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The Social Psychology of Gender across Cultures

Serge Guimond, Armand Chatard, and Fabio Lorenzi-Cioldi

THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF GENDER ACROSS CULTURES

There are important biological differences between the sexes, but do women and men also differ in important ways in their typical style of thinking, feeling, and behaving? If so, how can we account for these psychological differences? These questions have generated considerable interest and debate in psychological sciences, and for good reasons (Deaux, 1985; Eagly, 1995; Stewart & McDermott, 2004). The study of gender has implications for all areas of psychology and all theories about human behavior.

So does the study of culture. Over the last few decades, we have witnessed a tremendous amount of work devoted to the analysis of cultural similarities and differences in psychology, often raising questions about the standing of theories elaborated and tested exclusively within Western nations (Chiu & Hong, 2006; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Guimond, 2006; Schaller & Crandall, 2004). However, researchers have rarely considered both gender and culture together. Rather, those who study gender differences typically ignore culture, whereas those who study cultural differences typically ignore gender. Conclusions based on such approaches may be misleading to the extent that they fail to identify those points at which culture and gender interact.

In this chapter we consider the picture that emerges from the growing number of studies looking at the extent to which there are variations across cultures in gender similarities and differences. We start by considering perceived gender differences across cultures (i.e., stereotypic beliefs) before moving to research on actual similarities and differences between women and men in personality, values, emotions, and self-construals. We discuss issues of status and roles and then show how taking into account culture brings renewed understanding of the processes underlying gender similarities and differences. We outline future prospects based on our analysis and elaborate on implications for the psychological examination of both culture and gender.

GENDER STEREOTYPES: WHEN BELIEFS BECOME REALITY

Research on group stereotypes in general, and gender stereotypes in particular, has provided an important contribution to the psychological study of gender (see Wood & Eagly, 2010; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010). Stereotypes are beliefs about the characteristics of members of a particular group. One important feature of stereotypes, and one reason why they are of great theoretical interest, is their socially shared nature: people generally agree on the traits that are typical of a given group. Thus, in the case of gender stereotypes, research shows that women and men agree on the attributes that are typical of men and on those that are typical of women (Guimond, 2010). Moreover, the various traits attributed to men and to women are not perceived as independent of each other. Rather, research shows that they are structured along two main dimensions: an individualistic dimension, typical of men, usually called *agency*, with traits such as dominant, assertive and boastful, and a more social or collectivistic dimension, typical of women, usually called *communion*, with traits such as affectionate, gentle and sensitive (Wood & Eagly, 2010; see also Carli, Chapter 13 this volume).

Starting in 1972, Williams and Best (1982, 1986) conducted an elaborate cross-cultural study of gender stereotypes with university students from 30 countries. Students were presented with 300 Adjective Check List items and were asked to indicate for each of them whether it was more frequently associated with men, with women, or not differentially associated with the sexes. Although there were some variations across cultures, the results suggested that overall, gender stereotypes were pancultural – that is, shared not only across gender but also across cultures. Computing indices of favorability (evaluation), activity, and strength, Williams and Best (1986) found that the stereotype of men was higher on activity and strength than that of women. However, there were no systematic differences across cultures on the favorability dimension. Thus, the image of men is not generally more favorable compared to the image of women. In fact, many studies show the reverse to be the case (Eagly & Mladinic, 1994). One may summarize the evidence, following Glick et al. (2004), by suggesting that women are generally perceived as wonderful but weak, whereas men are generally perceived as bad but bold. More recent studies looking at cultures varying on the dimension of power distance (see Hofstede, 1980) found similar results (see Désert & Leyens, 2006; Guimond et al., 2007).

Although agency and communion are central dimensions, gender stereotyping occurs not only on personality traits but also on physical traits, cognitive abilities, roles, and occupations (Biernat, 1991; Deaux, 1985). Examining cognitive abilities, Guimond and Roussel (2001, Study 1) asked 463 university students in France: Do you believe that women [men] in general are gifted in science [language]? Ratings were significantly different depending on the target group (men vs women) and the domain (science vs language). Men were perceived as significantly more gifted in science than women, and women were perceived as significantly more gifted in language than men.

How important are such descriptions about the content of gender stereotypes in helping us understand the psychology of gender? Whereas research explaining why people hold these stereotypes is certainly important, one should not discard knowledge about the content of gender stereotypes too quickly because we now know that the consequences of gender stereotyping depend on content.

Consider the classic experiment by Zanna and Pack (1975) on the self-fulfilling nature of apparent gender differences in behavior. The female student participants, who expected to meet a fellow male student from Princeton, described themselves as more submissive and feminine when the attractive male student held traditional stereotypic views about women than when he held liberated views. Moreover, and consistent with

the researchers' hypothesis, the female students 'acted dumber' in the former condition compared to the latter. Their performance on a problem-solving test was significantly lower when the Princeton male was chauvinistic rather than progressive. Because these results held when the partner was desirable and attractive, but not when the Princeton male was an undesirable person, they reflect the fact that these women were motivated to conform to gender stereotypes to get along with their interaction partner.

A strong body of evidence, from the ground-breaking studies of Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) with school children to the laboratory research by Snyder (1984) and the now large literature on stereotype threat (e.g., Steele & Ambady, 2006, see Betz, Ramsey, & Sekaquaptewa, Chapter 26 this volume), has lent considerable support to the conception of group stereotypes as self-fulfilling. Because beliefs can create reality, knowing the content of stereotypic beliefs allows one to anticipate the type of reality that is going to be created.

