



The association between gender role stereotypes, resistance training motivation, and participation



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ABSTRACT

Objectives: Test the relationships between implicit gender stereotypes and perceptions of resistance training pleasantness, resistance training motivation, and participation among men and women. Test whether gender role moderates the effect of stereotypes on resistance training participation in men and women.

Design: Implicit associations between resistance training and masculinity and pleasantness were measured using an Affect Misattribution Procedure (AMP). Moderated mediation analyses were conducted to test motivation as a mediator of the relationship between implicit associations and behavior. **Method:** Participants ($n = 170$; 46% male) completed an AMP and measures of motivation for and participation in resistance training.

Results: Women's implicit associations between exercise and masculinity were not associated with their motivation for or participation in resistance training. The strength of men's implicit masculinity-resistance training association was negatively related to minutes of resistance training per week, mediated by lower autonomous motivation, 95%CI [-419.15 to -11.10]. The association between implicit resistance training pleasantness and behavior was mediated by autonomous motivation in women, 95%CI [2.54 to 313.55], with similar trends in men 95%CI_{men} [-3.00 to 320.38].

Conclusion: Based on these findings, implicit associations with masculinity are not associated with women's participation in exercise. However, implicitly endorsing gender-stereotypes for resistance training is associated with lower participation rates in men.

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Women engage in resistance training at lower rates than men throughout their lifetime (CDC, 2011). In college-aged (i.e., 16–24 year old) individuals, 74% of men report resistance training compared to 66% of women (Strain, Fitzsimons, Kelly, & Mutrie, 2016). Considerable research has been conducted to understand why women engage in resistance training at lower rates than men, and much of the evidence is focused on the masculine stereotypes associated with resistance training (e.g., Dworkin, 2001; Salvatore & Marecek, 2010). Specifically, developing and maintaining a muscular physique is a socially-constructed factor in the experience of masculinity (Goff, Di Leone, & Kahn, 2012; Hunt, Gonsalkorale, & Murray, 2013; Stibbe, 2004). Possessing a muscular body reinforces the biological differences between men and women (Stibbe, 2004), while also expressing the powerful and physically strong components of the male gender role (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000;

McCreary, Saucier, & Courtenay, 2005). Therefore, activities associated with the maintenance of a muscular body (e.g., resistance training) are integral to the masculine gender role (Hunt et al., 2013; Koivula, 1995; Matteo, 1986; Stibbe, 2004). The muscular and masculine context of resistance training may therefore help to explain the lower rates of resistance training behavior among women. Using a theoretical approach, the purpose of the current study was to examine the relationship between resistance training, gender stereotypes and resistance training behavior among men and women.

Some scholars propose that the masculine culture of resistance training may deter women from participating (Dworkin, 2001; Salvatore & Marecek, 2010). However, much of this research has examined women's desire to avoid a muscular, and therefore masculine, physique (Dworkin, 2001; Salvatore & Marecek, 2010) and relatively less research has been conducted on the effects of the masculine-resistance training stereotype alone. It is important to study the masculine stereotype independent of a desire to avoid or develop muscularity for several reasons. Namely, the female body

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ideal is shifting towards being more muscular (Gruber, 2007) and 88% of women do not express fear that regular resistance training will cause them to “bulk up” (Mojica, 2012). However, the gender differences in training frequency persist (CDC, 2011) and many women report being less comfortable while resistance training compared to men (Salvatore & Marecek, 2010). Based on these findings, the gender difference in resistance training perceptions and behaviors may result from more than a difference in body ideals.

One theoretical approach to the association between gender stereotypes and behaviors such as exercise participation is outlined in the expectancy-value model (Eccles & Harold, 1991). Specifically, individuals internalize gender stereotypes and these internalized stereotypes influence perceptions of competence and value (e.g., for resistance training) as well as actual behavior. In sport, females who endorse strong gender-sport stereotypes associate sport with masculinity, report feeling less competent in sport, value sport less, and participate at lower rates than females who do not endorse these stereotypes (Boiché, Chalabaev, Guillet, & Sarrazin, 2014; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Guillet, Sarrazin, Fontayne, & Brustad, 2006). The opposite is true for males—those who strongly associate sport with masculinity feel more competent, value sport more, and participate at higher levels than males who do not possess strong sport-masculinity associations (Boiché et al., 2014; Eccles & Harold, 1991; Guillet et al., 2006). Boiché et al. (2014) suggested that gender stereotypes may influence perceptions of competence and value, leading to changes in motivational regulations. Based on this proposition, masculine stereotypes for resistance training may be related to one's quality of motivation for the behavior(s) and participation in resistance training.

