stereotypes and only then asking participants how they relate to these stereotypes (as is done in many existing studies). In contrast, our design makes gender roles and stereotypes salient by asking male and female participants what they believe how men and women in general perceive certain concepts and subsequently assesses participants' own subjective perceptions of these concepts. Before we describe the study in more detail, we first discuss pertinent theories of how men and women relate to gender

stereotypes. We then present methods and results of two studies assessing the valence of concepts known to be perceived differently by men and women. Finally, we summarize and discuss our findings.

## Gender Stereotype Endorsement

Although there is a broad variety of research on gender stereotypes (see Prentice and Carranza, 2002, for an overview), comparably little is known about how individuals relate to own gender stereotypes. Swan and Wyer (1997, p. 1266) have reviewed studies on how certain stereotypes affect judgments of self and others and derived a number of hypotheses based on McGuire's distinctiveness theory (McGuire, 1984; McGuire & McGuire, 1981) that are instructive for understanding gender stereotype endorsement. According to self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), individuals tend to perceive themselves in terms of social category membership, e.g. as men or women. Self-categorization leads to perceiving the self as part of a social category whose stereotypical attributes become more important for one's self-image when category membership is salient. For example, Hogg and Turner (1987) have shown that subjects rated themselves to be more gender stereotypical when in mixed-gender groups as compared to same-sex groups. In contrast, stereotype avoidance theory (Wegner 1994) posits that individuals may find it socially undesirable to conform to stereotypical expectations and thus avoid presenting themselves in line with stereotypical attributes when gender is made salient (Swan & Wyer, 1997). Finally, social identity theory points at status differences between social categories and people's tendency to endorse and align with status superior attributes. Therefore, predictions derived from social identity theory may include distinct effects for men and women in identifying with own-gender stereotypical attitudes, a

phenomenon that has received some empirical support, although with mixed results (Hogg, 1985; Piliavin & Martin, 1978). Regarding status differences between men and women (e.g., Massey, 2007, Ch. 6), Swan and Wyer (1997) reported that both men and women describe themselves as more masculine – apparently because of the higher desirability of male vs. female stereotypes.

Rather than focusing on status differences and social mobility in interpreting social identity theory (Swan & Wyer, 1997), we hypothesize that the explicit and deliberate endorsement of male and female stereotypes is subject to individual appraisals of the social desirability to be "typically male" or "typically female". Research indicates that these appraisals are influenced by constantly changing roles and role behaviors, which in turn also dynamically shape stereotype content (Diekman & Eagly, 2000). However, changes in gender roles and gender stereotype content are unlikely to follow identical trajectories for men and women. The increasing similarity between male and female gender roles (Lindsey, 2010) might affect the endorsement of own-gender stereotypical attributes for men and women differently.

Whereas Diekman and Eagly (2000) hold that these changes predominantly affect female roles and stereotypes due to more significant transformations in women's roles over the past decades, recent research on masculinities (e.g., Bridges & Pascoe, 2014; Connell, 2005; Reeser, 2010) suggests major changes also in male gender norms and roles as well as in men's endorsement of stereotypically male attributes. Some argue that these changes, which are often seen as emanating from substantial progress in overcoming the discrimination of women, are fueled by a widely shared perception that this overcoming is associated with increasingly positive views of stereotypically female

attributes, and, conversely, to increasingly negative views of stereotypically male attributes. For instance, the Spanish newspaper El País (2011) wrote that men in Spain, a country with an notable public debate on domestic violence, were ceding to make compliments to female strangers in the streets – which can yet be considered a feature of traditional Mediterranean culture – because this allegedly reflects a view of women as being at the disposition of male dominance and may foster sexual harassment. Similarly, in the discourse on pornography – but reverberating far beyond – feminist positions have labeled the "male gaze" on the female body as "always contemptuous" (Jelinek, 1989) and feminist movie theory generally describes the "male gaze" as abasing women to sexual objects (e.g., Mulvey, 1975).

The question arises how men would integrate such negative views into the way they see themselves. A shift in the social desirability of respective gender stereotypes is similarly evident when, for instance, male characters in contemporary literature (e.g., Heller, 1987; Lind, 1994) are suggested to lack emotional maturity because they maintain sexual relations with different women whereas women with several sexual relations are admired for having liberated themselves from the traditional, oppressive gender role. Only a few decades ago, commentators would have been more likely to praise men's virility and devaluated women's morality.