This was illustrated in a series of experiments testing the impact of gender stereotypes on memory for one's grades in school (see Chatard, Guimond, & Selimbegovic, 2007). Our memory is often used to reconstruct the past in ways that suit our purposes. As Conway and Ross (1984) suggested, you can get 'what you want by revising what you had'. Thus, when asked to report as accurately as possible their grades, students will be motivated to report higher grades than those that they have actually obtained. However, as Chatard et al. (2007) argued, gender stereotypes could be an important source of bias given that their content reflects cognitive abilities. Because women are stereotypically better than men in the verbal domain, it was expected that in this domain women would be more likely than men to overestimate their grades. Similarly, because the stereotype suggests that men are better than women in mathematics, it was expected that in this area, men would be more likely than women to overestimate their grades. Two studies found support for these predictions (Chatard et al., 2007). When gender stereotypes were contextually salient, students overestimated their grades in stereotype-consistent domains, but this gender difference in the recall of grades did not emerge when gender stereotypes were not contextually salient.

These findings have important implications for understanding and explaining gender differences in behavior. This is especially the case because gender stereotypes do not simply have descriptive components, they also have prescriptive ones. They suggest how one *should* behave (Prentice & Carranza, 2004). Thus, when men and women behave differently, a potentially important explanation is a process of conformity to gender stereotypic beliefs. This means that processes of social influence, which have little to do with biology, can be the source of many gender differences in behavior. It also means that social psychology as a field dedicated to the scientific study of social influence may have a lot to offer to this area (see Haslam et al., 1996; Haslam, Oakes, Reynolds, & Turner, 1999). In fact, recent research has specified the ways in which these influence processes come into play, and we will discuss this in detail when we consider explanations for gender differences in social behavior. Before that, we need to address the question of why these gender stereotypes exist in the first place. Why is it that men are perceived as agentic and women as communal? Why not the reverse?

ORIGINS OF GENDER STEREOTYPES: STATUS AND ROLES

The widely shared nature of gender stereotypes raises fundamental questions about the source of these beliefs that are not easy to answer. Nevertheless, considerable progress has been made by focusing on the impact of social status and social roles. Whether we like it or not, in virtually all countries around the world, one finds men in socially dominant

positions relative to women (Glick, 2006; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Accordingly, the assumption that men have higher status and greater power than women is central to many social psychological analyses of gender stereotypes: gender is commonly used in research to operationalize status, prestige, power, and influence (Wood & Eagly, 2010). Moreover, attempts to disentangle the effect of gender from the effect of social status and power suggest that stereotypic beliefs about men and women are firmly rooted in society's division of labor, and therefore in the social structure (Chatard, Guimond, Lorenzi-Cioldi, & Désert, 2005; Eagly & Steffen, 1984). In general, less prestigious roles and occupations ask for communal behavior, whereas more prestigious ones ask for agentic behavior. The fact that men and women are unevenly distributed in such roles and occupations boosts the belief that men are agentic and women are communal.

In a seminal demonstration of this central hypothesis of *social role theory*, Eagly and Wood (1982) showed that, knowing only the gender of the protagonist of an influence scenario, participants inferred higher status for men than for women. In contrast, when both genders were portrayed in an ostensibly similar occupational role, the impact of gender stereotypes was reduced (see Eagly, 1987). Likewise, Moskowitz, Suh, and Desaulniers (1994) demonstrated that employees of both sexes acted more agentically when interacting with a subordinate than when interacting with a superior. The pre-eminence of status cues in the interpretation of male and female behavior is demonstrated quite clearly in a study in which participants distributed agentic and communal traits among two managers and two employees of each sex (Lorenzi-Cioldi, 1997). Results showed that participants matched the traits according to the targets' professional role (judging both managers as more agentic than the employees), rather than their gender (men and women occupying the same professional role being matched with similar traits). Taken together, these findings support the idea that status cues override, or account for, gender effects (notwithstanding, in all of these studies, congruent roles, that is woman–employee and man–manager, produced the strongest contrast).

Research on the *stereotype content model* (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002) confirms the role of group status as a determinant of perceived competence in the stereotype of all possible groups that people can think of (see Caprariello, Cuddy, & Fiske, 2009; Fiske & Cuddy, 2006). Despite important differences between the gender status-system and other long-term status systems, notably class, ethnicity, and age (see Fiske, 2010), the study of gender differences has provided valuable insights for understanding how status hierarchies operate at a more general level (see Lorenzi-Cioldi, 2009; Ridgeway & Bourg, 2004). A case in point is oppression or subordination theories, which were initially elaborated to account for women's superior competence in the nonverbal domain (see LaFrance & Henley, 1994). The basic idea of these theories is easily generalized to other status systems: those who possess status and power are the focus of attention (Keltner, Gruenfeld, & Anderson, 2003). The disadvantaged, aware that their fate depends on adaptation to those with greater power, are motivated to pay attention to those with power (Fiske, 1993). Knowledge about the powerful's attributes, preferences, and behaviors is sought in order to predict their reactions, to respond appropriately, and possibly to influence them. Consistent with these ideas, Snodgrass (1992) provided evidence of greater interpersonal sensitivity among subordinates than among leaders, a tendency that is at work in male–female relationships (see Lammers, Gordijn, & Otten, 2008).

