

The background of the slide features a collection of faint, overlapping silhouettes of people's heads and shoulders. These silhouettes are rendered in a light, muted green color against a white background. They represent a variety of hair styles and head shapes, suggesting a diverse group of individuals. A semi-transparent, light brown horizontal band is positioned across the middle of the image, serving as a backdrop for the title and author's name.

Gender Bias/Sexism

Dr Katie Sullivan

What is Gender Bias/Sexism?



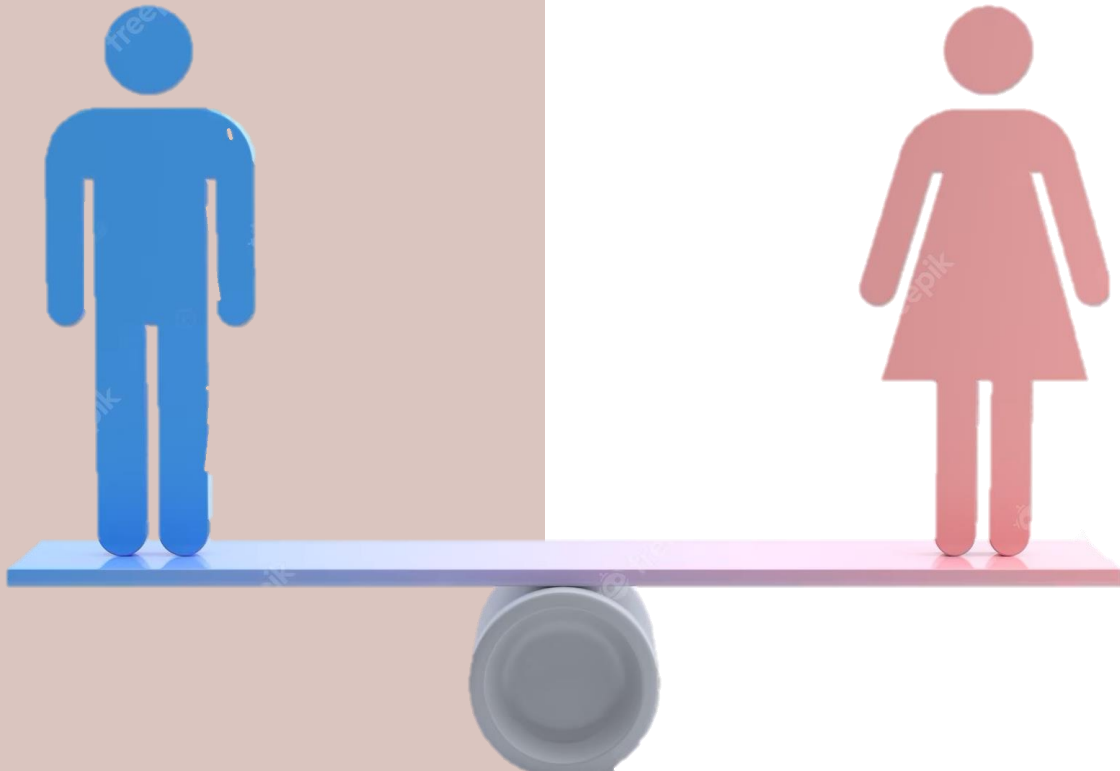
‘Sexism’

Negative attitudes and behaviour towards someone based on their gender (Nelson, 2006)

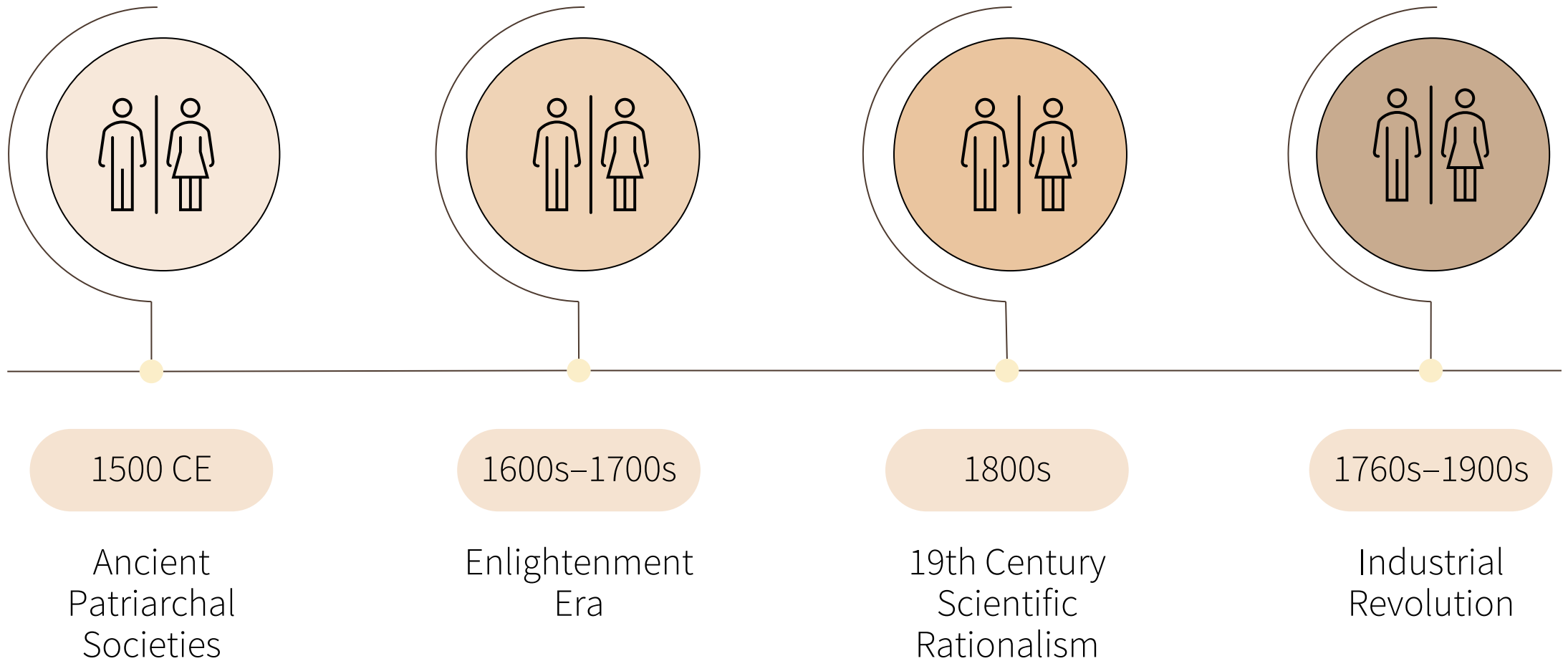
- Mostly towards women, but not exclusively; can be discrimination towards males as well