These examples suggest how social desirability and moral judgments concerning gender stereotypes depend on changing relations between the two sexes. Obviously, this perspective is not only invoked by feminist scholars but also by the "men's rights" or "backlash" movements (e.g., the mythopoetic *Iron John* movement) that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s in reaction to some of the (unintended) consequences of feminist

movements and women's emancipation (for academic responses in see Connell, 2001; Reeser, 2010). No matter what perspective is taken here, at the core of these cultural changes are substantial reconfigurations of "masculinity" and stereotypically male attributes and attitudes. These reconfigurations, fueled by constant negotiation, discourse, political and ideological debate, most likely do not go without consequences for the social desirability and the individual endorsement of what is deemed stereotypically male and female.

## The Present Research

To investigate how men and women relate to stereotypes regarding their own gender, we devised two experiments on gender-specific and gender stereotypical judgments of the affective meanings of a broad variety of social concepts. In this study, concepts (i.e., words) were taken from an affective lexicon, the *Berlin Affective Word List* (BAWL; Vo, Jacobs, & Conrad, 2006; Vo et al., 2009) that contains valence ratings for thousands of words by male and female raters.

Such affective lexica, containing normative ratings for the perceived valence or arousal of words, provide a general means to study the interplay between language and emotions, for example in emotional word processing (Conrad, Recio, & Jacobs, 2011; Recio, Conrad, Hansen, & Jacobs, 2014) or in sentiment mining in the social web and other domains (e.g., Thelwall & Kappas, 2014). However, words have also been shown to imply strongly gendered connotations with words' valence being part of gender stereotypical behavior (Lenton, Sedikides, & Bruder, 2009). These gendered connotations of words are presumably already reflected in male vs. female ratings in these lexica and they should be particularly evident when gender is made salient while rating a word's

valence or arousal (which is usually not the case in typical rating studies from which affective lexica are generated). Based on this assumption, we asked participants to indicate not only how they themselves perceive a word's valence (the standard task to obtain ratings for affective lexica), but also what they believe how same- and opposite-sex individuals *generally* perceive a word's valence. We thus take subjects' general beliefs about how same- and opposite-sex individuals perceive specific words as indicators of *stereotypical* judgments of the valence of the various concepts we assessed.

Importantly, and unlike previous studies, our approach does not rely on explicit information regarding gender stereotype content, but rather makes use of established gender differences in the perception of words' valence according to existing affective lexica, which are exclusively acquired under conditions in which gender is *not* a salient category. Knowing how men and women in fact differ in their perceptions of the valence of words – as is evident from gender differences in mean affective rating values in an existing lexicon (BAWL, Vo et al., 2006, 2009) – allows comparing subjects' beliefs about generalized same- and opposite-sex perceptions of valence with (a) their very own responses under conditions of salient gender identity, and with (b) previously established ("de facto") differences between men and women.

## Study 1

### Methods

**Participants.** Twenty-seven female and 27 male psychology students from Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, took part in the study.

**Materials.** We selected 171 German words from the BAWL (rated for perceived valence on 7-point scales from -3 =*very negative* to +3 =*very positive*) according to a

factorial manipulation (factor *Word Category*) of most pronounced differences in the existing ratings between male and female raters in the BAWL database. Words were assigned to three categories, each containing 57 words (see Appendix for the complete stimulus material): (1) Gender neutral words, for which mean ratings from male respondents in the BAWL equal mean ratings by female respondents (category *neutral:* e.g., “Talent” (talent), “Detail”, (detail), or “illegal" (illegal)); (2) words rated more positively by male than by female BAWL respondents (mean male-female rating difference > 1.00) (category *positive male,* equals *more negative* for females; e.g., “Blitz” (lightning), “Metzger” (butcher), “Tabak” (tobacco)); and (3) words rated more positively by female than by male respondents in the BAWL (mean male-female rating difference < -1.00) (category *positive female;* equals *more negative* for males; e.g., “Ewigkeit” (eternity), “Hexe” (witch), “Palast” (palace)).

