

# An Underexamined Inequality: Cultural and Psychological Barriers to Men's Engagement With Communal Roles

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## Abstract

Social psychological research has sought to understand and mitigate the psychological barriers that block women's interest, performance, and advancement in male-dominated, agentic roles (e.g., science, technology, engineering, and math). Research has not, however, correspondingly examined men's underrepresentation in communal roles, traditionally occupied by women (e.g., careers in health care, early childhood education, and domestic roles including child care). In this article, we seek to provide a roadmap for research on this underexamined inequality by (a) outlining the benefits of increasing men's representation in communal roles; (b) reviewing cultural, evolutionary, and historical perspectives on the asymmetry in status assigned to men's and women's roles; and (c) articulating the role of gender stereotypes in creating social and psychological barriers to men's interest and inclusion in communal roles. We argue that promoting equal opportunities for both women and men requires a better understanding of the psychological barriers to men's involvement in communal roles.

## Keywords

gender, prejudice/stereotyping, norms/social roles, self/identity, social status, well-being, organizational behavior, motivation/goals, automatic/implicit processes, applied social psychology

We've begun to raise daughters more like sons . . . but few have the courage to raise our sons more like our daughters.

—Gloria Steinem

Gender inequality is typically thought of as a problem faced only by women, and most of the attention in society and in science has focused on improving women's freedom to seek out opportunities in traditionally male-dominated roles. Indeed, over the past half century, a convergence of economic, sociological, and technological factors has enabled women to enter the paid workforce in unprecedented numbers. Social psychological research has sought to identify and mitigate the biases and barriers to women's advancement in domains still dominated by men. At the same time, the growing scientific interest in and public support for promoting women's entry and advancement in agentic roles and occupations have not been matched by similar efforts to understand and rectify the gender disparities in communally oriented roles.

Although economists and sociologists have long tracked gender differences in both paid and unpaid labor (Sayer, 2005; Sayer, England, Bittman, & Bianchi, 2009), and a handful of social psychologists have examined the identity threats (e.g., Vandello & Bosson, 2012; Rudman, Mescher, & Moss-Racusin, 2013) and social backlash (see Moss-Racusin, 2014, for a summary) that men experience when

they enact female-dominant roles and activities, there has been no systematic review that consolidates different mechanisms that prevent men from developing an interest in taking on more communal roles. The very existence of this gap in the literature is itself likely to be a symptom of the lower status given to communal traits and roles. Our goal in the current article is to provide a framework for understanding the psychological processes that explain men's relative underrepresentation in communal roles and to chart a course for more social psychological research on this topic. After outlining a range of benefits of increasing men's involvement in communal roles, we review the distal factors that have led to an asymmetry of changing gender roles, and then provide a discussion of the proximal social psychological factors that reduce men's interest and inclusion in communal roles.

A starting observation for this work is the distinct asymmetry in the extent to which gender roles have been changing during the last half century (England, 2010, 2011). Women's

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**Figure 1.** Asymmetrical change in gender ratios for male- versus female-dominated careers.

Source: Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013b).

Note. Male-dominated jobs include electrical engineers, dentists, industrial engineers, architects, physicians, computer systems, chemists, lawyers and judges, biological and life scientists, and medical scientists. Female-dominated jobs include psychologists, social workers, counselors, physical therapists, librarians, elementary school teachers, speech therapists, nutritionists, registered nurses, and preschool and kindergarten teachers.

traditional roles of caregiving and domestic responsibility have indeed been expanding to include more agentic pursuits such as paid work outside the home, whereas men's involvement in communal roles has not been expanding in a complementary fashion (England, 2010, 2011; Saad, 2012). For example, using data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013b), Figure 1 charts the average change in gender ratios for 20 professional careers that were notably female- (e.g., nurse, social worker, elementary school teacher) or male-dominated (e.g., lawyer, physician, industrial engineer) over the 18 years preceding 1995. As one can see, the proportion of women in once male-dominant jobs has steadily increased in the past two decades, whereas the proportion of men in female-dominated jobs has remained relatively unchanged.

These gender inequalities in the labor market also extend into the domestic sphere. Although men have been increasing their contribution to child care and domestic chores, women continue to manage life inside the home and act as primary caregivers to children, still doing disproportionately more than men, even when they work full-time (Hochschild & Machung, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2013). This gendered division of domestic labor also continues to receive the public's approval. Whereas 50% of respondents to a representative poll state that they feel children would be better off with their mother at home rather than working, only 8% feel that it would be beneficial for kids if their father stayed home (Pew Research Center, 2013). By accepting gender unequal-

ity in the home, people tacitly endorse disproportionate barriers to women's advancement in paid work.

Consistent with social role theory (Eagly & Steffen, 1984), these gender disparities in chosen roles are mirrored by—and perhaps lead to—gender disparities in self-perceived attributes. Whereas women have begun to see themselves as possessing increasingly agentic traits over the past few decades (meta-analyses suggest a change of 0.8 of a standard deviation over just 20 years), men have exhibited very little if any increase in their self-ratings of communal traits (Twenge, 1997, 2009; Twenge, Campbell, & Gentile, 2012). The social sanctions from others, such as backlash for transgressing traditional gender stereotypes (e.g., Bosson & Vandello, 2012; Rudman et al., 2013), represent one potent reason why men might not adopt such traits. Later in this article, we will discuss the social psychological research that explores these and other external barriers to men's adoption of communal traits and roles. Importantly, though, according to social role theory, changes in such gendered beliefs come about in direct response to changing gender roles that occur only when structural forces allow or demand one gender to enter a role that has previously been held almost exclusively by the other (Diekmann, Eagly, Mladinic, & Ferreira, 2005). However, social role theory has not elaborated on the distal and proximal psychological explanations for why women's roles should be changing more quickly than men's. In this review, we seek to understand such distal and proximal factors that explain the widespread acceptance of gender