Organismic Integration Theory (OIT; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2002) is one of the most prominent theories outlining the relationship between motivation and exercise behaviors (Teixeira, Carraça, Markland, Silva, & Ryan, 2012). In OIT (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Ryan & Deci, 2002), motivation may be conceptualized on a continuum from not self-determined (i.e., amotivated) to highly self-determined (i.e., autonomous). Amotivation is lacking any intention to engage in behavior (Ryan & Deci, 2002). External (i.e., participating for external reward) and introjected (i.e., participating to avoid feelings of guilt) regulations are the least self-determined and are usually conceptualized as controlling forms of motivation (Teixeira et al., 2012). Autonomous motivation is often captured as a combined score among the most self-determined regulations in OIT (Segatto & Lafreniere, 2013; Wilson, Rodgers, Fraser, & Murray, 2004) including identified (i.e., participating because one values the outcomes), integrated (i.e., feeling the behavior is a critical component of one's identity) and intrinsic motivation (i.e., participating in an activity for the enjoyment and satisfaction inherent in the activity itself). Empirical support for the assertions of OIT is well-documented: as individuals become more autonomously motivated for physical activity, they participate more often (Teixeira et al., 2012).

Drawing from OIT and expectancy-value model tenets, incongruent gender stereotypes (i.e., being a man performing a feminine activity or a woman performing a masculine activity) may be related to lower self-determined motivation and lower exercise participation. An aim of the current study was to test the relationship between gender stereotypes, motivation, and participation in resistance training. The following specific hypotheses were tested:

H1. *The relationship between endorsing resistance training-masculinity stereotypes and resistance training participation would be mediated by self-determined motivation, and moderated by gender. Specifically, high self-determined motivation (i.e., high autonomous*

motivation, low amotivation, and low controlled motivation) for resistance training would mediate the positive association between resistance training-masculinity stereotypes and participation in men, and low self-determined motivation would mediate this relationship in women.

Furthermore, the effect of stereotype endorsement on perceptions and behavioral outcomes may be moderated by gender role (Guillet et al., 2006). Gender role represents the extent to which an individual is identified with masculine and feminine roles and is motivated to act in gender congruent ways (Bem, 1981). Individuals with a strong feminine gender role display lower sport competence, where individuals with a strong masculine gender role display high sport competence and value sport more than individuals with a low masculine gender role (Guillet et al., 2006). Based on this research, we propose the following hypothesis:

H2. *The relationship between endorsed resistance training-masculinity stereotypes and resistance training participation would be moderated by gender role such that men who identified as masculine would display a stronger positive relationship between masculine stereotype endorsement and resistance training, compared to men who did not identify as masculine. The opposite would be true for women such that women who endorsed a feminine gender role would display a stronger negative relationship between masculine stereotype endorsement and participation in resistance training, compared to women who did not identify as feminine.*

A secondary purpose of this study was to replicate previous research concerning the effect of implicit exercise valence associations on motivation and participation (e.g., Antoniewicz & Brand, 2014; Calitri, Lowe, Eves, & Bennett, 2009). Based on previous studies, individuals with strong implicit associations between good/pleasant and exercise tend to exercise more frequently (Antoniewicz & Brand, 2014; Kiviniemi, Voss-Humke, & Seifert, 2007). The study reported in is paper replicates and adds to that research by exploring whether self-determined motivation mediates the relationship between implicit valence and participation. Specifically, the following hypothesis was tested:

H3. *High self-determined motivation (i.e., high autonomous motivation, low amotivation, and low controlled motivation) would mediate the relationship between implicit pleasantness and participation. Specifically, increased implicit pleasantness of resistance training would lead to improved self-determined motivation, leading to increased participation in resistance training.*

To remain consistent with the model in H1, gender was tested as a moderator of the relationship proposed in H3, but no specific hypotheses were proposed.

In sum, the present study expands on previous literature in four important ways. First, this study uses implicit procedures to measure stereotype endorsement. Implicit stereotype measures reduce presentation bias (Boiché et al., 2014; Clément-Guillot, Chalabaev, & Fontayne, 2012) and predict unique variance beyond that explained by explicit attitudes (Calitri et al., 2009; Conroy, Hyde, Doerksen, & Ribeiro, 2010; Rebar, Vandelandotte, Van Uffelen, Short, & Duncan, 2014). Furthermore, implicit gender-role stereotypes have been associated with participation in gendered activities (Lane, Goh, & Driver-Linn, 2012). In contrast to most research on implicit attitudes, which employs the Implicit Association Task to measure attitudes, the present study uses the Affect Misattribution Procedure, addressing a call from Hyde, Doerksen, Ribeiro, and Conroy (2010) to increase the diversity of methods used to measure implicit attitudes in exercise. Second, this study explores a previously hypothesized (Boiché et al., 2014) but untested relationship between gender stereotype endorsement

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