Based on the distinction between agency and communion in gender stereotype content, some authors have argued that men pursue positive distinctiveness using agentic (i.e., status-relevant) dimensions, and women, in a parallel process, pursue positive distinctiveness using communal (status-irrelevant) dimensions (e.g., Maccoby, 1998; Oldmeadow & Fiske, 2010). From the social

identity perspective (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), this difference has been portrayed as a social creativity strategy, whereby members of a low-status group achieve positive distinctiveness despite their negative standing in the social structure (e.g., Bettencourt, Dorr, Charlton, & Hume, 2001). Accordingly, this difference is contingent on values that by and large govern societies. Western societies value individualistic beliefs, which are akin to agentic qualities (Stephens, Markus, & Townsend, 2007). Research on gender stereotypes has shown that descriptions of men in general match closely those of adult, white, healthy persons, whereas descriptions of women are more group-specific, that is, they are comprised of relational and communal characteristics (see Wood & Eagly, 2010; see also Hegarty, Parslow, Ansara, & Quick, Chapter 3 this volume). The shared cultural norm of the agentic person, and the ingroup norm, coincide for men, but diverge for women. Direct evidence for this comes from research on the perception of leadership styles (e.g., Eagly & Carli, 2007). For example, the 'think manager–think male' phenomenon (Schein, 1996) shows that leaders are typically endowed with masculine, agentic characteristics. Women must therefore face the conflicting demands of what it means to be a good leader and of what it means to be a woman (see Eagly & Karau, 2002; Heilman, Wallen, Fuchs, & Tamkins, 2004).

A series of studies by Lorenzi-Cioldi (2002) highlights the resulting greater ambivalence of perceptions concerning lower-status groups. Male and female Swiss participants judged the extent to which various attributes apply to people in general, to men and women, to Westerners and Asians, and to themselves. Two attributes represented the Western culture ('independent' and 'individualistic'), and two other attributes represented the Asian culture ('collectivistic' and 'follower'). The findings showed that, overall, Westerners, men, and people in general were attributed agency, whereas Asians were attributed communion. Men's self-descriptions paralleled the descriptions of their cultural and their gender ingroups. In contrast, perceptions of female targets, as well as women's self-descriptions, embodied intermediate levels of both agentic and communal behaviors. Furthermore, these effects were accentuated when participants were first provided with a cultural prime (see Lorenzi-Cioldi & Chatard, 2006). Apparently, only those who have power and status can fully claim to embody the cultural norm of the self-contained person.

EXPLAINING GENDER SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES: THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURE

Turning to explanations of actual similarities and differences between men and women, rather than perceived ones, one encounters an important debate between social role theory, arguably the most influential sociocultural explanation of gender differences, and an alternative, biologically based explanation, proposed within the evolutionary perspective (Eagly & Wood, 1999). As we hope to show, taking into account variations across cultures brings new insights into this debate.

According to evolutionary theorists, women and men should differ in domains in which they have faced different adaptive problems throughout human evolution. From this perspective, natural selection has produced gender differences over the course of human evolution, especially in traits involved in men's and women's reproductive fitness (see Byrd-Craven & Geary, Chapter 7 this volume). For example, for biological reasons, including pregnancy, childbirth, and lactation, women are more invested than men in their relationship with their children. Women who were more agreeable and nurturing may have promoted the survival of their children and gained evolutionary advantage. In contrast, men's higher aggressiveness and assertiveness may have fostered their fitness in ancestral environments by increasing their chances of rising in dominance hierarchies and acquiring resources

that added to their mate value. Evolved dispositional gender differences are presumably caused at a proximate level by genetic differences between the sexes and by genetically guided biological mechanisms (e.g., hormonal factors) (see Lippa, 2005; Schmitt, 2005).

Evolutionary and social role theories make different predictions about the influence of culture on gender differences (see Guimond, 2008; Lippa, 2010). Social role theory implies that, across societies, weaker differentiation between men and women's occupational roles and status would be associated with a decrease in sex differences. As Eagly and Wood (1999, p. 421) explicitly stated: 'To the extent that the traditional sexual division between wage labor and domestic labor disappears and women and men become similarly distributed into paid occupations, men and women should converge in their psychological attributes.' Thus, according to Eagly et al. (2004), '[t]his demise of many sex differences with increasing gender equality is a prediction of social role theory' (p. 289). In contrast, based on evolutionary psychology, most researchers predict that gender differences in personality dispositions and behaviors, which are expected to manifest innate differences between men and women, should be stable, or invariant, across cultures (Costa et al., 2001; Lippa, 2008; Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). As Lippa (2008, p. 2) noted: 'To the extent that sex differences in personality show strong consistency – sometimes even universality – across cultures, the likelihood increases that biological factors contribute to these differences.'

Cross-cultural studies are therefore ideally suited to examining the relative merit of these two major theoretical perspectives. Supporting evolutionary theorizing, Buss (1989) showed that in terms of the criteria that people use in selecting mates, there are sex differences that are invariant across cultures. However, Eagly and Wood (1999) argued that a closer examination of these data indicate cross-cultural variation that supports social role theory. They showed that across the 37 cultures examined by Buss (1989), sex differences in mate preferences are correlated with societal gender equality: as gender equality increased, sex differences decreased. Similar findings have been observed in other domains (see Wood & Eagly, 2012). For example, differences between men and women in physical aggression against their partner (Archer, 2006), and gender differences in certain sexual behaviors (Peterson & Hyde, 2010) follow the pattern predicted by social role theory when variations across cultures are considered. However, this evidence is strictly correlational. Moreover, there is an emerging body of research showing cross-cultural variations in gender differences that do not fit either with evolutionary theorizing or with social role theory (see Guimond, 2008). Indeed, contrary to the assumption of social role theory that gender differences in ways of thinking and feeling would be minimized in modern, progressive cultures (like the UK), as compared to more traditional cultures (like Ethiopia), the opposite pattern was found. As discussed below, gender differences on a number of self-related characteristics are largest in Western countries.