Very few cultures do not show prejudice and discrimination towards women

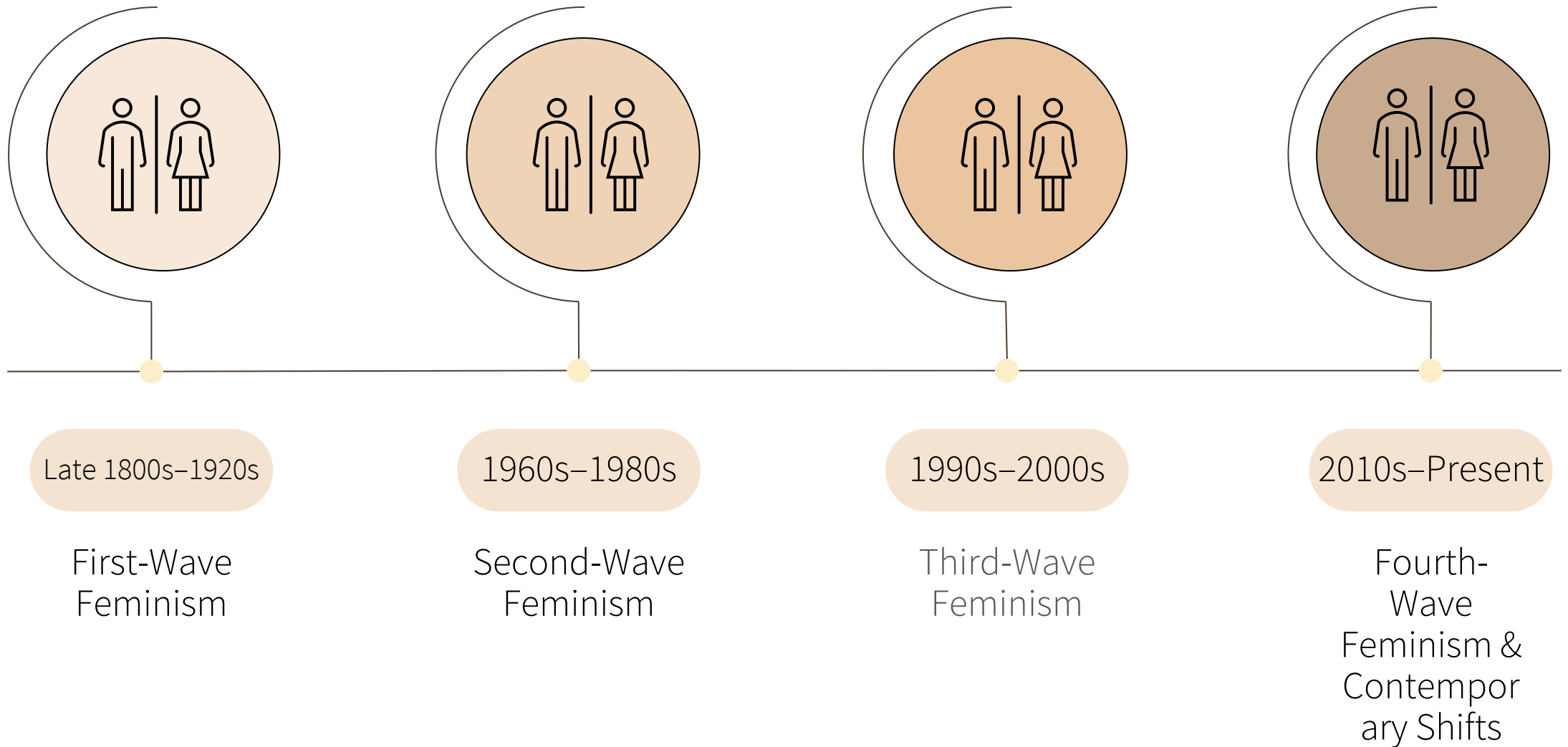
- Suggests partly an evolutionary effect
- Strength
- Child-bearing