Note that already this selection of many words with considerable gender differences in perceived valence makes gender a salient category in the subsequent rating task (in addition to the explicit gender ratings, see below). The global means (regardless of respondents’ gender) of valence ratings of selected words were held constant across experimental conditions. Furthermore, global means span the entire range of the 7-point scale to introduce no further bias. This mean “global” valence was used as a covariate in our analyses. Table 1 shows relevant characteristics of the selected words.

<Table 1 about here>

**Procedure.** All words were presented in randomized order on a computer screen. Participants were asked to answer the following questions for each target word: “How would you rate this word?” (*self-rating*), “What do you think how women [men; always

same sex] in general would rate this word?" (*same-sex*), and "What do you think how men [women; always opposite sex] in general would rate this word?" (*opposite-sex*). The questions were always presented in identical order and participants were instructed to rate each word on a 7-point scale (-3 =*very negative to +3 =very positive*) displayed below each word. Analytically, these three consecutive questions define the within-subjects factor *Gender Perspective*. All stimuli and instructions were presented in German. For sake of brevity, only English translations are henceforth used for examples illustrating given effects.

**Results**

Mean ratings were submitted to separate analyses of variance (ANOVAs) for participants and items (F1 and F2).

**Stereotypical beliefs regarding gender differences.** We first tested whether the previously established gender differences in valence ratings of words according to the BAWL (within-subjects factor *Word Category*, i.e. words rated more positively vs. more negatively by the respective gender vs. no gender differences) are mirrored by participants' ratings of presumed stereotypical *same-* and *opposite-gender* ratings, including participant sex as a between-subjects factor.

To investigate whether a stereotypical representation of established gender differences would generalize over participant sexes, we first analyzed data pertaining to same and opposite gender ratings using a 3 x 2 ANOVA (*Word Category* x participant sex; only F1, averaging over participants). Note that this implies a flexible coding of *Word Category* ("gender neutral" vs. "more positive" vs. "less positive *for the respective*

*gender*" depending on individual participant's sex[1]) for which we found a highly significant main effect, F1 (2,104) =129.89, $p < .0001$, $\eta p^2 = .714$, indicating that participants' *same* and *opposite* ratings align with how men and women had rated these words in the affective lexicon without gender being a salient category. Valence ratings were more positive in the "more positive" condition for the respective gender than for words from the gender-neutral condition, and more negative for words in the "more negative" condition. Put differently, participants' beliefs concerning which words would be perceived more positively by men than by women, or the inverse, tally with gender differences as established in the BAWL affective lexicon.

For example, words like "beer", "to booze", "(female) lover", "cigar", or "mechanics" that belong to the "more positive for men" category were consistently given

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[1] Note that this coding of established gender differences in our materials allows a joint analysis of effects for the factor *Word Category* across different *Gender Perspectives* (*same*, *opposite*) and participant sexes (male, female). Note also that an item multifactor analysis cannot be conducted in this case, since a single item always has a fixed value concerning the established gender differences in our materials, which turns into the opposite for the respective alternative gender, i.e., "more positive" for men equals "more negative" for women. In turn, we apply the original coding of *Word Category* ("gender neutral" vs. "more positive for women" vs. "more positive for men") only when focusing either on one gender perspective (self vs. own vs. other) or on one participant sex – being able to perform both F1 and F2 analyses in these latter cases.

more positive ratings when participants had to estimate stereotypical "male" as compared to "female" judgments. The opposite was true for "marriage", "cosmetics", "magic", "sensitive", or "talkative" that belong to the "more positive for women" category.[2]

These findings do not only validate the gender differences present in the affective lexicon, but also demonstrate that these differences are matched by participants' stereotypical *beliefs* about them. Results thus show that participants are well aware of what women (according to the affective lexicon) perceive as more positively ("marriage", "cosmetics", "sensitive") or negatively ("to booze", "beer", "cigar") compared to men and vice versa. The absence of an interaction between this effect and participant sex ($F<1$) suggests that this is true for both male and female participants.