In an influential paper, Costa, Terracciano, and McCrae (2001) examined sex differences in five broad personality factors. Using a large data set of students and adults (n = 23,031) from 26 nations, they showed that sex differences are relatively small overall, but quite consistent across nations: women are higher in self-reported neuroticism, agreeableness, and warmth, whereas men are higher in assertiveness and dominance, and such differences are invariant across age lines. However, there were some important variations across cultures. As the authors noted: '[The results] show an unmistakable pattern: gender differences are most marked among European and American cultures and most attenuated among African and Asian cultures' (p. 327). At the cultural level, the magnitude of sex differences was strongly correlated with Hofstede's (1980) individualism/collectivism dimension ($r = 0.71$, $n = 23$, $p < 0.01$), a dimension that is strongly related to United Nations indices of

gender equality and economic development. Thus, gender differentiation was greater in individualistic (and more egalitarian) nations than in collectivistic (and less egalitarian) nations.

This finding of greater gender differentiation in individualistic than in collectivistic nations has been documented more recently by independent researchers using data from more than 50 nations. Schmitt, Realo, Voracek, and Allik (2008) found that women report higher levels of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness than do men across most nations. They also found that United Nations indices of gender equality and economic development, such as the Human Development Index, are the main nation-level predictors of larger sex differences in personality. This led them to conclude that 'sex differences in personality traits are larger in prosperous, healthy, and egalitarian cultures in which women have more opportunities equal with those of men' (p. 168).

Along a similar line, studies by Watkins and colleagues (Watkins et al., 1998) indicate that the magnitude of gender differences in self-construals is contingent on culture. Indeed, differences in self-construals between women and men are well documented in psychological research (see Cross & Madson, 1997). Men are more likely to espouse an independent conception of the self than are women; they perceive themselves as being autonomous, separated from others, assertive, and unique. In contrast, women perceive themselves as being communal, relational, and embedded in others (reflecting an interdependent self-construal). However, the gender differences reported by Cross and Madson (1997) in the United States do not seem to extend beyond Western countries. Watkins et al. (1998) examined independent and interdependent self-construals across 14 countries, using various measures of self-construals, but failed to find support for the expected differences in collectivistic cultures.

Cross-cultural research on emotions reveals a similar pattern of variation in gender differences. For instance, using data from 37 countries, Fischer and Manstead (2000) found larger gender differences in the expression of emotions in individualistic than in collectivistic cultures. In the former, but not in the latter, women reported expressing stereotype-consistent emotions (joy, sadness, guilt) to a greater extent than men. Gender differences in emotion recognition across cultures have analogously been reported. For instance, in a large Internet-based study (n = 42,638), Merten (2005) found that women were better at recognizing emotions than men, and that this female superiority was moderated by culture, in line with the above results. In this study, gender differentiation across cultures was strongly and positively correlated with the Gender Empowerment Measure (GEM), a reliable index of gender equality obtained from the United Nations. These results mean that there was an increase of gender differences as gender equality increased.

Cross-cultural variations in gender differences have also been documented on value priorities (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005). In particular, findings from 127 samples in 70 countries (n = 77,528) revealed that men attribute consistently more importance than women do to power, the reverse being true for benevolence. Again, these differences were quite consistent across age lines, but varied according to culture. As Schwartz and Rubel (2005) contended:

> The greater the social, health, and employment equality of women and men in a country, the larger the sex differences (men higher) in power values (r = –0.61) and the larger the sex differences (women higher) in benevolence values (r = 0.70). … These findings contradict the idea that gender equality reduces gender differences. (p. 1023)

Finally, gender differences in attitudes toward the social hierarchies, considered by some to be a personality predisposition (see Altemeyer, 1998), were also shown to increase with gender equality in the meta-analysis of Lee, Pratto, and Johnson (2011).

In sum, recent cross-cultural research using large data sets provides a clear picture of gender

differentiation across cultures. Men and women differ more in their personality, self-construals, emotions, and value priorities in individualistic and prosperous countries, where political and economic gender equality is high, than in more collectivistic and traditional countries, where gender equality is low. It is worth noting that this consistent pattern of findings was *never anticipated* in the studies reviewed above. This may be because this pattern contradicts current theoretical models of gender differentiation.

