



INTRODUCTION

Gender roles are, by definition, the role or behaviours learned by people as governed by cultural norms: that is, how people act based on how society expects them to act because of their gender. Most behaviours have some sort of gender-based stereotype associated with them.

Gender roles permeate society deeply, and often have negative affects on both men and women. While the negative impacts of gender roles on female-identifying people are often a focal point of gender discussions, 'toxic masculinity' has negative impacts on all genders.

Toxic masculinity is a narrow-minded and repressive representation of what it means to be male: defining it with aggression, dominance, status, and violence. Toxic masculinity can cause emotional repression in men, and insults targeted towards men them being "soft" and "feminine" suggest that being a woman is a weakness. Language plays a large role in reinforcing gender stereotypes.

Non-binary people are those whose gender does not fit within the confines of masculine or feminine: identities which are thus outside the gender binary and cisnormativity. For non-binary people, gender roles are non-applicable, which can lead to heightened gender dysphoria.

The impact that gender roles have can be difficult to handle, especially since the mindsets in society are so solidly in place. Even if you're open-minded, it can be hard to drop the roles you've learned from birth. This learned mindset ties into the idea of unconscious bias. It is something we all have, but through becoming more aware of what our biases are we can consciously make efforts to alter them (or not allow them to influence decision making). A way to identify potential biases is to take the Harvard implicit association test: if you haven't already, we encourage you to take the test and become more aware of your bias.

Fundamentally, the way to start disintegrating harmful gender roles in society is to first recognise where they exist. Having a conversation about gender roles with your mentor is a good way to start recognising where gender roles may be having an influence on your life.

We also encourage you to spend some time reflecting on the progress of your SMART goals from last week. Continual development and monitoring of goals is the key to attaining them. Be honest with yourself and your mentor on your progress – be proud of what you have achieved so far and good luck with your mid-semester assessments!

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QUESTIONS TO ASK YOUR MENTOR

- Have you ever felt stereotyped because of your gender?
- How do you think we can reduce the effects of gender roles on those around us?
- Discuss the progress of your SMART goals and ask for ideas/advice on how they could be developed or changed.
- Discuss a personal achievement you've each had this term – what makes you proud of it? What do you aim to achieve in the semester break?

THINGS TO DO

- Test yourself – take the Harvard implicit (another word for 'unconscious') bias tests (link in further resources)
- Solve the riddle:
A father and a son are in a horrible car crash that kills the father. The son is rushed to hospital; just as he's about to go into surgery, the surgeon says "I can't operate on his boy – he's my son!" How is this possible?
- What answer did you come up with? This puzzle was an opening line in a New York Times article on gender stereotypes: they reported that 45-75% of people can't figure it out. Of course, the surgeon is the boy's mother. A common conclusion was that the boy had two fathers.
- Reflect on your goals from Week 4 – have you met any? Do they need to be re-scoped or changed? Do you need to set new ones for the next fortnight?

UPCOMING EVENTS



Workshop 3 Week 10:

Where: Physics Studio

When: October 9th 1-3pm

FURTHER RESOURCES

Take the tests:

<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/selectatest.html>

Follow the hyperlink to the main page and proceed to test types: test yourself on Gender-Career and Gender-Science