Additional analyses of effects of the factor *Word Category* (using the more simple coding "gender neutral" vs. "more positive for women" vs. "more positive for men" suitable for less complex ANOVAs for only one gender perspective) over participants and items show that for both, the female ("What do you think how women in general would rate this word?"), $F1\ (2,104) = 119.67$, $p < .0001$, $\eta p^2 = .697$; $F2\ (2,168) = 22.06$, $p < .0001$, $\eta p^2 = .210$, and the male ("What do you think how men in general would rate this word?") perspectives, $F1\ (2,104) = 57.02$, $p < .0001$, $\eta p^2 = .523$; $F2\ (2,168) = 14.74$, $p < .0001$, $\eta p^2$

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[2] We present those stimulus words as examples throughout the article for which effects were most pronounced. Examples may thus illustrate effects, but single words do not necessarily represent the entire semantic space of a stimulus category (hence, see the Appendix for the complete materials).

=.151, our participants' beliefs are similar to the established differences in the affective lexicon.

Both of these *Word Category* effects did not show interactions with participant sex, suggesting that representations of respective male or female stereotypes are shared across male and female participants. For example, both male and female participants agreed on "cosmetics", "mystical", or "talkative" being evaluated more positively by women in general than "thunder", "butcher", or "insect". Likewise, participants concur in that, for instance, "mechanics", "to govern", and "cigar" are evaluated more positively than "church", "poodle", or "cosmetics" by men in general. Mean ratings underlying these and the following analyses are given in Table 2.

<Table 2 about here>

Single comparisons over both participants and items between all three word categories and within each of the two gender perspectives (*same*, *opposite*) and participant sexes further underline the robustness of this finding: Corresponding p-values for ANOVAs (for these and all following analyses) are shown in Table 3. Note that particularly pronounced effects are obvious and expected between the conditions "more positive" vs. "more negative" for the respective participant sex.

<Table 3 about here>

**Gender stereotype endorsement.** To investigate whether participants actually endorse their stereotypical beliefs of how same gender individuals evaluate the valence of concepts, we computed F1 and F2 ANOVAs involving *Gender Perspective* (*self-ratings* vs. *same-sex*) and *Word Category* (*neutral* vs. *more positive for women* vs. *more positive for men*) as within-subject factors for both participant sexes separately.

For the *female* participants, we find a significant effect for *Word Category*, F1 (2,52) =106.33, p <.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.804; F2 (2,168) =18.19, p<.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.180, characterized by an interaction with *Gender Perspective*, F1 (2,52) =10.43, p <.0003, $\eta p^2$ =.286; F2 (2,168) =5.17, p<.007, $\eta p^2$ =.059. Separate tests revealed that effects of *Word Category* were strongest for the *same-sex* perspective, F1 (2,52) =116.16, p <.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.817; F2 (2,168) =21.71, p<.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.207, but still highly significant for the *self* perspective, F1 (2,52) =47.05, p <.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.644; F2 (2,168) =10.29, p<.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.110. .

Rating differences between, for instance, “to forgive”, “mystical” or “protection” (more positive for women) compared to “lighting”, “cunning” or “stoic” (more positive for men) are representative for both, the established differences represented in the *Word Category* and the fact that female participants’ stereotypical *same sex* ratings largely concur with their *self* ratings in our data.

Interaction effects between *Word Category* and *Gender Perspective*, on the other hand, may best be illustrated by words like “poodle”, “jewel”, or “church” (more positive for women) or “to rage”, “thunder” and “female lover” (more negative for women), for which female participants’ ratings tended to become less stereotypical in the *self* compared to the *same sex* perspective.

For the *male* participants, we again find a significant effect of *Word Category* in our materials, F1 (2,52) =14.76, p <.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.362; F2 (2,168) =7.95, p <.001, $\eta p^2$ =.087, characterized by an interaction with *Gender Perspective*, F1 (2,52) =16.41, p <.0003, $\eta p^2$ =.387; F2 (2,168) =10.41, p<.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.111. Here, however, separate ANOVAs and single comparisons showed that effects of *Word Category* are restricted to

the *same-sex* perspective, F1 (2,52) =23.41, p <.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.474; F2 (2,168) =15.09, p<.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.154. For male participants, we find no effects of *Word Category* in the *self* perspective, Fs<1 (all p >.2 in single tests either over subjects or items). For example, words like "beer", "female slave", or "torpedo" from the "more positive for men" category received less positive (or more negative) ratings in the *self* perspective than one would have predicted given the same participants' estimates of stereotypically male ratings in the *same-sex* perspective. Likewise, male participants rated words like "criticism", "sensitive", or "without a struggle" from the "more positive for women" category more positively in the *self* perspective than one would have predicted regarding their stereotypical evaluations of these words in the *same* sex perspective.