As Costa et al. (2001) noted, this pattern of gender differentiation is surprising because neither the evolutionary model nor the social role model can predict it. Nonetheless, researchers have offered a number of post hoc interpretations. For instance, Costa et al. (2001) suggested that men and women may be especially prone to attribute masculine and feminine behaviors to roles rather than traits in traditional cultures, and that this may account for the fact that gender differences in personality traits are larger in modern than traditional societies. Schwartz and Rubel (2005) suggested that gender differences in values may be more pronounced in post-industrial societies because women in these societies are especially motivated to express distinct values, rather than the same values as men. Although plausible, to date, none of these explanations has been subjected to empirical examination, and they therefore remain purely speculative. Based on the shifting-standards model (Biernat & Thompson, 2002), Wood and Eagly (2012) recently suggested that the findings showing the reverse of what they predict probably reflect the use of unreliable subjective rating scales. They note that when objective scales are used (i.e., performance tests), the result is typically smaller gender differences with greater gender equality. There are several reasons to doubt that this is the right explanation. First, this claim is directly contradicted by the findings of Hamamura (2012) showing greater, not smaller, gender differences in standardized mathematics performance in low as opposed to high power distance societies. Second, in the studies reviewed above (and elsewhere, see Guimond, 2008) various types of measures other than subjective rating scales have been used (open-ended questions, reliable multi-item scales, the Twenty Statements Test, etc.). Finally, and more importantly, an alternative explanation has been empirically tested and confirmed using both subjective rating scales and objective scales as advocated by Wood and Eagly (2012). Based on theories of social comparison and self-categorization, Guimond and colleagues (Guimond et al., 2007; Guimond, 2008; Guimond, Chatard, & Kang, 2010) provided a theoretical framework that can actually predict the surprising pattern of gender differences noted above, and thus can explain why gender egalitarian societies can paradoxically produce greater psychological differences between women and men.

SOCIAL COMPARISON AND SELF-CATEGORIZATION ACROSS CULTURES

Existing theories, that is, the social role and evolutionary models, are not particularly compatible with the cross-cultural evidence reviewed above concerning self-related characteristics (self-construals, values, emotions, and personality traits). A new model of gender differences is thus needed to account for these findings. In the remainder of this chapter, we outline a new approach, as recently proposed by Guimond and colleagues (Guimond, Chatard, Branscombe et al., 2006; Guimond et al., 2007). This approach builds on social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954), social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), and self-categorization theory (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987) to suggest that different social comparison processes across cultures produce diverse patterns of gender differences in the self. Let us briefly outline how these different frameworks relate to one another and how they might contribute to the emergence of a new model of gender similarities and differences that can complement existing ones.

Research on Festinger's (1954) social comparison theory has shown that how people define themselves is relative rather than absolute (Buunk & Gibbons, 2006; Mussweiler & Strack, 2000). That is, people evaluate themselves in comparison with others, rather than in absolute terms. These comparisons are crucial to understanding self-evaluation and should not be neglected (see Heine, Lehman, Peng, & Greenholtz, 2002). However, most research on gender differences fails to take into account this essential aspect of human functioning. Usually, gender differences in personality traits (Costa et al., 2001; Lippa, 2008; Schmitt et al., 2008), values (Schwartz & Rubel, 2005), emotions (Fischer & Manstead, 2000; Merten, 2005), and self-construals (Cross & Madson, 1997), are assessed as absolute entities, without considering the standard of comparison that participants use when evaluating themselves. Yet, a change in the standard of comparison can lead to systematic changes in self-evaluation.

Festinger (1954) argued that most people compare themselves with ingroup members, because they are more similar to the self and because such comparisons are more informative. There is evidence that people often favor comparisons with the ingroup and that they choose not to compare with dissimilar others (see Guimond, 2006). Recent research suggests, however, that social comparison is often a spontaneous and automatic process and that people cannot avoid comparing themselves, even with dissimilar others (e.g., Mussweiler, Rüter, & Epstude, 2006). Moreover, in daily life, social comparisons are often imposed by some external conditions. For example, when a woman works in a male-dominated field, she does not have another alternative than to compare with men (i.e., outgroup members).

Unlike social comparison theory, social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) considers that intergroup comparisons are essential in regulating human behaviors. According to this framework, social identity is the feeling that one belongs to a social group and includes all features shared with other ingroup members. It is conceptually distinct from personal identity, which corresponds to aspects of the self that make an individual unique, different from others. Although personal and social identities coexist within the same individual, the theory predicts that they are not activated in the same contexts. Broadly speaking, intragroup comparisons render personal identity psychologically salient, whereas intergroup comparisons trigger social identity (Turner & Onorato, 1999). However, whether or not individuals engage in social comparisons with outgroup members depends on a number of interrelated factors: the legitimacy, permeability, and stability of group boundaries. If intergroup boundaries are perceived as stable, impermeable, and legitimate, people are unlikely to engage in intergroup comparisons. In contrast, if intergroup boundaries are perceived as unstable, permeable, and illegitimate, intergroup comparisons are more frequent, and have a greater impact. As we will see, these considerations lead to specific predictions concerning variations in gender differences across social and cultural contexts.

Self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987; see also Garcia, Branscombe, Desmarais, & Gee, 2006; Hogg & Turner, 1987; Oakes, Haslam, & Turner, 1994; Ryan & David, 2003; Ryan, David, & Reynolds, 2004; Turner, Oakes, Haslam, & McGarty, 1994; Turner & Onorato, 1999) complements and extends social identity theory in several respects. In this perspective, people can categorize themselves as an individual (at the level of personal identity) or as a group member (at the level of social identity). Social comparison leads to an immediate change in the level of self-categorization. When the level of self-categorization shifts from personal to social identity, a process of depersonalization or self-stereotyping occurs. People no longer perceive themselves as unique individuals, but as group members. As compared to when personal identity is salient, social identity salience leads people to ascribe ingroup characteristics to the self, to conform to ingroup norms, and to engage in stereotype-consistent behaviors. In harmony with this view, Ryan and colleagues

(2004) showed that support for Gilligan's (1982) influential thesis about gender differences in moral reasoning was observed when the social context makes gender identity salient but not when another social identity (i.e., university students) is salient.

