William Paterson University Professor’s Research Finds Gender Stereotypes Have Not Changed In 30 Years Despite Advances By Women

Results, published in new edition of "Psychology of Women Quarterly," point to significant implications for 2016 presidential campaign, as Hillary Clinton tries to become first woman nominee

Wayne, N.J. (PRWEB) March 10, 2016 -- Gender stereotypes are as strong today as they were 30 years ago, and people are even more likely now to believe that men avoid “traditional” female roles, according to research conducted by Elizabeth Haines, PhD, a professor of psychology at William Paterson University in Wayne, N.J. In addition, according to Haines, the research has significant implications for the current presidential campaign, in which Hillary Clinton is seeking to become the first woman nominated to run for president.

Haines is the lead author of a study published today in the journal Psychology of Women Quarterly, titled “The Times They are a-Changing…or Are They Not? A Comparison of Gender Stereotypes, 1983-2014.” The study, co-authored by Kay Deaux, distinguished professor emerita, CUNY Graduate Center, and Nicole Lofaro, a 2015 graduate of William Paterson University, compared data from 195 college students in 1983 to data from a national sample of 191 adults in 2014.

According to the researchers, “Changes in the activities and representation of women and men in society have unquestionably occurred since the early 1980s; however, those changes apparently have not been sufficient to alter strongly held and seemingly functional beliefs about the basic social category of gender.”

Participants in each time period rated each of 91 characteristics in terms of how they applied to a man, a woman, or a person with gender unspecified. The characteristics were divided between four categories: male- and female-linked traits (16), role behaviors (25), occupations (25), and physical characteristics (25). The researchers found that despite greater diversity in the 2014 sample, people continue to strongly stereotype men and women on personality traits (e.g. kindness, competitiveness), gender role behaviors (e.g. tending the house, does household repairs), occupations (e.g. registered nurse, engineer) and physical characteristics (e.g., delicate, deep voice).

The researchers also found that:

• In the 2014 sample, men and women were largely similar in their gender stereotyping; they showed similar stereotyping on psychological traits and occupations for both genders and on physical characteristics for males.

• Women and men were believed to be more equally engaged in financial roles in 2014 than in 1983. For example, in 2014, both genders were equally believed to assume financial obligations, make major decisions, and handle financial matters.

• Beliefs about male gender roles, such as that males “repair and maintain the car,” did not significantly change from 1983 to 2014. The increase in female gender role stereotyping appears to be the result of men being perceived as less likely than women to engage in female gender roles (e.g., tends the house, takes care of children) in 2014.
The 2014 data also showed that men were more likely to believe gender stereotypes about male gender role behaviors, while women were more likely to believe stereotypes about female gender role behaviors.

“The persistence of gender stereotypes needs to be recognized by all those who make judgments and choices regarding the potential and/or the performance of women and men,” says Haines. “Evidence that some women have ‘made it’ does not rule out the operation of gender stereotyping.”

Haines is a social and personality psychologist whose research focuses on the basic processes underlying social perception, stereotyping, and prejudice. She supervises the Social Cognition Lab at William Paterson University.

To arrange an interview, please contact Phillip Sprayberry, William Paterson University media relations coordinator, at sprayberryp(at)wpunj(dot)edu or 973.720.2965.


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