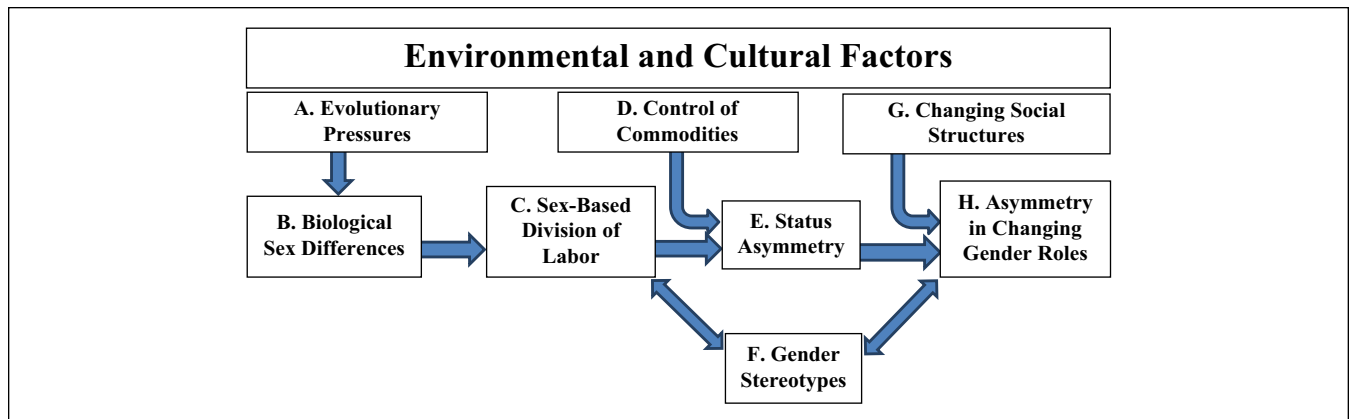


Figure 2. Distal factors that have led to an asymmetry in changing gender roles.

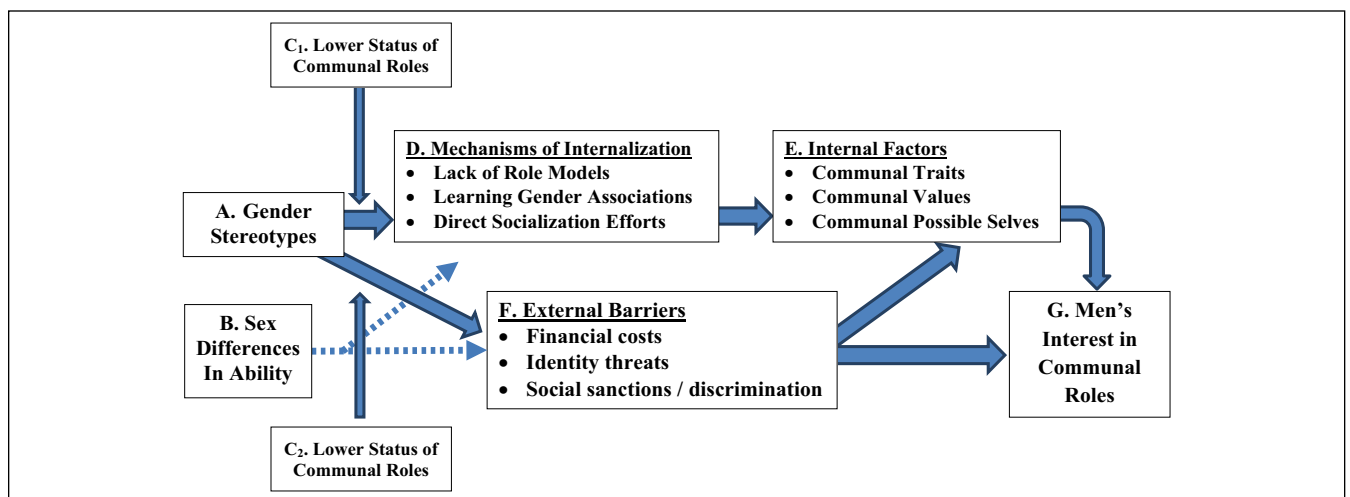


Figure 3. Proximal factors and social psychological barriers to men's engagement in communal roles.

inequality in communal roles and perhaps challenge some of the existing assumptions underlying it.

In our synthesis of the existing literature, we will lay out how several factors and their interplay contribute to men's relatively weaker interest and inclusion in communal roles. To highlight the importance of this issue, we begin with a consideration of the benefits of increasing men's involvement in communal roles above current levels. Next, we outline the distal factors in human history that have played a role in fostering a status asymmetry between men and women in respective roles (see Figure 2). These include evolutionary, biological, cultural, and social factors that contribute not only to gender differences in preferences but, more novel to the social psychological literature, also to the asymmetry in how these preferences have been changing over time. Third, we propose a framework for understanding the proximal psychological barriers to men's participation in such roles (see Figure 3), encompassing both internal barriers, such as internalized gender norms and values, and external barriers, such as discrimination, backlash, and status costs. Last, we use the

proposed model of proximal factors to generate hypotheses for future social psychological research aimed at dismantling these barriers or encouraging greater gender equality in communal roles.

### A Change We Should Believe in? Benefits of Addressing Men's Underrepresentation in Communal Roles

In 1963, Betty Friedan launched the second wave of the feminist movement by calling attention to the fact that many (although by no means all) women would benefit from the ability to pursue work outside the home. More than 50 years later, women now make up roughly 50% of the American labor force (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013e). Is there a similar argument to be made for more (and again, most certainly not all) men to take on more communal pursuits? Before trying to understand why men are currently less likely

to engage with these roles, we start by examining the possible benefits to society, women, children, and men themselves of fostering more communal traits and behaviors in men.