Self-stereotyping is assumed to be a relatively spontaneous and automatic process. However, in line with social identity theory, perceptions of legitimacy, permeability, and stability of intergroup boundaries might constrain the tendency to engage in such comparisons and thereby the extent to which self-stereotyping occurs.

What predictions can be made from these theories in terms of gender differences? One interesting prediction, from a psychological viewpoint, is that gender differences should be relative and context-dependent rather than stable, fixed, and immutable (see also Batalha & Reynolds, Chapter 11 this volume). In particular, gender differences should depend on social comparisons. In line with self-categorization theory, intergroup comparisons should induce a shift to gender identity and a self-stereotyping process. Men and women should evaluate themselves as being similar to their group (i.e., in line with common gender stereotypes). This would entail an accentuation of gender differences. In contrast, intragroup comparison should induce a shift to personal identity and a process of individualization. Women and men should then evaluate themselves as being dissimilar to other members of their gender group (i.e., at odds with common gender stereotypes). This would entail a minimization of gender differences.

In four experiments, Guimond, Chatard, Martinot, Crisp, and Redersdorff (2006) tested these predictions on two fundamental dimensions of the self: agentic and relational (or communal) self-construals. The researchers focused on these dimensions because, as argued by Cross and Madson (1997), there is evidence that gender differences in most psychological attributes (motivation, emotion, personality, cognition) can be explained by gender differences in agentic versus relational self-construals. Participants' self-descriptions on these dimensions were assessed in a control condition (without any comparison), in an intragroup condition (in comparison with ingroup members) or in an intergroup condition (in comparison with outgroup members). For example, in the intragroup condition, male (vs female) participants were asked to describe themselves 'in comparison with most men (vs women)'. In the intergroup condition, participants were asked to describe themselves in comparison with the opposite gender.

The results showed that in the control condition, women described themselves as more relational than men, whereas men described themselves as more agentic than women. In line with Cross and Madson's (1997) theorizing, these gender differences were pronounced, with large effect sizes. Interestingly, however, these gender differences were eliminated in the intragroup social comparison condition; there were no statistically reliable gender differences in self-construal, either on the relational dimension or on the dimension of agency. Furthermore, the results showed that, as compared to the control condition, gender differences were significantly increased when participants were asked to rate themselves in comparison with members of the other gender group (intergroup social comparison). In terms of effect size, the results of these studies consistently indicated that gender differences in the self were small (or trivial) in the intragroup condition, medium in the control condition, and large in the intergroup condition. In line with self-categorization theory (Turner et al., 1987), the results also showed that these gender differences in the self were mediated by a self-stereotyping process. That is, in the control and intergroup conditions, where reliable gender differences were found, participants tended to describe themselves (self-construals) as similar to their ingroup (men vs women in general).

In sum, these studies showed that gender differences in the self are consistent with common gender stereotypes (men are more agentic, whereas women are more relational), but that these differences are relative and context-dependent rather than stable, fixed,

and immutable (see also Guimond et al., 2010). Simply changing the frame of reference changes the magnitude of gender differences, and such changes largely reflect a self-stereotyping process (the tendency to conform to ingroup norms or stereotypes). These studies highlight the critical role of ingroup versus outgroup social comparisons in shaping self-definition and gender differences. When social comparisons are limited to the ingroup, gender differences are attenuated (for related research on the effects of shifting standards, see Fuegen & Biernat, Chapter 9 this volume).

What predictions can be made from these findings in terms of the cross-cultural variations in gender differences? In a nutshell, gender differences should be large in magnitude in cultures where men and women frequently engage in intergroup comparisons. In these cultures, the norms would be consistent with, and encourage, intergroup comparisons. In contrast, gender differences should be small in cultures where intergroup comparisons are more restricted. In such cultures, the cultural norms would be at odds with, and would discourage, intergroup comparisons.

To the extent that there are variations in nations around the world in the level of gender inequality, with some cultures being less egalitarian and more hierarchical than others, the five-stage model of intergroup relations (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1994) concur with these expectations. This model describes a series of stages through which most intergroup relations are assumed to develop over time. In stage 1, concerning clearly stratified intergroup relations such as 'paternalistic' societies, the model predicts that 'Only individualistic or intragroup social comparisons are deemed legitimate, since the outgroup … is seen as being so dissimilar to the in-group' (p. 143). Thus, when the gender gap is wide and stable, this model suggests that there will be few social comparisons with members of the other gender. However, Taylor and Moghaddam (1994) suggest that in later stages, when movement from one group to another begins to be perceived as possible and, especially, when the system of inequality is perceived as illegitimate, there will be 'a shift from interpersonal to intergroup social comparisons' (p. 147). Thus, when inequalities between women and men are reduced, an important psychological implication is that between-gender social comparisons are increasingly perceived as appropriate. Interestingly, at the level of culture, Yuki (2003) has similarly argued that while intergroup social comparisons may be an important psychological process within Western individualistic cultures, as proposed by social identity theory, Eastern collectivistic cultures are based on an alternative 'intragroup relational model'. Thus, diverse theoretical perspectives all lead to the expectation that in societies with relatively strong gender inequality, such as many African or Asian collectivist countries, there will be more within-gender than between-gender social comparisons, compared to many Western individualistic countries. The implication for gender differences is that one would predict more important psychological differences between women and men in Western cultures, insofar as they stimulate between-gender social comparisons, than in Asian or African nations.