## Study 2

We have argued that two proprieties of the present study design are likely to make gender a salient social category and, in consequence, to affect stereotype endorsement. First, the high proportion of words with established gender differences in the affective lexicon (as reflected in the word categories) and, second, the subsequent questions involving beliefs about stereotypical *same* and *opposite* gender ratings. To test to which extent the second feature might have influenced participants' ratings in the *self* perspective, which is our main indicator of own-gender stereotype endorsement, we conducted a second study. In this study, we presented the same set of words to different participants who were only asked to perform *self* perspective ratings.

### Methods

**Participants.** Twenty-seven female and 27 male psychology students from the Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, participated in this study. None of them had participated in Study 1.

**Materials and procedure.** The materials used were identical to those used in Study 1. As in Study 1, all words were presented in randomized order on a computer-screen. Participants were asked to answer the following question for each target word: "How would you rate this word?", using the same 7-point scale (-3 =*very negative to +3* =*very positive*) as in Study 1.

**Results**

To test for potential systematic differences in *self* ratings between the two studies, we added the new data obtained to conjoint analyses with *self* ratings from Study 1 – separately for participant sex – using *Word Category* as a within-subjects and the *Experimental Context* (Study 1 vs. Study 2) as a between-subjects factor.

For *female* participants, we find a significant interaction between *Word Category* in the materials and *Experimental Context*, F1 (2,52) =6.69, p <.002 $\eta p^2$ =.114; F2 (2,168) =6.06, p<.003, $\eta p^2$ =.068, suggesting that their endorsement of gender stereotypical ratings was more pronounced in Study 1, F1 (2,52) =47.81, p <.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.648; F2 (2,168) =10.29, p<.0001, $\eta p^2$ =.110, than in Study 2, where only *self* perspective ratings were acquired, F1 (2,52) =15.96, p <.0001 $\eta p^2$ =.380; F2 (2,168) =3.94, p<.03, $\eta p^2$ =.045. Ratings for words like "care", "custody", and "sensitive" from the "more positive for women" category were even more positive in Study 1 compared to Study 2, whereas ratings in Study 1 – where gender was a salient social category – were

clearly more negative for words from the "more positive for men" category, for instance "to booze", "nicotine" and "smoker".

For *male* participants, we neither find an interaction between effects of *Word Category* and *Experimental Context* (Fs<1) nor a main effect for *Word Category*, even for this increased number of participants, F1 (2,52) =1.59, p >.2 $\eta p^2$ =.029; F2 (2,168) =1.15, p>.3, $\eta p^2$ =.014. Compared to male *self* perspective ratings in Study 1 (F<1), separate tests revealed only a small and non-significant tendency for the *Word Category* in male participants in study 2, F1 (2,52) =1.28, p >.3 $\eta p^2$ =.042; F2 (2,168) =1.31, p>.2, $\eta p^2$ =.016.

## Discussion

Our study was designed to investigate possible differences between men and women in endorsing what they subjectively believe to be stereotypically male or female attitudes. More specifically, we looked at differences in the endorsement of own-gender stereotypical judgments of the affective valence of various concepts (i.e., words) using a rating task and words with established gender differences in perceived valence. We found that these differences are adequately represented as beliefs about how men and women stereotypically perceive this valence. We have shown that gender differences in existing affective lexica, such as the BAWL, were closely reproduced by both male and female participants when asked to estimate how men or women would typically rate a given word.

More importantly, our study shows intriguing differences in how men and women in their subjective self-related ratings align with what they believe to be stereotypically male or female ratings. Only women, but not men, made self-related ratings that are

similar to their beliefs on how women in general rate the respective words. In contrast, men in their ratings did not conform to their beliefs of how men in general rate these words. Women thus tended to display own-gender "typical" affective attitudes in the specific context of the present study that made gender differences and gender identity salient due to the experimental procedure. At least for men, therefore, the present results stand in contrast to what can be expected from self-categorization theory, which would predict an increased endorsement of stereotypes when the social category is salient – independently of one's gender. Our results also contradict the view that individuals generally seek to avoid deviance from gender norms (Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Carver et al., 2003).