### **Benefits to Society**

One benefit to society of men's entry into communal roles is economic. There are more women today earning post-secondary degrees and entering professions that were once dominated by men than in any prior time in history (Boushey, 2009; Brooks, 2010; Mason, 2009). But at the same time, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2013c) has projected increased job openings for occupations traditionally held by women, such as registered nurses, retail salespeople, health aides, office administrators, and personal care aids. These health- and service-oriented professions are particularly valuable to society at large as life expectancies increase and the sizable baby-boomer population ages. Yet if we continue to encourage young women to seek out more male-dominated roles, the number of opportunities for men to take on previously female-dominated occupations should only increase. In addition to these labor shortages, as more women no longer feel the need to put their own career ambitions second to men's (Harrington, Deusen, & Jamie, 2010), someone is needed to fill the gap in child care and domestic responsibilities at home. Just as the call to increase female representation in science and leadership is motivated by a desire to expand the labor pool and opportunities for innovation in these important fields, so too might an increase of men in communal roles broaden the diversity of perspectives in these roles and fill current needs in the labor market.

### **Benefits to Men**

A second reason for promoting men's involvement in communal roles is the psychological benefits that men themselves might enjoy from taking on communal activities and values. The need to belong is a fundamental human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995) and both men and women who have a more communal orientation or who feel they are able to meet communal goals tend to be happier and more satisfied with their lives (Fleeson, Malanos, & Achille, 2002; Le, Impett, Kogan, Webster, & Cheng, 2013; Sheldon & Cooper, 2008). In a recent study, both male and female college students increased in subjective well-being to the degree that they exhibited an increase in their goals for communion (but not agency) over their 3 years at university (Bauer & McAdams, 2010). In fact, cultivating a strong network of support and social connection even increases life expectancy (Holt-Lunstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010). Thus, although communion and social connectedness are stereotypically associated more with women than with men, men benefit psychologically—to the same degree as women—when they have stronger social ties and communal goals.

Consistent with the general benefits of social connectedness, more specific research reveals that men's involvement in the care of others, especially their own children, is associated with (a) greater overall well-being, (b) a general sense of emotional growth, (c) better health and marital satisfaction, and (d) broader community involvement (Duckworth & Buzzanell, 2009; Fischer & Anderson, 2012; Knoester, Petts, & Eggebeen, 2007; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2004; Yarwood, 2011). Furthermore, evolutionary psychologists have recently proposed the existence of a fundamental motivation for parenting that underlies not only the care of offspring but also protective and caregiving tendencies more generally (Kenrick, Griskevicius, Neuberg, & Schaller, 2010). This motivation is present among both women and men, and although is measurably higher in women, is elevated to an equivalent degree for both genders among parents as compared with non-parents (Buckels et al., in press).

In addition, research points to the psychological benefits of prioritizing motives for social connection and communion over motives for esteem or status. In a prospective study of adjustment, a motivation for intimacy, rather than power, predicted better psychological and life outcomes among both men and women (Zeldow, Daugherty, & McAdams, 1988). This is important because it challenges conventions that construe striving for status and power as central to men's basic functioning. Experimental studies find that investing in and affirming relationships with others yield greater psychological rewards than investing in or affirming oneself (Burson, Crocker, & Mischkowski, 2012; Crocker, Niiya, & Mischkowski, 2008; Dunn, Akin, & Norton, 2008). Moreover, both men and women rank failing to form or maintain social relationships higher than failing to advance work or educational goals among their biggest regrets in life (Morrison, Epstude, & Roese, 2012; Morrison & Roese, 2011). In sum, data converge to suggest that men (just like women) can find a sense of meaning in their lives through communal activities and roles that promote social connection and deepen bonds with family.

### **Benefits to Children**

A third factor to consider is that, as men begin to take on more communal roles, especially those involving child care, their children benefit as well. The quality of relationships between fathers and children has a profound effect on children's social and cognitive development (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000), which persists into adulthood (Fletcher, 2011). High-quality father involvement (independent of mother involvement) predicts fewer behavioral problems in grade-school-aged and adolescent children (Aldous & Mulligan, 2002; Amato & Rivera, 1999; Carlson, 2006), perhaps because families are more cohesive when parents have a more balanced distribution of domestic labor (Stevens, Kiger, & Riley, 2002). In addition, research from our own lab suggests that—controlling for fathers' explicitly endorsed

beliefs about domestic gender roles—fathers who contribute more to domestic work and child care have daughters who report less stereotypic occupational aspirations (Croft, Schmader, Block, & Baron, 2014). Thus, from a developmental perspective, fathers who are more involved with their children not only bring about distinct psychological benefits for their children (see Pleck, 2007, for a theoretical review), they might also weaken stereotype-constrained roles for future generations. By the same logic, education experts have drawn attention to the importance of recruiting more male elementary school teachers to serve as role models for young students (Martino, Rezai-Rashti, & Lingard, 2013). Not only is there no evidence that female teachers are more effective than their male counterparts (Carrington, Tymms, & Merrell, 2008), but early exposure to both male and female teachers could weaken gender stereotypes in children.

### Benefits to Women

Finally, the degree to which men fill communal roles can also benefit women's own aspirations and major life decisions. Given that the majority (more than 60%) of couples with children under the age of 18 in the United States are now dual-earner parents (Pew Research Center, 2013), one might expect a complementary shift to a more egalitarian distribution of household labor. However, men's careers are often given precedence to women's and at home, women remain disproportionately more likely than men to take care of household and child care tasks even after spending the day doing a similar shift of paid work (Biernat & Wortman, 1991). This *second shift* among working mothers (Hochschild, 1989; Hochschild & Machung, 2012) is a widely documented phenomenon (e.g., Beckwith, 1992; Klute, Crouter, Sayer, & McHale, 2001). For example, a recent American Time Use Survey reveals that in families with young children, women spend 80% to 85% more time taking care of children and twice as much time on other domestic tasks as do men (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013a). Recent research has even shown that working mothers are significantly more likely than working fathers to experience interrupted sleep due to caring for their children during the night (Burgard, 2011).