Guimond et al. (2007) conducted a cross-cultural study to examine these predictions about the role of cultural norms and the effects of social comparison processes on gender similarities and differences. Participants were adults from five countries: France, the United States, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Malaysia. According to Hofstede's data (1980), these nations strongly differ on two major cultural norms: individualism and power distance. Individualism refers to the degree to which people value autonomy, self-interest, and separation from others, rather than strong ties between family and ingroup members. Power distance refers to the extent to which inequality among persons in different positions of power is viewed as normal and legitimate. Glick (2006) has shown that this index of power distance is indeed negatively

related to the level of actual gender equality in a nation. The higher the power distance in a society, the less equality there is between women and men. Moreover, in Hofstede's (1980) classification, power distance is strongly and negatively correlated with individualism. The United States is the nation with the highest score on individualism and the lowest score on power distance. In contrast, Malaysia is among the nations with the lowest score on individualism and the highest score on power distance. France, Belgium, and the Netherlands are intermediate on these two dimensions, though as Western nations they are closer to the United States than to Malaysia.

Guimond et al. (2007) reasoned that these cultural differences might have a major bearing on the type of social comparison in which people engage. High power distance cultures are characterized by a relatively rigid social hierarchy in which it is seen as inappropriate for people in different positions of power to interact informally with each other. Consequently, social comparison between groups at different power levels would be relatively rare, with most social comparisons being restricted to an intragroup level. In line with social identity theory (Tajfel, 1981), in high power distance cultures where group boundaries are perceived as stable, legitimate, and impermeable, people may find intergroup social comparisons inappropriate and irrelevant. In contrast, in highly individualistic cultures, it is seen as appropriate to interact with and to relate oneself to people in different positions. In short, intergroup social comparisons were expected to have a stronger impact in Western nations like the United States, The Netherlands, Belgium, and France than in Malaysia. Using an experimental manipulation of social comparison, Guimond et al. (2007) found strong support for this prediction. Gender differences in the relational self were variable across cultures, being stronger among participants from Western individualist countries than among Malaysian participants. Moreover, this gender by culture interaction in self-construal was more pronounced when participants were asked to compare themselves with members of the other gender (intergroup social comparison condition) than when participants were instructed to compare themselves with members of their own gender ingroup (intragroup social comparison condition). In fact, the gender X culture interaction on self-construal was no longer significant in the intragroup comparison condition. Participants from Malaysia had the highest scores on relational self-construals, and contrary to what was found in Western nations, intergroup social comparisons did not accentuate gender differences in self-construal. These results are consistent with the idea that cultural norms (high power distance, low individualism) constrain people's tendency to engage in intergroup comparisons.

This research has demonstrated experimentally that variations in gender differences across cultures depend on the social comparison process that participants engage in. Gender differences are more pronounced when and where people engage in intergroup social comparisons. The tendency to engage in intergroup comparison is quite limited in certain cultures (high power distance and low individualistic cultures). Highly individualistic and egalitarian cultures favor intergroup comparisons, and thus tend to magnify gender differences in the self. The social comparison explanation of gender differences across cultures outlined here deserves further examination, but clearly it contributes to explaining the seemingly paradoxical phenomenon of more marked gender differences in Western nations, precisely those high in individualism and egalitarianism. Although gender differences on agentic versus communal self-construals were the focus of this research, the theoretical analysis has implications for other gender differences. In fact, as explained elsewhere (see Guimond, Chatard, Martinot et al., 2006; Guimond et al., 2010), there is strong evidence supporting this claim.

CHANGING THE SELF MATTERS

Gender differences in self-construals fluctuate in magnitude as a function of social comparisons. Is this change in self-construal, following same-sex versus opposite-sex social comparisons, a mere perceptual phenomenon having little concrete impact on subsequent behaviors? Or, is this a genuine change in self-views that carries important consequences? This is a critical issue that was addressed in two experiments (see Guimond, Chatard, Martinot et al., 2006, Study 3 and Study 4). The results of these experiments are directly relevant to the claim of Wood and Eagly (2012) that research revealing stronger gender differences in more gender-equal societies is probably misleading. Indeed, they suggest that these results are due to the use of subjective rating scales that can obscure 'actual sex differences', differences that would be revealed using objective scales (or 'common rule' measures, see Biernat & Thompson, 2002).

To examine this issue, social comparison was manipulated on the self-rating task, following a procedure similar to that of Heine et al. (2002). After rating themselves using subjective scales, all participants were asked to complete the Social Dominance Orientation scale (SDO; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This scale was presented in the same standard format for all participants. It measures a general attitude toward group-based dominance and hierarchy. It was used because sex differences on this scale, with women being less favorable than men toward group dominance and inequality, are said to be extremely robust. Clearly, this scale cannot be said to obscure actual sex differences. To the contrary, Sidanius and Pratto (1999) have argued that differences between men and women on this scale are universal and invariant (see, however, Chatard et al., 2005; Schmitt, Branscombe, & Kappen, 2003). If Wood and Eagly (2012) are right, and under certain conditions subjective self-ratings can obscure sex differences, then one may fail to observe sex differences in the self-ratings but one should still find a sex difference on SDO. This follows from the argument that the sex differences on self-ratings are assumed to be there, even though they are not observed. On the other hand, if the results discussed above showing shifting gender differences in self-construals using subjective rating scales do have implications for the explanation of other gender differences, then one can predict that other gender differences will also be modified (for the details of our theoretical reasoning, see Guimond, Chatard, Martinot et al., 2006; Guimond et al., 2010).