On the other hand, the salience of gender may have strengthened the influence of beliefs about the social desirability of gender stereotypes on subjects' self ratings – potentially linking our findings to propositions proposals from social identity theory. Yet, our results are not in line with Swan's and Wyer's (1997) findings. This would imply that stereotypically male attitudes are perceived by male participants as less desirable than stereotypically female attitudes.

It is important to note that the "stereotypically male" perceptions of valence in our study, as reflected in corresponding word ratings, are not simply the "usual suspects" of male stereotypes, which may simply be no longer endorsed by younger males today. Only words for which considerable gender differences had recently been established for a comparable population (German undergraduate students of psychology) were used to realize the respective gender contrasts in our materials. Likewise, instead of using pre-defined conceptions of what is stereotypically male or female, we basically left this

definition to the participants in our study (by asking about their beliefs how men or women in general perceive a concept's valence). In sum, the present results are intriguing because not only do men adequately represent (in terms of beliefs) typically male judgments of affectivity, but – critically – do not align with these judgments in their subjective ratings, thus notably deviating from what they perceive as typically male, when materials and the experimental task make gender a salient social category.

Our study shows a very different pattern for female participants who in their self ratings are similar to their perceived gender stereotypical judgments. The fact that both judgments (*self-* and *same-sex* ratings of female participants) do not completely align does not necessarily speak in favor of female stereotype threat explanations (e.g., Wegner, 1994). Rather, fully endorsed stereotypes across a wide range of very different concepts would be implausible. On the contrary, the contrast between female self ratings in Study 1 and Study 2 suggests that women seem to actively seek conformity with the presumed majority of female ratings when required to explicitly position themselves with regard to gender identity.

The conjoint outcome of Studies 1 and 2 suggests that men perceive male rating stereotypes as socially undesirable – impeding identification with an otherwise realistic estimate of how men are "in general", whereas women seem to positively identify with their own gender stereotypes. At first glance, these results seem to conflict with assumptions that the desirability of gender stereotypical attitudes is related to gender's social status, because in most countries, women are still economically and also often socially disadvantaged compared to men. However, many societies have undergone profound changes in terms of gender equality over the past decades, such that

stereotypically female attributes might increasingly be associated with personal and economic success and thus be perceived as highly desirable – also by men.

Aside from these considerations, a more general explanation for our findings can be found in a general transformation of male stereotypes resulting in insecurity or avoidance of particularly "masculine" ideals. As Connell (2001) has argued, the modern gender order is undergoing a general legitimacy crisis: patriarchy has lost its legitimacy with a global women's movement seeking emancipation. Persisting inequality of men and women is at odds with the logics of modern state and market structures. Accordingly, male stereotypes are increasingly reconfigured around these challenges in a way that might undermine the attractiveness of traditionally male stereotypes whereas female stereotypes become increasingly attractive. This in turn might provoke insecurities regarding widely and consensually accepted forms of masculinity.

We conclude that our data represent a snapshot from the ongoing debate and oscillations of struggle for sustainable gender equality. In the current spotlight of our experimental context focusing on social desirability of gender roles, male participants' self-reports appear to be influenced by a general devaluation of what is considered typically male. Whereas women seem to fully endorse and enjoy their femininity especially when gender is a salient category, it might be men in modern society who are in need to re-define sovereign gender stereotypes and roles – acceptable for themselves.

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# Tables

*Table 1*. Means and ranges for independent variables (male ♂ and female ♀ normative ratings) for words across different conditions of the factor *Word Category* gender difference (♀=♂: neutral; ♀>♂: more positive for women; ♂>♀: more positive for men)

| | Valence ♂ | | | Valence ♀ | | | Valence ♂-♀ | | | Global Valence | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Mean | Range | Std Dev | Mean | Range | Std Dev | Mean | Range | Std Dev | Mean | Range | Std Dev |
| ♀=♂ | 0.07 | -3.00-2.90 | 1.77 | 0.07 | -3.00-2.90 | 1.77 | 0.00 | 0.00-0.00 | 0.00 | 0.06 | -3.00-2.90 | 1.76 |
| ♀>♂ | -0.56 | -2.60-1.40 | 1.17 | 0.72 | -1.60-2.60 | 1.18 | -1.28 | -2.20- -1.00 | 0.28 | 0.08 | -2.10-2.00 | 1.17 |
| ♂>♀ | 0.67 | -1.90-2.60 | 1.18 | -0.57 | -2.90-1.20 | 1.14 | 1.25 | 1.00-1.80 | 0.24 | 0.04 | -2.40-1.90 | 1.15 |