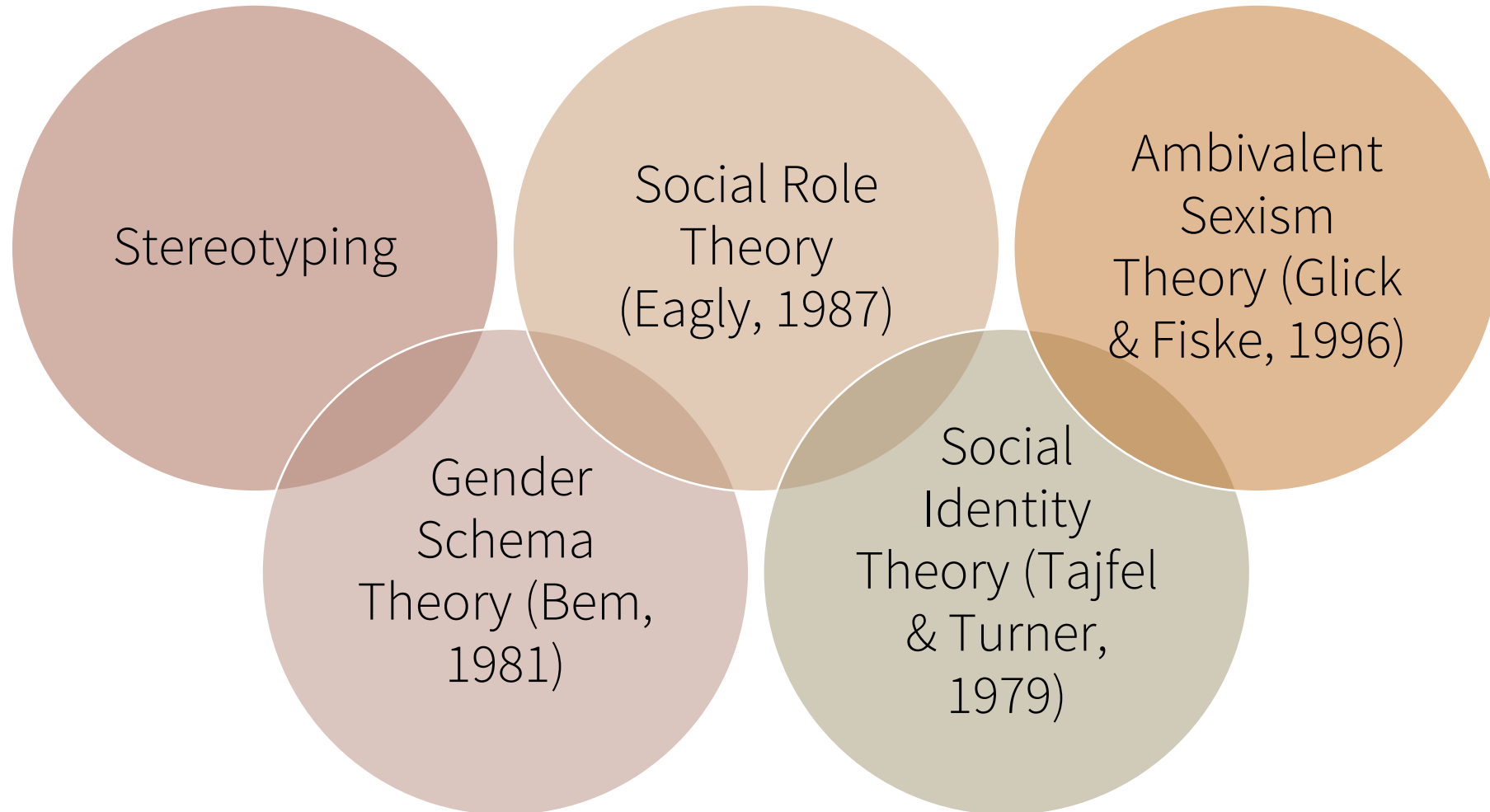
Timeline



Timeline



Psychological Theories Explaining Gender Bias



Why Do We Gender Stereotype?

Cognitive Efficiency &
Categorisation

Social Categorisation Theory
(Tajfel, 1981)

Implicit Bias and
Automaticity

Social Learning &
Culture

Bandura's Social Learning
Theory (1977)

Evolutionary and
Functionalist
Perspectives

System Justification
Theory (Jost &
Banaji, 1994)

Media and
Representation



Social Learning

Children learn through reinforcement and modelling
(Bandura & Walters, 1963)

- Rewarding of gender-appropriate behaviours; punishment of gender-inappropriate behaviours
- From an early age parents teach children differences with regards to clothes, toys, hobbies, personalities, etc. (Serbin et al., 1993; but see Harris, 1998 for alternative interpretations)

The 'Evolutionary' Argument

Sex differences in behaviour and cognition evolved because they enhanced survival and reproductive success.

These differences may have contributed to the development of gender roles, which in turn laid the foundation for gender stereotypes and sexism.

Key Concepts and Arguments:

- Division of Labor by Sex
- Parental Investment Theory (Trivers, 1972)
- Mate Selection and Gender Norms



System Justification Theory

(Jost & Banaji, 1994)

People are motivated to defend, justify, and maintain existing social systems.

This motivation stems from a psychological need for order, stability, and predictability.

- Justification of the Status Quo
- Palliative Function
- False Consciousness



SJT cont..

Endorsement of Gender Stereotypes

Resistance to Gender Equality

Internalized Sexism

Justifying Gendered Institutions

Intersection with Other Theories

Media and Representation



- Media; schools and clubs; peers
- Advertising
 - A persuasive message is best communicated by a source similar to the target audience (Hovland et al., 1953)
 - Women do more housework than men, even when both work full-time (Bird, 1999; Crosby, 1991)
 - So, it makes sense for advertisers to use a female source to advertise cleaning products etc. to the target audience – females
 - But it reinforces the stereotype of the female as the person who does the cleaning etc.
 - A vicious circle

Content analysis of TV ads

(Downs & Harrison, 1985; Goffman, 1979)



- Males used for voice-overs, even when females seen on the screen
- Males often agentic, females often peripheral
- Males appear higher in an advertisement than women
- Males often holding women, not the other way round

Content analysis of TV ads

Furnham & Mak (1999)



Women are more likely to be shown:

- In domestic settings (e.g., cleaning, cooking)
- As caregivers or passive observers
- Focused on beauty, fashion, or relationships

Men are more likely to be shown:

- In professional or outdoor settings
- As decision-makers, experts, or leaders
- Engaged in action, control, or humour

Content analysis of TV ads

Paek, Nelson, & Varan (2011)



Women are often associated with:

- Household products,
- beauty items,
- Childcare

Men are associated with:

- Cars,
- technology,
- finance,
- tools

Content analysis of ads

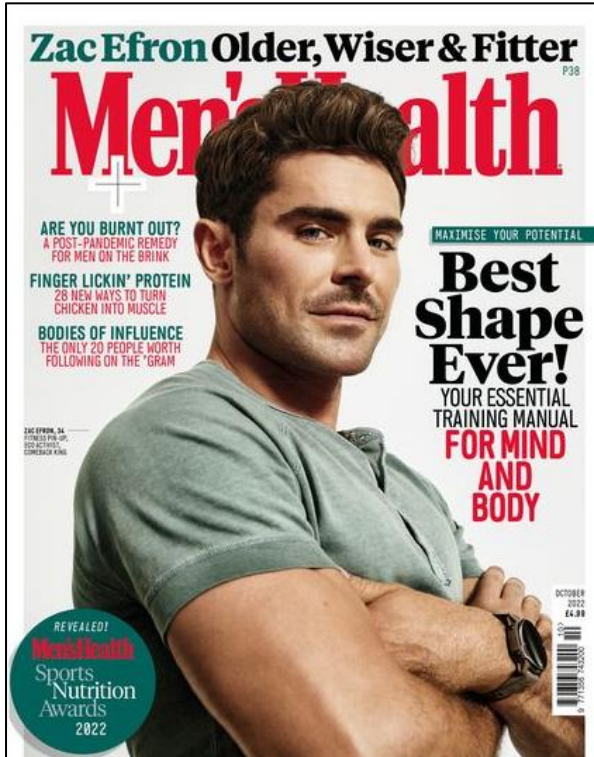
Santoniccolo et al. (2023)



- Media representations continue to objectify and sexualize women.
- Exposure to these portrayals increases endorsement of sexist attitudes, body surveillance, and tolerance of abuse
- Negative impacts on mental health, career ambition, and self-esteem.

‘Face-ism’

Archer et al. (1983)



- Images of men had significantly higher facial prominence than those of women.
- This pattern was consistent across various media types.
- Found across different cultures (Schwartz & Kurz, 1998)
- Potential for internalization of these media norms (Smith & Cooley, 2012)

CORONAVIRUS

STAY HOME. SAVE LIVES.



Content analysis of TV/Film

Smith et al. (2010)



Male characters stats:

- 72% of the characters in the top-grossing G-rated films were male.
- 85.5% of the titled films went to male characters
- 83.3% of the lead characters were male
- 72.0% of the main gang were male
- 73.3% of the speaking roles went to male characters

TASK!