Given that women recognize the existence of the *second shift* and anticipate having to do the majority of chores at home well before they have even begun having children (e.g., Brown & Diekmann, 2010; Maines & Hardesty, 1987; Park, Smith, & Correll, 2008), many adjust their future career goals and aspirations accordingly (Williams & Chen, 2014). In *Lean In*, Facebook C.O.O. Sheryl Sandberg states that marriage is not just a personal decision but also one that affects a woman's career (Sandberg, 2013). She joins an expanding cadre of successful professional women who extol the virtues of selecting a mate who will share the responsibility for domestic tasks and child care. Such advice might well be warranted given data suggesting that

professional women only fall behind their male counterparts in salary and career advancement once they begin having children and must shoulder a disproportionate amount of parenting responsibilities (Budig & England, 2001).

Thus, as men take on more communal roles, particularly helping with the care of young children, women might feel more flexibility to pursue more agentic career goals. In this way, increasing paternal involvement in child care might be the key to closing the gender gap in career achievement. The availability of infant formula (and the ability to express and store breast milk), day care, and family friendly workplace policies has made it increasingly easier for men to have a greater role in child rearing. Although these freedoms are not universally available, the emergence of such changes all within the space of the past 50 years means that, now more than ever, the responsibility of caring for young children need not be tied to the biological sex of the parent. That said, there are still heated debates about the superiority of having women in these roles, with women themselves often arguing for their unique right to be primary caregivers to others, especially their own children (S. Allen & Hawkins, 1999). Later in this review, we will examine the evidence for biological predispositions that might advantage women as caregivers. For now, we simply point out the benefit that men's involvement as caregivers can have for women themselves.

Not only does sharing the responsibility for domestic tasks broaden women's opportunities in the workplace, but marriage quality and family dynamics are also directly improved by men's involvement in domestic labor. For example, women who feel that their husbands do not help out enough around the house are less satisfied (Frisco & Williams, 2003; Stevens, Kiger, & Riley, 2001; Wilkie, Ferree, & Ratcliff, 1998), more depressed (Bird, 1999), and more likely to divorce (Frisco & Williams, 2003) than women who share these household tasks with their partners. The proportion of families with female breadwinners is on the rise (Pew Research Center, 2013), and the help of a supportive partner vastly improves these breadwinning women's experiences (Meisenbach, 2010). Together, this evidence suggests that as men take on more communal roles in the household, their female partners enjoy greater freedom to pursue more agentic career goals.

### Summary

Encouraging men's involvement in more communal roles could lead to several benefits for society, for men themselves, and for their families. If men's lack of involvement in communal roles is inhibited by social psychological barriers created by gender stereotypes, then reducing those barriers might encourage more men to pursue roles and careers now dominated by women. In addition, as more men move into communal roles, the rigidity of gender stereotypes should also be diminished (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). Of course, these benefits are currently outweighed by a long history of gender

role differentiation and more proximal social psychological factors that constrain men's interest in these roles. In the next section of the article, we review the distal factors that underlie not just gendered divisions of labor but also the asymmetry in how these roles have been changing.

### **Setting the Stage for Gender Differences in Roles: How Distal Evolutionary and Sociocultural Factors Have Led to a Status Asymmetry**

We next review the evolutionary and sociocultural backdrop for the differences in the roles that men and women currently occupy. Although this review will acknowledge that both biological and cultural factors have contributed to current role differentiation, our interest is not just in understanding the initial basis for gender differences in the roles people occupy, but more importantly, whether and how such divisions of labor narrow over time. Ultimately, our goal in this section is to understand why there is an asymmetry in how gender roles have been changing over the past century to predict, if not shape, future social change. Figure 2 provides a schematic synthesis of various theoretical processes discussed.

#### ***Gendered Division of Labor in Our Evolutionary Past***

One answer to the question of why men and women occupy different roles is quite simply that these roles reflect inherent propensities and abilities that men and women have. And indeed, one cannot overlook the fact that part of the reason for a gendered distribution of labor is biological (Figure 2, the links between Boxes A, B, and C). Because women invest a greater amount of time and physical resources in the gestation, birthing, and rearing of children, they assumed a primary caregiving role for young children in the ancestral environment as a matter of biological necessity. In contrast, men typically had the greater physical strength and size necessary to protect and provide for their families by warding off predators and hunting big game (see Buss & Kenrick, 1998, for a review). From an evolutionary perspective, sex differentiation in many physical attributes and behavioral traits evolves to the degree that those differences aid in the successful reproduction and maturation of offspring (Trivers, 1972). If there was a fitness advantage to dividing roles between the sexes, then over many thousands of years of both natural and sexual selection, communal traits could have been selected for in women, whereas agentic traits could have been selected for in men.

There is some evidence consistent with this reasoning. For example, studies have shown that females are more attracted to short-term mates who possess attributes indicative of dominance, whereas males are more attracted to

short-term mates who display attributes indicative of fertility and the ability to nurture young (Gangestad & Simpson, 2000; Gildersleeve, Haselton, & Fales, 2014; but see Wood & Carden, 2014; Wood, Kressel, Joshi, & Louie, 2014, for an opposing view of this literature). If such selection pressures do exist, behavioral tendencies toward agency and communion (in addition to these physical characteristics) could have become genetically linked to biological sex.