*Table 2*. Means and standard deviations (Std Dev) of ratings (on a seven-point-scale ranging from -3 "very negative" to +3 "very positive") for words given by male and female participants in the different conditions of *Word Category* and *Gender Perspective* (*self, same, opposite*) of Studies 1 and 2.

| WOMEN | Study 2 | | Study 1 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SELF | | SELF | | SAME | | OPPOSITE | |
| | Mean | Std Dev | Mean | Std Dev | Mean | Std Dev | Mean | Std Dev |
| ♀>♂ | .274 | .28 | .324 | .31 | .515 | .29 | -.039 | .37 |
| ♀=♂ | .137 | .22 | .083 | .17 | .137 | .19 | .099 | .25 |
| ♂>♀ | .003 | .30 | -.212 | .28 | -.284 | .29 | .469 | .33 |

| MEN | Study 2 | | Study 1 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SELF | | SELF | | SAME | | OPPOSITE | |
| | Mean | Std Dev | Mean | Std Dev | Mean | Std Dev | Mean | Std Dev |
| ♀>♂ | .140 | .39 | .104 | .24 | .022 | .18 | .584 | .35 |
| ♀=♂ | .176 | .25 | .074 | .16 | .209 | .28 | .329 | .53 |
| ♂>♀ | .240 | .39 | .138 | .28 | .508 | .35 | -.179 | .36 |

*Table 3*. p-levels of significance for single comparisons of mean rating differences over participants (Part.) and items between conditions *Word Category* (pos: more positive vs. neg: more negative valence for the respective gender vs. neut: gender neutral) across different *Gender Perspectives* (*self, same, opposite*) and participant sex.

| MEN | Study 2 | | Study 1 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SELF | | SELF | | SAME | | OPPOSITE | |
| | Part. | Items | Part. | Items | Part. | Items | Part. | Items |
| pos-neg | .14 | .25 | .23 | .57 | .0001 | .0001 | .0001 | .0001 |
| neut-pos | .35 | .18 | .52 | .29 | .0001 | .0001 | .0051 | .0009 |
| neut-neg | .59 | .84 | .58 | .62 | .012 | .32 | .0001 | .0023 |

| WOMEN | Study 2 | | Study 1 | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | SELF | | SELF | | SAME | | OPPOSITE | |
| | Part. | Items | Part. | Items | Part. | Items | Part. | Items |
| pos-neg | .0001 | .0015 | .0001 | .0001 | .0001 | .0001 | .0001 | .0001 |
| neut-pos | .0063 | .032 | .0001 | .017 | .0001 | .0005 | .0001 | .0012 |
| neut-neg | .0070 | .30 | .0001 | .022 | .0001 | .0007 | .031 | .19 |

APPENDIX A Stimulus Material[3]

| GENDER NEUTRAL | | MORE POSITIVE FOR MEN | | MORE POSITIVE FOR WOMEN | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Abbild | Image | abhauen | to clear out | absurd | absurd |
| Ablauf | Procedure | Absicht | Intention | Advent | Advent |
| Absage | Cancellation | Aktie | Share | Altar | Altar |
| Absender | Sender | allein | alone | Arroganz | Arrogance |
| anwidern | to disgust | Arsenal | Arsenal | Benzin | Gasoline |
| Aufstieg | Rise | Aufwind | Upwind | Bibel | Bible |
| Begabung | Talent | ausgeben | to spend | Dogge | Mastiff |
| berauben | to rob | autark | self-sufficient | Endziel | Final Goal |
| Detail | Detail | Bad | Bathroom | Euphorie | Euphoria |

[3] Some words might have an ambivalent meaning, in the German original as well as in the translation. For example, the german „Laufbahn“ might refer to occupational career as well as to a raceway, and the English „Arsenal“ might refer to a weapons storage or the London football club. Fort he experimental procedure, however, this is irrelevant since it seeks to tap participants’ immediate associations.