The Bechdel Test is a simple measure used to assess the representation of women in film, television, and other media. To pass the test, a work must meet three criteria:

- It has at least two named women characters,
- Who talk to each other,
- About something other than a man.

Use the Bechdel Test to explore how women are portrayed in film

How does this impact attitudes/perceptions?

Cultivation Theory (Gerbner & Gross, 1976)

- Long-term exposure to media cultivates a **distorted view of reality**.

Objectification Theory (Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997)

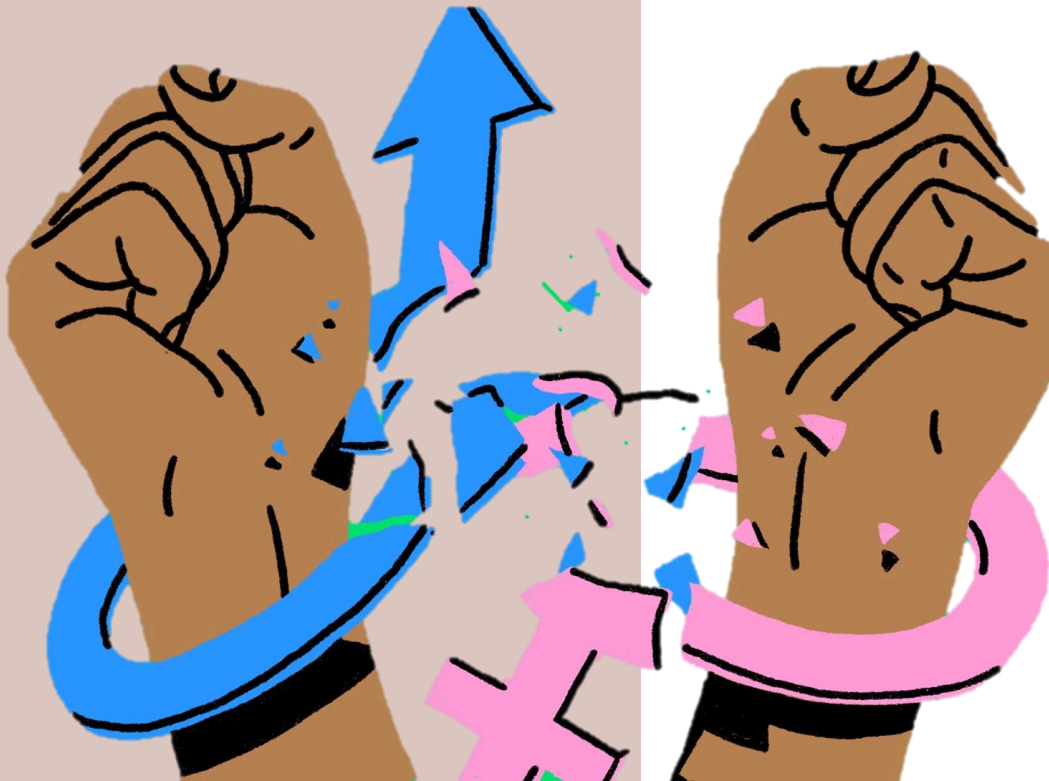
- Media often portrays women as **objects of male desire**, focusing on appearance over competence.

Accuracy Of Stereotypes

(Jussim et al., 2009)

1. Stereotypes Can Be Empirically Evaluated
2. Accuracy Varies by Domain
3. Stereotypes Are Often Overgeneralized
4. Accuracy $\neq$ Justification

Supports Allport's (1954) notion of stereotypes containing a 'kernel of truth'



Why Do We Gender Stereotype?

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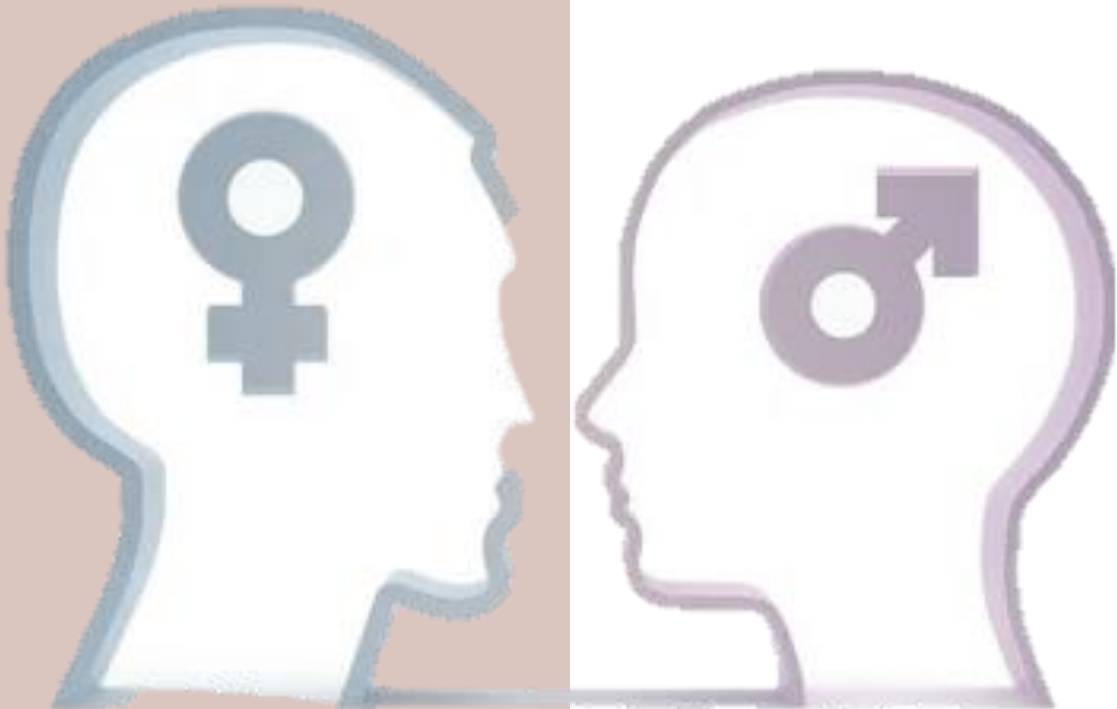
Media and
Representation

Understanding Gender Bias Through Roles

(Social Role Theory; Eagly, 1987)

Gender stereotypes and gender-based expectations arise from the division of labour:

- Observational Learning
- Role Congruity
- Stereotype Formation



SRT cont...