In addition, evolutionary explanations presume the existence of biological mechanisms that have evolved over time. Evolutionary psychologists have pointed to the role of hormones as a biological mechanism through which this sex differentiation in behaviors could occur (Ellis, 2011). Specifically, known sex differences in basal levels of testosterone (linked to dominance and higher in men) and oxytocin (linked to social bonding and higher in women) are often taken as evidence of a biologically based mechanism for sex differences in agency (at least the dominance component) and communion, respectively. For example, individuals exposed to higher levels of testosterone while in the womb later exhibit more masculine behavior patterns and lower empathic skills as children and adults, effects that are often more pronounced for males (Chapman et al., 2006; Manning, Reimers, Baron-Cohen, Wheelwright, & Fink, 2010). The lack of social skills evident in autistic individuals (who are more likely to be male) has been described as an extreme form of the masculinized brain (Baron-Cohen, 2002), and a recent study suggests that testosterone administration can impair empathic skills, even among adult women (van Honk et al., 2011). In contrast, higher levels of circulating oxytocin, but also vasopressin, in women may partially explain their advantage in empathic skills and lower levels of autism diagnoses, as well as a tendency to tend-and-befriend in response to threats (Carter, 2007; Feldman, 2012; S. E. Taylor et al., 2000). Such physiological findings are often interpreted as evidence that women are inherently better equipped for roles that involve social connections and nurturing, whereas men are inherently better suited to positions of dominance and status.

At this point, however, the role of hormones in nurturing behavior is far from clear. Although testosterone is widely assumed to promote masculine behavior such as dominance and status seeking, it has also been found to promote nurturing behaviors (e.g., huddling and grooming in mice pups) among fathers in some species (Trainor & Marler, 2001). In contrast, there is also evidence of reduced testosterone levels among people who engage in communal and cooperative activities (Gettler, McDade, Agustin, & Kuzawa, 2011; Gray, Kahlenberg, Barrett, Lipson, & Ellison, 2002; Kuzawa, Gettler, Muller, McDade, & Feranil, 2009). In one recent study, men who spent more than 3 hr a day caring for children exhibited a marked decrease in waking levels of testosterone (Gettler et al., 2011). Such research points to a much more dynamic role for testosterone in human mating patterns than was traditionally assumed. Men with higher

testosterone levels are more successful in finding a mate and having offspring, but if they assume a role in caring for those offspring, their testosterone levels decline. Taken together, the evidence linking hormones to communal and agentic interests indicates the fluid and changeable nature of these biomarkers, making it difficult to conclude that these biological mechanisms underlie stable patterns of gender role differentiation. Furthermore, evidence that humans are an outlier in paternal caregiving compared with other mammalian species where fathers play almost no role in caring for offspring (Geary, 2000) might be interpreted to suggest that evolutionary reasoning is limited in explaining contemporary human parental behavior.

From these evolutionary and biological perspectives, part of the between-sex variance in the roles and traits that differentiate men and women is due to basic biological differences that have evolved to become sex-typed predispositions (see Wood & Eagly, 2012, for a similar model). However, this evolutionary and biological perspective does not help us understand why women's traits and roles have *changed* so quickly during the past century, whereas men's traits and roles have remained relatively more stagnant. Evolutionary theorists suggest that it takes thousands of years for complex behavioral traits to evolve (Cosmides & Tooby, 1992), although the evolution of simple traits requiring variation of only a single gene or set of genes might occur within 10,000 years (Hawks, Wang, Cochran, Harpending, & Moyzis, 2007). A sharp increase in agentic traits and behaviors among women in just half a century—an increase that has considerably narrowed the gap in self-perceived agency between the sexes (Twenge, 1997)—is quite difficult to explain in terms of biological adaptations on sex-specific genes. Furthermore, even traits specific to parenting (emotional responsiveness and protection) are estimated to be only 20% to 30% heritable, suggesting that these communal traits can be influenced by environmental factors (Pérusse, Neale, Heath, & Eaves, 1994). Thus, although biological differences between the sexes likely formed the initial basis for sex role differentiation in the human species (Figure 2, link between Boxes B and C), they cannot adequately account for the asymmetry in changing gender roles across many modern industrialized societies.

### *The Cultural Evolution of Status Differences in Gender Roles*

Whereas biologically based evolutionary theories might be ill equipped to explain relatively sudden shifts in human behavior, cultural evolutionary perspectives can more readily account for changing norms and cultural beliefs through processes of social learning (Richerson & Boyd, 2005). Most notably, understanding the asymmetry in men's slower adoption of communal traits and roles requires an understanding of how the differential status that is assigned to men and women developed over time. Theories of status maintain that

one's position in a status hierarchy reflects the relative ease with which that individual has access to valuable resources and commodities (Figure 2, the links between Boxes C, D, and E). People gain higher status when others in the hierarchy generally acquiesce to the arrangement (i.e., maintain the status quo). This can be contrasted against having power or dominance when one's access to resources is gained or maintained with the use or threat of force (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001).

A wealth of research finds that men enjoy higher status than do women (e.g., Conway, Pizzamiglio, & Mount, 1996; Feinman, 1981; Ridgeway, 1991; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004; M. J. Williams, Paluck, & Spencer-Rodgers, 2010), although there is considerable cross-national variability in women's access to higher status roles (United Nations Development Programme, 2009). These gaps in status are reflected in the relative levels of power, economic advantage, and professional success enjoyed by men and women (Major, 1993; Ridgeway, 1991). There are different perspectives, however, on why these status differences emerged in the first place. Economists have pointed out that status differences between men and women are partly explained by historical differences in the contribution to food production (Sanday, 1973) and ownership of economically viable property (Sacks, 1979; but see Whyte, 1978, for an opposing view). Another plausible viewpoint is that men's relatively larger size and strength have generally allowed them to have more power over women (Fedigan, 1986), which stabilizes into shared assumptions of status given the relational interdependence between the sexes.