| | |
|---|---|
| Dusche | Shower |
| ehrlich | honest |
| Faden | Thread |
| Falle | Trap |
| feiern | to celebrate |
| Freizeit | Free Time |
| freund | friend |
| Giftgas | Poison gas |
| grausam | cruel |
| guttun | to do well |
| heiter | cheerful |
| illegal | illegal |
| Inhalt | Contents |
| Karton | Carton |
| kraftlos | powerless |
| kreativ | creative |
| Leim | Glue |
| Leine | Leash |
| Lesesaal | Reading room |
| Lid | Eyelid |
| Liebe | Love |

| | |
|---|---|
| Bier | Beer |
| Blitz | Lightning |
| Chef | Chief |
| Donner | Thunder |
| Droge | Drug |
| Ende | End |
| Erfinder | Inventor |
| Erlebnis | Experience |
| Fessel | Shackle |
| fett | fat |
| feucht | moist |
| Gedanke | Thought |
| Geld | Money |
| Geliebte | female Lover |
| heroisch | heroic |
| Insekt | Insect |
| Job | Job |
| Kampf | Fight |
| Laufbahn | Career |
| List | Cunning |
| Logik | Logic |

| | |
|---|---|
| Ewigkeit | Eternity |
| Fohlen | Foal |
| fraulich | womanly |
| Gebet | Prayer |
| Heirat | Marriage |
| Hexe | Witch |
| Irrsinn | Madness |
| Juwel | Jewel |
| kampflos | without a struggle |
| Kind | Child |
| Kirche | Church |
| Klima | Climate |
| Kollaps | Collapse |
| Kosmetik | Cosmetics |
| Kritik | Criticism |
| Kult | Cult |
| Magie | Magic |
| Masche | Stitch |
| Maulkorb | Muzzle |
| Mitleid | Compassion |
| mystisch | mystical |

| | |
|---|---|
| Lupe | Magnifying glass |
| martern | to torture |
| Massaker | Massacre |
| Merkmal | Feature |
| Missetat | Iniquity |
| Mitglied | Member |
| Nachrede | Defamation |
| Oase | Oasis |
| Paradies | Paradise |
| Pest | Plague |
| Pfaffe | Cleric |
| Phase | Phase |
| Raub | Robbery |
| Regler | Regulator |
| schinden | to flay |
| Schwur | Oath |
| sinnlich | sensual |
| Stau | Jam |
| strahlen | shine |
| Tonfall | Tone of voice |
| Triumph | Triumph |

| | |
|---|---|
| Magma | Magma |
| Magnet | Magnet |
| Mechanik | Mechanics |
| Meinung | Opinion |
| meistern | to master |
| Metzger | Butcher |
| Minirock | Mini Skirt |
| mollig | chubby |
| Nikotin | Nicotine |
| Opfer | Victim |
| Papa | Dad |
| Plan | Plan |
| Pointe | Punchline |
| Raucher | Smoker |
| regieren | to govern |
| saufen | to booze |
| Sklavin | female Slave |
| stoisch | stoic |
| Strafe | Punishment |
| Tabak | Tobacco |
| toben | to rage |

| | |
|---|---|
| Nacht | Night |
| Obhut | Custody |
| Ohnmacht | Powerlessness/fainting |
| Opium | Opium |
| Palast | Palace |
| Perle | Pearl |
| Pflege | Care |
| Pudel | Poodle |
| Rasse | Race |
| redselig | talkative |
| Rente | Pension |
| Schimmel | Mold |
| Schonung | Protection/treating with care |
| schrill | shrill |
| sensibel | sensitive |
| Soldat | Soldier |
| spucken | to spit |
| Treue | Fealty |
| Übermut | High spirits/Mischief |
| vergeben | to forgive |
| Walzer | Waltz |

| | |
|---|---|
| umarmen | embrace |
| verarmen | to become impoverished |
| Weltruhm | World fame |
| wuchern | proliferate |
| Zukunft | Future |
| Zustand | Condition |
| Torpedo | Torpedo |
| traurig | sad |
| Umbruch | Radical change |
| Vitamin | Vitamin |
| Zeitung | Newspaper |
| Zigarre | Cigar |
| Welpe | Pup |
| Wunder | Miracle |
| Zahnarzt | Dentist |
| Zauber | Magic |
| zerlumpt | ragged |
| Zeugnis | Certificate |