Given that comparison with the opposite sex increases gender differences while comparison with same-sex ingroup members decreases them, Guimond, Chatard, Martinot et al. (2006) predicted that the consequence would be a reduction in the gender gap in SDO in the intragroup comparison condition and an increase in the gender gap in SDO in the intergroup comparison condition, relative to the control group. Study 3 and Study 4 in Guimond, Chatard, Martinot et al. (2006) revealed evidence consistent with these predictions. In Study 3 among British university students, the results showed no effect of gender on SDO in the intragroup comparison condition. In contrast, a strong gender effect was found in the intergroup comparison condition, with men having higher SDO than women. These findings were replicated in Study 4 among French college students.

In sum, this research indicates that through a simple change in target of comparison, involving the substitution of one word, men versus women, gender differences in self-construals are altered. More importantly, this change in self-construals has implications for the explanation of other gender differences. When participants are subsequently asked to complete the SDO scale presented in the same standard format, their answers reflect the prior experimental conditions to which they were randomly allocated. Gender differences in SDO were reduced in the intragroup comparison condition and magnified in the intergroup comparison condition. Clearly, the lesson to be derived from this research is

not that subjective rating scales are a methodological artifact (for additional evidence involving both subjective scales and objective or common rule measures, see Guimond, Chatard, Martinot et al., 2006, Study 4). It is that social psychological processes of social comparison and self-categorization are fundamental to an understanding of many psychological differences and similarities between women and men. This perspective also affords a theoretical understanding of the variations across cultures that can usefully complement social role theory. As noted above, the meta-analysis of Lee et al. (2011) showed that the gender gap in SDO was larger, not smaller, in more gender-equal nations.

Because social role theory is a dynamic theory that can account for change, this type of finding does not necessarily invalidate the theory. It simply suggests that gender equality may set in motion certain social-psychological processes that will result in divergence between women and men, rather than convergence. So far, research has shown both convergence and divergence. The influence of gender roles and gender identity, concepts that already form the basis of social role theory, simply needs to be expanded to allow for the prediction of divergence between women and men, not solely convergence. The findings reviewed above by many different researchers on many different psychological constructs all showing greater divergence with greater equality clearly suggest that as Lee et al. (2011) put it, 'more gender equality does not necessarily lead to gender sameness' (p. 1048).

ACCOUNTING FOR CHANGE WITHIN WESTERN SOCIETIES OVER TIME

Our analysis is relevant to understanding the changes in gender relations that have occurred over the last half-century in Western societies. Since the 1950s, when women were largely confined to domestic roles, up to the present, where women, like men, are part of the labor force, considerable changes in gender roles have occurred. Social role theory's prediction of a narrowing of gender differences over time on agentic traits received strong support in several studies (see Wood & Eagly, 2012). However, looking at gender stereotypes and the self-concept of American men and women, Lueptow, Garovich-Szabo, and Lueptow (2001) did not find, as social role theory would expect, evidence of less gender stereotyping in the 1990s than in the 1970s. The trend is even in the opposite direction. Why? We would argue that a change from within-gender social comparisons to between-gender social comparisons is one important piece of the puzzle. As Buunk and VanYperen (1989) noted in the context of intimate relationships, 'In earlier times, when husbands and wives did not consider one another as equals, they probably did not view each other as appropriate referent persons to evaluate how good a deal they were getting' (p. 158). Thus, in North America and Western Europe in the 1950s, comparisons between men and women probably did not seem appropriate. However, as the legitimacy of gender inequality was increasingly questioned, between-gender social comparisons are likely to have become more widespread. We argue that this change in social comparison processes over time is one mechanism that can help us understand why the feminist movement in the United States, as discussed by Eagly and Wood (2011), evolved from a period where men and women were considered to be the same, to a period where, with Gilligan's (1982) work as the most well-known example, men and women were increasingly recognized as being different, and equal.

CONCLUSION

Most research looking at similarities and differences between women and men on important psychological attributes has been carried out in North America and Western Europe. In

this chapter, we have reviewed evidence showing that gender stereotypes are largely shared, even across cultures, but that similarities and differences between women and men in personality, values, emotions, and the self-concept vary across cultures. Moreover, this variation, indicating more pronounced gender differences in Western individualistic countries, is unexpected from the perspective of the most influential frameworks applied to sex differences, notably evolutionary psychology and social role theory. Thus, we presented an alternative perspective based on social comparison theory and self-categorization theory that can explain why more egalitarian societies paradoxically result in greater psychological differences between women and men than do less egalitarian societies.

This analysis, predicting an interaction between gender and culture, has important implications that should stimulate interesting research in the future. For example, under what conditions does gender equality lead men and women to converge in their psychological attributes and under what conditions does it lead them to diverge? What are the implications for the work of cultural psychologists engaged in contrasting Western and Eastern psychologies, often without considering possible gender differences? Markus and Kitayama (1991) have argued for a basic difference in self-construal between members of Western European cultures and those of Asian cultures. They note that the Eastern construal in terms of an interdependent self is highly similar to some of the most significant themes of the psychology of women. Yet, they do not draw the obvious implication that there may be an interaction between culture and gender when it comes to self-construal. Likewise, in his book on cognitive differences between Asians and Westerners, Nisbett (2003) presents an important contribution that nevertheless fails to consider in any detailed manner the role of gender. This chapter clearly suggests that theories about human behavior, including research on culture and cognition, are likely to be much improved by taking into account gender and associated processes of intragroup and intergroup social comparisons that shape self-definition and ultimately behavior.

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