More recently, economists have linked an agricultural account with a strength account, providing empirical support for a hypothesis wherein geographic regions that led preindustrial societies to adopt the plow instead of the hoe for farming continue to maintain more traditional beliefs about gender roles today, even after controlling for other societal factors that might contribute to gender inequality (Alesina, Giuliano, & Nunn, 2013). The argument is that men's greater upper body strength made them uniquely qualified to use plow technology when it was invented, leading to a gendered division of labor between work in the field and work in the home. From this perspective, gender roles are not so much a function of biological evolution as they are a function of cultural evolution, which can happen over a much shorter time span. Physical differences between the sexes paired with an environmental context favoring a certain technology have meant that a culture could flourish to the degree that it divided labor by sex (see also Eagly & Wood, 1999; Eagly & Wood, 2011; Eagly & Wood, 2013; Wood & Eagly, 2012; Wood & Eagly, 2013). Furthermore, when food and property are the major commodities of value, the sex with greater access to these commodities develops the position of status.

By the same token, Uri Gneezy's work suggests that in matrilineal societies (i.e., societies where property is owned by women and passed down through the maternal line),

women generally enjoy higher status than in nearby patrilineal societies. Perhaps as a result, typical gender differences in preference for competition are eliminated and sometimes reversed in matrilineal cultures (Andersen, Ertac, Gneezy, List, & Maximiano, 2013; Gneezy, Leonard, & List, 2009). Gneezy maintains that this cross-cultural variation argues against biologically evolved sex differences in competitiveness in favor of cultural evolutionary processes that typically (given that patrilineal societies are more common) grant higher status to men rather than to women.

*Social role theory and the development and maintenance of gender stereotypes.* The biological and cultural factors outlined above have ensured that men and women segregate into different social roles and those roles are often assigned different social status or prestige. Social role theory then posits that gender stereotypes develop such that men and women are assumed to possess the abilities and preferences compatible with the roles they occupy (Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000). In this way, people come to expect men to possess agentic qualities associated with the higher status and breadwinning roles they have traditionally occupied and women to possess communal qualities associated with their more subordinate and caregiving roles (Figure 2, the links between Boxes C, E, and F).

Moreover, because perceivers use gender automatically when making social judgments (Banaji & Hardin, 1996; Banaji, Hardin, & Rothman, 1993; Eagly & Karau, 2002; W. von Hippel, Sekaquaptewa, & Vargas, 1995), these gendered divisions of roles are perpetuated by stereotype-based inferences about the essential differences between groups and the differentiation of behaviors that results (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Eagly & Wood, 2013; Eagly et al., 2000; Eagly & Wood, 1999; Wood & Eagly, 2000). Because societies can function more efficiently when the status quo is accepted as legitimate, there are also psychological and cultural incentives for both men and women to justify and endorse gender stereotypes (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 2001, 2011; Jost & Banaji, 1994). For example, ambivalent gender stereotypes that advantage men in competence and women in warmth allow both men and women to accept gender inequality (Jost & Kay, 2005), and indeed, nations with greater ambivalent sexism scores also have greater gender inequality (Glick et al., 2000; Glick et al., 2004).

Social role theory provides a powerful explanation for the origins of gender stereotypes and the role they play in differentiating men's and women's behaviors. In addition, the theory maintains that these stereotypes will change only when *changing social structures* in a society encourage citizens to adopt roles outside traditional gender norms (Figure 2, the links between Boxes F, G, and H). These changing social structures could include various technological, economic, political, or cultural shifts that incentivize individuals to enter roles that were traditionally considered inappropriate for them or their gender. For example, Brazil and Chile have

undergone a rapid shift toward capitalism over the past three decades, and as a result, both women and men have moved to urban centers, entered the workforce, and had fewer children. These changes in workforce participation have been paralleled by perceptions that both men and women possess more agentic traits now than they did in the 1950s (Diekmann et al., 2005).

Viewed through this lens, we can better appreciate why women's gender roles have generally become more flexible over the past century in response to certain structural changes: When women gained the right to vote, they gained more of a voice in political decision making. During World War II, many women entered the paid workforce to fill the manufacturing jobs vacated by men fighting the war. The advent of reliable birth control enabled women to plan families around educational and occupational goals (Bailey, 2006). And perhaps most significantly, the arrival of the information age has meant that success in today's global market is tied much more to intellectual ability than to physical strength or size. Thus, although traditional gender roles persist in Western cultures, women's opportunities for achievement and agency have rapidly increased as a response to these changing cultural needs (Figure 2, the link between Boxes G and H; see also Wood & Eagly, 2012). Although social role theory suggests that men will be perceived as more communal if they begin to adopt more communal roles, the theory has not delved into the host of factors that have led men to be relatively slower to adopt these roles. We suggest that this stagnation of men's changing roles stems from the status asymmetry assigned to men's and women's roles.

*Understanding the status asymmetry of gendered traits.* Once a division of labor is in place and men and women are afforded different levels of status in society and assigned different traits, presumptions of group status inform the perceived utility of traits, behaviors, and preferences observed among the two groups (Berger, Cohen, & Zelditch, 1972; Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). For example, people assume that an unknown trait has more value or utility when men (or any higher status group) score higher on that trait compared with when women score higher on that trait (Schmader, Major, Eccleston, & McCoy, 2001). In naturalistic contexts, this manifests as men being paid more than women for the same work (Biernat & Kobrynowicz, 1999; Jackson & Grabski, 1988). Even women themselves buy into and perpetuate these inequalities, paying themselves less money (Major, McFarlin, & Gagnon, 1984) or negotiating a lower salary (Kray & Thompson, 2005) than would men for the same job. Similarly, occupations that are traditionally held by women pay significantly lower salaries than other jobs (England, Budig, & Folbre, 2002; Olicker, 2011), and even at an implicit level, people associate men more than women with wealth (M. J. Williams et al., 2010).