Workplace Discrimination

Leadership Bias

Benevolent Sexism

Media Representation

Cross-Cultural Considerations

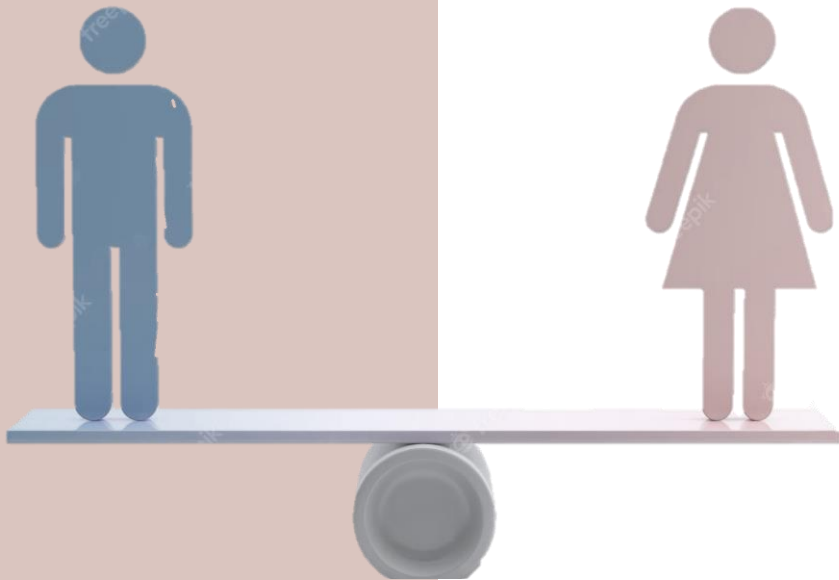
The Dual Nature of Sexist Attitudes

(Ambivalent Sexism Theory; Glick & Fiske, 1996)

Sexism is not just overtly hostile—it also includes subjectively positive but patronizing attitudes toward women

Two Components of Ambivalent Sexism:

- Hostile Sexism
- Benevolent Sexism



Ambivalent Sexism Theory

Hostile Sexism

Antagonistic attitudes toward women who are seen as challenging male power or traditional gender roles.

Benevolent Sexism

Subjectively positive attitudes that idealize women as pure, moral, and in need of protection.

Ambivalent Sexism

Reinforcement of Traditional Roles

Workplace Discrimination

Romantic and Interpersonal Relationships

Political and Social Attitudes

Cross-Cultural Considerations

Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981)

Individuals develop mental frameworks (schemas) about gender from a young age:

- Schema Formation
- Early Internalisation
- Selective Attention and Memory



Gender Schema Theory

Stereotype Endorsement

Self-Concept and Identity

Reinforcement of Sexism

Media and Cultural Representation

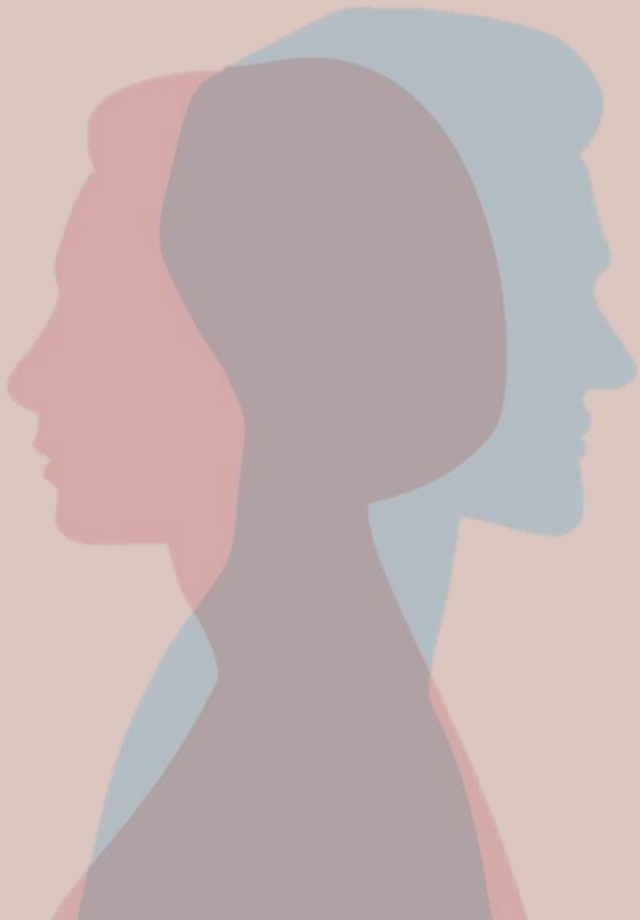
Cross-Cultural Considerations

Explaining Gender Bias Through Group Membership and Identity

(Social Identity Theory; Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

Individuals derive part of their self-concept from their membership in social groups:

- Social Categorisation
- Social Categorisation
- Social Comparison



Social Identity Theory

Gender as a Salient Social Category

Ingroup Favouritism and Gender Norms

Outgroup Derogation

Gender-Based Social Comparison

Intersection with Other Theories

Religion & Gender Bias

- Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987)

Religious doctrines often prescribe communal roles for women and agentic roles for men

- System Justification Theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994)

Religion can serve as a system-justifying ideology, legitimizing existing gender hierarchies as divinely ordained or natural.

- Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

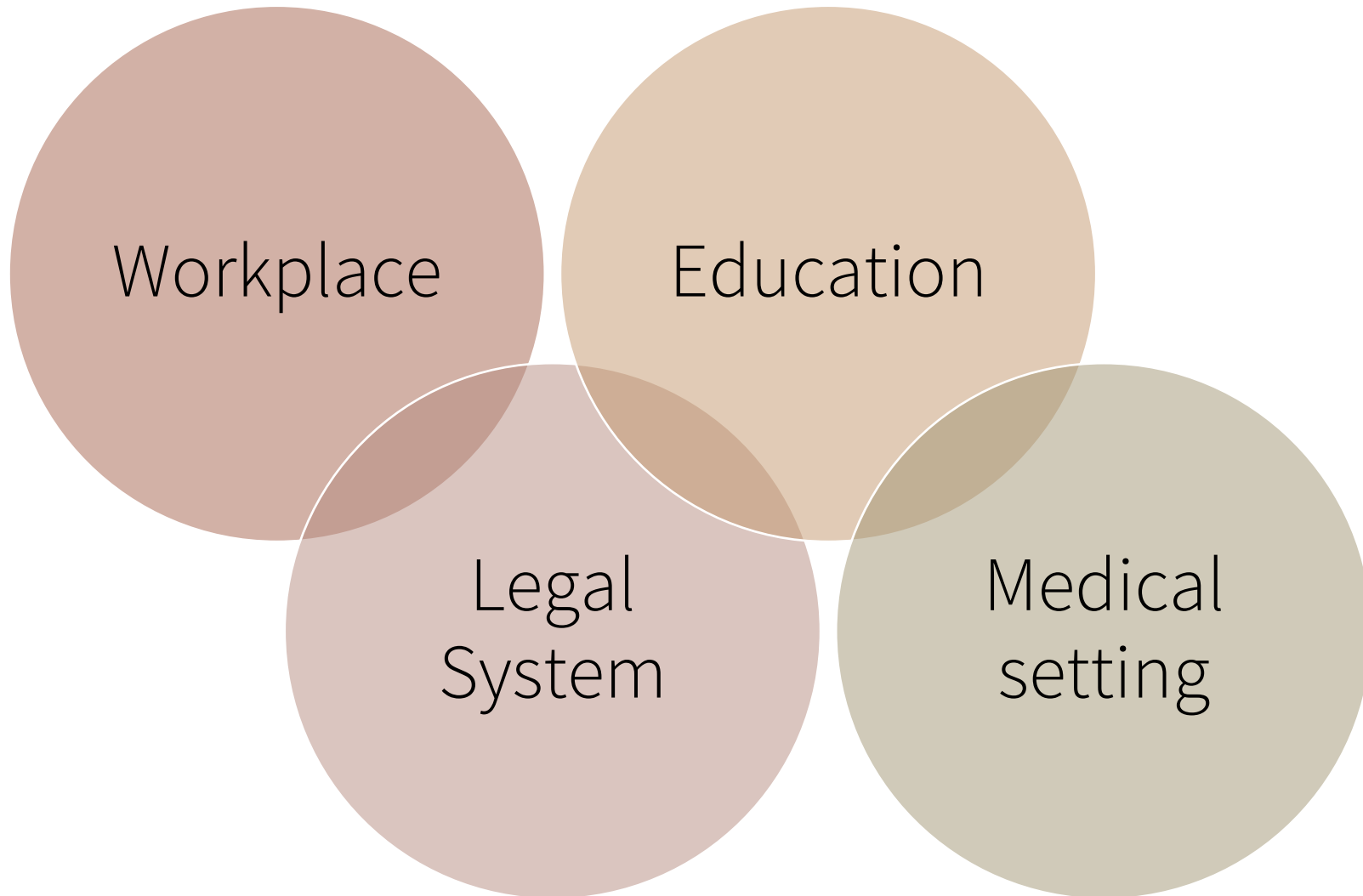
Religious contexts often promote benevolent sexism

- Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979)

Religion can function as a social identity, shaping ingroup norms about gender.



Gender Bias in society



Gender Discrimination In The Workplace

Social Role Theory (Eagly, 1987)

- Gender stereotypes stem from traditional social roles: men in agentic roles, women in communal roles.

Implicit Bias and Stereotype Activation

- Unconscious associations influence judgments and decisions.

Ambivalent Sexism Theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996)

- Sexism includes both hostile and benevolent components.

System Justification Theory (Jost & Banaji, 1994)

- People are motivated to defend and justify existing social systems.

Stereotype Threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995)

- Awareness of stereotypes can impair performance.

Gender Bias in Hiring

- Employers showed occupational stereotyping, preferring female applicants for female-dominated roles, but not male applicants for male-dominated roles (Birkelund et al., 2022).
- Hiring decisions are influenced by implicit bias, in-group favouritism, and gender stereotypes (Hassan, 2019).

Gender Bias in Promotion

- Women were 14% less likely to be promoted than men (Li, Benson & Shue, 2022)

Gender Bias in Leadership

- Women remain underrepresented in executive roles across sectors and women face unequal pay, limited advancement, and gendered harassment (Guddu, 2024)

Gender Bias in Workplace Culture

- Bias affects how merit is defined, credit is allocated, and how women are punished for violating stereotypes (Chang & Milkman, 2020).

'The 'Glass Ceiling'



“Those artificial barriers based on attitudinal or organisational bias that prevent qualified individuals from advancing... into upper management positions” (U.S. Department of Labour)

- Role Congruity Theory (Eagly & Karau, 2002)
- Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002)
- Social Identity and Homosocial Reproduction Theories

Linked Theory: Glass Escalator Theory



The Motherhood Penalty

- Competence and Commitment Ratings (Heilman & Okimoto, 2008)
- Wage Penalties and Career Progression (Budig & England, 2001; Yu & Hara, 2021)
- Workplace Authority (Stojmenovska & England, 2020)
- Performance Evaluations (Healy & Heissel, 2020)

The Fatherhood Bonus

- Increased Earnings (Glauber, 2008; Budig, 2014)
- Positive Bias in Evaluations (Diamond, 2023)
- Breadwinner Framing (Bear & Glick, 2017)

Bias Against Men in Female-Dominated Roles

Halper, Cowgill & Rios (2019)

- Perceived Lack of Warmth and Suitability

Kaur et al. (2023)

- Stereotype Content and Paternalistic Prejudice

Moss-Racusin et al. (2022)

- Anticipated Discrimination and Belongingness

Ayub & Yasin (2023)

- Social Stigma and Masculinity Struggles

Wingfield (2009)

- Glass Escalator vs. Hostile Climate



Gender Bias in education

Teacher Expectations and Bias

- Rosenthal & Jacobson (1968)
- McGinnis (2017)
- Turetsky et al. (2021)

Gender Bias in Grading and Subject Choice

- Lavy & Megalokonomou (2023)
- The Conversation (2021)

Student Evaluations of Teachers

- Ayllón et al. (2025)

Gender Stereotypes and Academic Achievement

- Gonzalez et al. (2020)
- Watson et al. (2023)

Gender Bias in Medicine

Diagnostic and
Treatment Disparities

- Gustafson (2023)

Dismissal of Women's
Symptoms

- Gustafson (2023)
- Ayhan Balik et al., (2019)

Bias in Medical Research
and Education

- Ruzycki et al., (2020)
- van der Meulen et al., (2017)

Gender Bias in
Professional Evaluations

- Ruzycki et al., (2020)
- Petsko, Ponce de Leon, & Rosette (2025)

