The Structure and Content of the Male Gender Role Stereotype: An Exploration of Subtypes

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Stereotypic categorization schemas pertaining to the male gender role are examined in two related studies. Study I provides preliminary evidence for four stereotypic categories and their attributes: Businessman, Athlete, Family Man, and Loser. When compared to a similar study on female stereotypes, male stereotypes appear more weakly held. Study II expanded the populations sampled, employing a hierarchical cluster analysis to analyze responses to a card sorting task using attributes from Study I. Differences were found between the three, primarily Caucasian, subject groups. Results support a social cognitive orientation to understanding stereotypes, which suggests that broad categories, such as "men" or "women," do not capture the commonly made distinctions within these groups, which are more accurately conceptualized as subtypes.

Traditionally, the male gender role stereotype has been understood in either one of two ways. In much of the professional literature, empirical research has focused on how men are viewed in comparison with women, generally at the instrumental end of an instrumental–expressive bipolar scale (Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson, & Rosenkrantz, 1972; Sherriff & McKee, 1957; Spence, Helmreich, & Stapp, 1974; Williams & Bennett, 1975). In the popular press, particularly since the emergence of a men's liberation movement in the 1970s, a variety of typologies of men

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have been proposed that have been primarily derived through observation, intuition, or informal interviews with small samples of men (Farrell, 1986; Franklin, 1984).

The process itself of stereotyping has been the subject of a number of investigations in social cognition (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981; Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; Cantor & Mischel, 1979; Hamilton & Rose, 1980; McCauley, Stitt, & Segal, 1980; Ruble & Ruble, 1980; Snyder, Tanke, & Berscheid, 1977; Taylor, Fiske, Etcoff, & Ruderman, 1978). Although the cognitive approach has been criticized for taking insufficient account of factors such as motivation and intention (Fiske, 1987; Ryff, 1987; Sampson, 1981), it is accepted as a valuable complement to the psychodynamic and sociocultural orientations to the study of stereotypes (Ashmore & Del Boca, 1981). The consensus that has emerged from this body of work is that stereotyping is the result of imperfections, biases, or limitations in the way people process large amounts of information. Stereotypes can therefore be conceptualized as one particular instance of more general cognitive processes.

The concept of subtypes has recently emerged in cognitive research on stereotypes (Ashmore, 1981; Brewer, Dull, & Lui, 1981; Fiske, Neuberg, Beattie, & Milberg, 1987; Hamilton, 1981; Hamilton & Trolier, 1986; Krueger & Rothbart, 1988; Pettigrew, 1981; Taylor, 1981; Weber & Crocker, 1983). Although variations occur across experimental investigations, it seems quite clear that people can and do conceptualize men and women in terms of specific types as well as the more generic male and female categories. These subtypes may correspond to the roles that men and women typically occupy in society (Deaux & Major, 1987; Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Yount, 1986). In one study (Deaux, Winton, Crowley, & Lewis, 1985), when college students were asked to list as many specific types of men that they could think of, there were several types of men that were mentioned with considerable frequency: athletic man, blue-collar working man, businessman, and macho man. Another series of studies (England & Hyland, 1985, 1986) found that college student subjects systematically rated traits and behaviors as being characteristic of three separate categories of males: family man, businessman, and macho man. Other cognitive research has used multidimensional scaling, hierarchical cluster analysis, and factor analysis to generate subtypes and dimensions of gender stereotypes (Ashmore, 1981; Ashmore, Del Boca, & Wohlers, 1986; Ashmore & Tumia, 1980; Thompson & Pleck, 1987).

One cognitive model of stereotyping is based on Eleanor Rosch's work on natural object categories (Rosch, 1978; Rosch & Mervis, 1975; Rosch, Mervis, Bray, Johnson, & Boyes-Braem, 1976). Rosch postulated that information about objects is cognitively organized into superordinate,