The implication of assigning higher status to men's versus women's roles is that women have now developed an interest



in entering fields once dominated by men more so than men have an interest in entering fields still dominated by women (Figure 2, the links between Boxes E, F, G, and H). In other words, the asymmetry of changing gender roles can be understood as a manifestation of a more general process whereby lower status groups aspire to possess the traits and attributes associated with those of higher status, whereas higher status groups readily devalue the personal importance of traits and attributes associated with lower status groups (Schmader et al., 2001). To the degree that these gender differences in status and roles are implicitly endorsed and justified, people will continue to undervalue female roles and associated communal traits and interests. As a result, and as Gloria Steinham's quote suggests, young girls are now being socialized to be more agentic in their interests and pursuits, whereas similar efforts to encourage the development of communal interests in boys is largely absent.

### **A Framework of Psychological Barriers to Men's Engagement in Communal Roles**

Whereas the goal of the prior section was to review the broad cultural and historical context that has led to an asymmetry of changing gender roles, in this section, we delve deeper into the social psychological pathways that inhibit men's interest and inclusion in communal roles, both in their personal lives and in paid occupations. Part of this process (outlined in Figure 3) is that, given prevailing stereotypes, men internalize communal traits and values relatively less than do women, and, as a result, have relatively lower interest in communal roles (links between Boxes A, D, E, and G). In addition, because these same stereotypes are openly endorsed by others, there are societal constraints that further block men (even those who have internalized communal goals and values) from feeling comfortable in these roles (links between Boxes A, F, and G). We also examine how the perceived lower status assigned to communal roles makes each of these pathways particularly strong relative to what women might encounter with respect to agentic roles (Boxes C<sub>1</sub> and C<sub>2</sub>). Finally, in discussing each pathway, we will provide examples of future research that is needed to better understand or alleviate these social psychological barriers to men's interest in communal roles. But first, it is important to consider the possibility that there are real differences in the communal abilities of men and women.

#### ***Gender Stereotypes About Men's Communal Abilities: Is There a Kernel of Truth to Them?***

As reviewed above, social role theory predicts that because people witness more women than men occupying communal roles, the stereotype develops that women more than men possess the traits and skills needed for caregiving and other

traditionally female occupations (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Wood & Eagly, 2002). As a result, men are stereotyped as being lower than women in communal/nurturing goals and as being less emotionally expressive, empathic, warm, and concerned for others (Deaux & Major, 1987; Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002; Manstead, 1992; Shields, 1987; Widiger & Settle, 1987; J. E. Williams & Bennett, 1975).

Before developing our ideas for how the mere existence of these stereotypic beliefs can constrain men's interest and involvement in communal roles, it is worth examining the evidence that such stereotypes might in fact be true (Figure 3, Box B). For example, either a biological or a cultural evolutionary advantage to a gendered division of labor could lead to inherent differences between the sexes with respect to their ability to succeed in different domains. Such arguments have been made when examining the underrepresentation of women in the sciences, claiming that women lack the natural quantitative and spatial abilities needed to succeed in math and science fields (e.g., Ceci & Williams, 2011; Ceci, Williams, & Barnett, 2009; Eccles, 2007; Pinker, 2005). Similarly, some researchers have posited that men's relative deficiency in verbal ability restricts their choice of occupation, resulting in sex-segregated careers (Wang, Eccles, & Kenny, 2013). If we assume that communal roles require socioemotional traits such as empathy, communication skills, and social intelligence more broadly, then a female advantage on these dimensions could offer a reasonable account for women's higher interest in these roles.

Research has indeed identified some evidence that men are outperformed by women on tasks of interpersonal and emotional skills. For example, meta-analyses reveal that men rate themselves as being less empathic ( $d = .99$ , Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983) and report lower interest in people versus things as compared with women ( $d = -1.18$ , Lippa, 2010). Researchers also point to the striking male preponderance of autism spectrum disorders (Attwood, 2006; Fombonne, 2009), characterized by a deficit in social and verbal skills, as evidence of an extreme manifestation of what Baron-Cohen (2002) calls the masculinized brain. Some of the most compelling evidence of performance-based differences in the general population comes from infant studies where, before much socialization can occur, girls outperform boys in recognizing facial expressions and responding to others emotions ( $d_s = .18-.27$ ; Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983; McClure, 2000). As alluded to earlier, researchers point to the male offspring's relative lack of exposure to oxytocin during critical periods of development (Carter, 2007; Yamasue, Kuwabara, Kawakubo, & Kasai, 2009) and the masculinizing effects of androgens on the brain (Ellis, 2011) as candidate mechanisms for sex differences in socioemotional ability.

It should be noted, however, that research with adult samples does not always find such clear evidence of sex differences on socioemotional tasks, especially when behavioral measures (rather than self-report measures) are used to assess

basic skills or propensities that are not directly linked to chosen roles. For example, a meta-analysis of the neural activation indicative of an empathic response to another's pain revealed no sex differences across the 32 samples studied (Lamm, Decety, & Singer, 2011), and contrary to the popular belief that women are inherently more communicative, there is no solid evidence that women generally talk more than do men (Mehl, Vazire, Ramirez-Esparza, Slatcher, & Pennebaker, 2007).

Furthermore, experimental studies have shown that gender differences in some kinds of social sensitivity tasks can be magnified or reduced by changing the salience of contextual cues (J. Allen & Smith, 2011; Bosson, Haymovitz, & Pinel, 2004; Ickes, Gesn, & Graham, 2000; Leyens, Desert, Croizet, & Darcis, 2000; Wraga, Duncan, Jacobs, Helt, & Church, 2006). Specifically, when men believe that their social skills are being evaluated through the lens of a gender stereotype, their emotional sensitivity performance and self-reported empathic skills become more stereotype consistent. These effects have at times been interpreted as evidence of stereotype threat (Leyens et al., 2000); that is, as resulting from a concern over confirming negative stereotypes that undermines men's performance on these tasks. However, the evidence that men rate themselves as having lower empathic skills when they know their empathy is being assessed is more consistent with a form of self-stereotyping whereby men are motivated to deny possessing traits that they associate more with women. In either case, this evidence suggests that stereotypes might play a stronger role than biological sex in creating the gender gap in socioemotional skills (see also Koenig & Eagly, 2005).