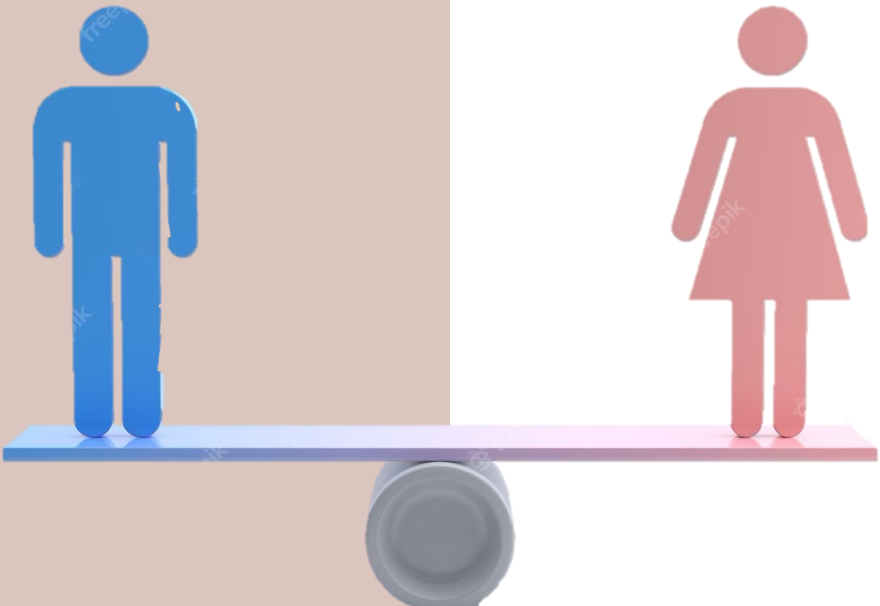
Impact on Marginalized
Groups

- Ayhan Balik et al., (2019)
- Cuevas et al., (2025)

Has Gender

Prejudice changed

over time?

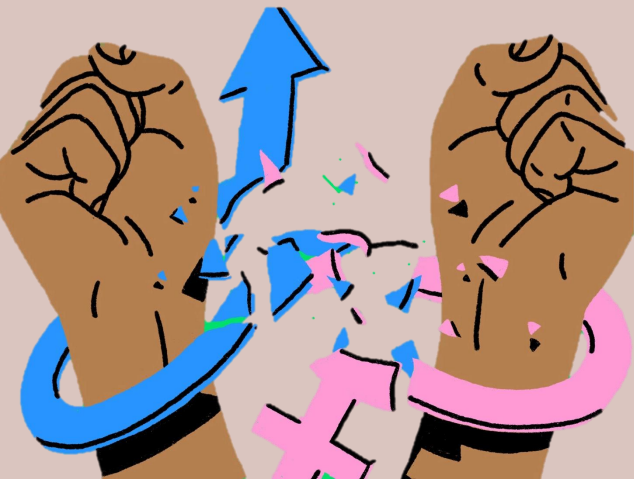


Old-Fashioned Sexism

- Overt, explicit prejudice based on traditional gender roles.
- Linked to RWA and SDO

Modern Sexism

- Subtle, covert, and socially acceptable forms of sexism.
- Linked to Symbolic Prejudice and Modern Prejudice



Changes over time

Eagly et al. (2019)

- Analysed U.S. public opinion polls over 70 years.
- Found stereotypes have evolved, but gendered expectations persist

Charlesworth & Banaji
(2022)

- Used data from 1.4 million tests (2007–2018) to track changes in gender stereotypes.
- Found that gender stereotypes are malleable and have weakened over time

Hammond et al. (2025)

- A meta-analysis of 1,097 samples across 81 countries (1996–2023)
- Found small but consistent declines in both hostile and benevolent sexism

Tang et al. (2017)

- Analysed 17 million job ads over 10 years.
- Found that gender-biased language in job descriptions decreased significantly

Hyde et al. (2019)

- Reviewed psychological and neuroscientific evidence challenging the binary view of gender
- Found increasing recognition of gender fluidity, nonbinary identities, and similarities between men and women

But has it actually changed?

Serena Williams: Wimbledon finalist at 36 and a mum - how has she done it?

By Sonia Oxley
BBC Sport at Wimbledon

13 July 2018 | Tennis



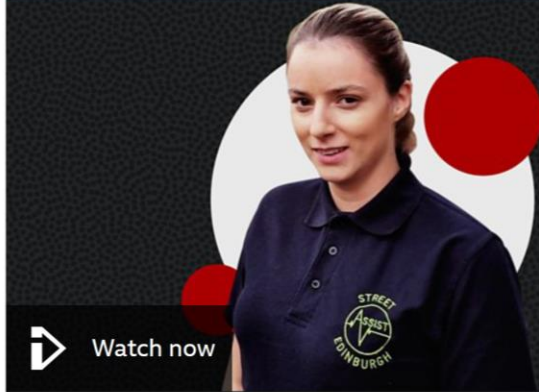
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bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0cxbdvk

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NEWS Midnight Mum: Saving the Streets

Home

 Watch now

The young mum working on the streets of Edinburgh, helping late night partygoers.

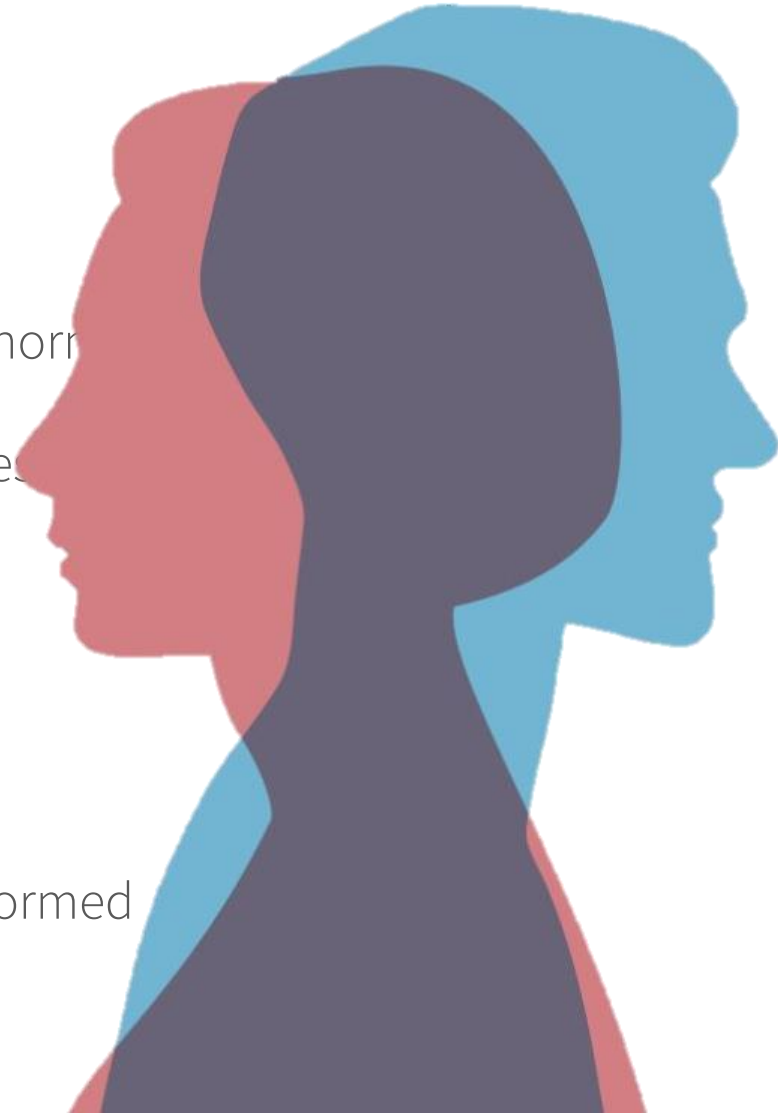
31 August 2022
5 months left to watch
11 minutes

Similar programmes

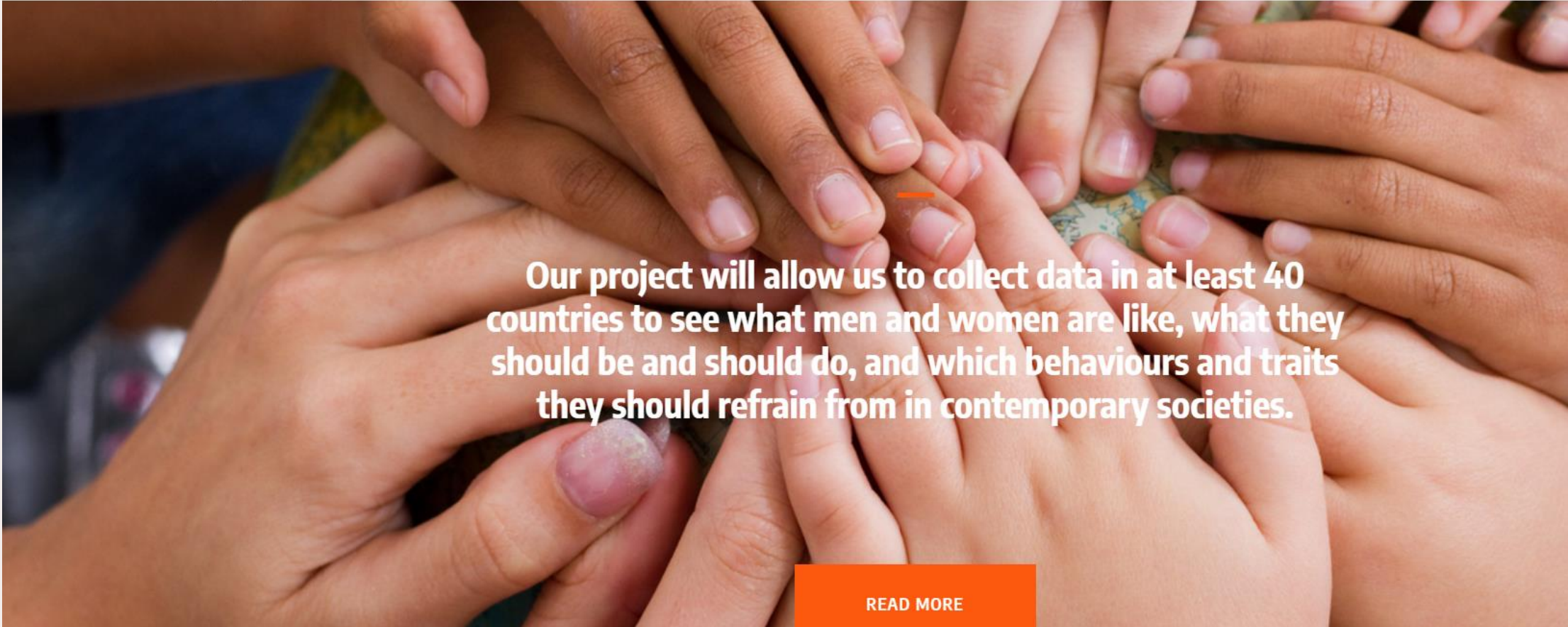
Home

Summary

- Gender bias is deeply embedded in society
- Sexism exists on a spectrum which evolve over time
- Social roles, religious ideologies, and cultural expectations reinforce gender norms
- Empirical research shows that while explicit sexism is declining, implicit biases and structural inequalities remain persistent.
- Recognising the complexity and persistence of gender bias is essential for promoting equality.
- Change requires both individual awareness and systemic transformation, informed by psychological insight and empirical evidence.



The Towards Gender Harmony Project

[HOME](#)[ABOUT THE PROJECT](#)[OUR RESEARCH](#)[RESEARCH TEAM](#)[CONFIRMED SITES](#)[COLLABORATORS FAQ](#)[PAR MIGRATION NAVIGATOR](#)[CONTACT](#)A close-up photograph of many hands of various skin tones reaching in from all directions to hold a small globe of the Earth. The hands are positioned in a way that they appear to be supporting or cradling the globe. The background is slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the globe.

Our project will allow us to collect data in at least 40 countries to see what men and women are like, what they should be and should do, and which behaviours and traits they should refrain from in contemporary societies.

[READ MORE](#)

The TGH Project



- 62 countries
- Using updated but equivalent-forms methods of measuring gender stereotyping
- Measuring descriptive and prescriptive gender stereotypes for males and females

The TGH Project



‘Rate the extent to which each of these traits describes you personally’

- Compassionate
- Dominant
- Uncertain
- Sensitive
- 52 traits in total

The TGH Project



Agreement with statements

- ‘Men and women have different abilities’
- ‘Their underlying nature makes it difficult for men to learn to behave more like women’
- ‘Every woman needs a male partner who will cherish her’

The TGH Project



Precarious Manhood Theory (Vandello & Basson, 2013)

‘[men] must conform to norms such as agency, dominance, a pursuit of high social status, and avoidance of femininity. Men have greater structural power than women in most cultures, but manhood status itself is ... “hard won and easily lost”.’

- Never tested in a cross-cultural context before
- Comparisons of pre/post #metoo data

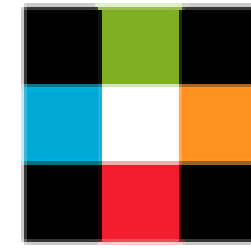
The TGH Project



Agreement with statements:

- ‘Some boys do not become men, no matter how old they get’
- Other people often question whether a man is a ‘real man’
- The more power women gain, the less power men have’

The TGH Project



**Towards
Gender
Harmony**

Kosakowska-Berezecka et al. (2020). Country-level and individual-level predictors of men's support for gender equality in 42 countries. *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

Bosson et al. (in press). Precarious Manhood Beliefs in 62 Nations. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*.

Findings of continued use of gender stereotypes, particularly by males who:

- A) show less support for action in support of gender equality
- B) Show higher levels of concern with loss of masculinity and power



Thank you for listening!