Together, these findings raise some doubt about the prevalence, magnitude, and meaning of gender differences on socioemotional tasks. In her seminal paper on the gender similarity hypothesis, Janet Hyde (2005) argues that although gender differences of small (e.g., in leadership style) to large effect sizes (e.g., spatial reasoning) have been observed consistently, the sum of research on gender differences suggests that men and women are more similar than different in their abilities and preferences (for a more recent review on the issue, see Hyde, 2014). In fact, recent quantitative analysis across a broad range of literatures suggests that the gender differences in mean levels of empathy, communion, or care orientation that exist are better characterized as differences along a single dimension of human variability rather than as indicative that men and women are distinct categories (Carothers & Reis, 2013). Furthermore, any of the small fundamental differences in ability that are tied to biological sex are not likely to account for the much larger differences in how men and women view themselves and are viewed by others (which is why, in Figure 3, we provide only dotted rather than solid predictive links from sex differences in ability).

Instead, the existence of societal gender stereotypes is likely to magnify any baseline sex differences that might

exist. And because gender is a social category that is highly essentialized (Gelman & Taylor, 2000; Prentice & Miller, 2007; M. G. Taylor, Rhodes, & Gelman, 2009), people's awareness of the basic physiological differences between the sexes can readily reinforce the perception that men are inherently less communal than women. In the sections that follow, we examine how the presence of these gender stereotypes inhibit men's interest in communal roles both via internal and external processes and as moderated by the status ascribed to various roles.

## Internal Factors That Preclude Men From Adopting Communal Roles

One author in this article was discussing these ideas with a colleague whose initial response to the question of why men do not take on more communal roles in society was, "Well, why would they want to?" So deep is the assumption that boys and men simply do not relate to the communal roles in society, that we seldom stop to examine or question the psychological processes that shape these preferences. Yet, given the potential benefits of men taking on more communal roles, it is important to identify the degree to which societal stereotypes constrain the development of men's interest in these roles. As we will review in this section, one pathway by which this happens is a relatively weaker tendency among men to internalize communal traits into their self-concept, to embrace communal values for their behavior, and to develop communal possible selves for their future (Figure 3, Box E). As we will also describe, the existence of strong gender stereotypes that are readily endorsed promotes this lack of internalization of communion through various pathways including automatic tendencies to learn and conform to gender-normative behaviors, more direct forms of socialization by others, and a lack of salient communal role models (Figure 3, Box D). Finally, we will discuss how this process of internalization is stronger to the degree that communal roles are assumed to have lower status in society (Figure 3, Box C<sub>1</sub>).

### Mechanisms to Internalizing Communal Self-Attributes

*Early learning of gender-stereotypic associations.* The tendency to automatically learn from and conform to the behavior of same-sex peers is one key process that inhibits males from internalizing communal traits, values, or possible selves. Gender conformity begins early (Martin & Ruble, 2004). Children begin exhibiting gender-stereotypic toy preferences at 9 months of age (Campbell, Shirley, Heywood, & Crook, 2000; Lutchmaya & Baron-Cohen, 2002) and most infants have internalized gendered associations well before reaching their second birthday (Jadva, Hines, & Golombok, 2010; Serbin, Poulin-Dubois, Colburne, Sen, & Eichstedt, 2001). This early development of knowledge about appropriate

behavior for boys and girls only becomes stronger as children grow, and in adulthood, agentic and communal traits become inversely related (Biernat, 1991; Cherney & London, 2006). Furthermore, evidence suggests that kids pick up on the asymmetry of gender role options. For example, 8- to 9-year-old children make up sentences implying that girls can be doctors, but that boys cannot be nurses (Wilbourn & Kee, 2010). Hence, the restriction of male roles is already evident in childhood.

These gender-typical behaviors can be learned through direct observation of sex differences in behavior, but they are also reinforced by implicit gender associations. Around the same time children exhibit gender-typical behaviors and preferences, they also develop implicit stereotypes about males and females. Once in place, these implicit associations can be automatically activated, subtly influencing behavior and preferences distinct from explicitly held values or beliefs (Banaji & Hardin, 1996). In fact, even people who explicitly hold gender-egalitarian attitudes still exhibit evidence of strong automatic associations linking men more with agentic qualities and roles and women more with communal qualities or roles (Nosek, Banaji, & Greenwald, 2002; Park, Smith, & Correll, 2010; Rudman & Goodwin, 2004; Rudman, Greenwald, & McGhee, 2001).

Through processes of identity balance, the implicit associations with one's gender group then shape implicit associations about oneself (Baron, Schmader, Cvencek, & Meltzoff, 2014; Greenwald et al., 2002). For example, individuals exhibit gender-consistent implicit stereotypes about themselves (e.g., Devos, Blanco, Rico, & Dunn, 2008; Devos, Diaz, Viera, & Dunn, 2007; Rudman & Phelan, 2010), which are present as early as age 8 (see Baron et al., 2014, for a review). Perhaps because of this early learning of stereotypic associations, we would expect boys and men to develop a relatively weaker association between themselves and communal characteristics, traits, and values. Indeed, men show a much clearer implicit association between self and work (vs. home), whereas women have equally strong implicit associations between "self and work" and "self and home" (Devos et al., 2008). With a weaker self-concept connected to communal self-constructs, the motivation to embody communal roles is also likely to be weaker.

Expanding this discussion of internalization more broadly to other communal-oriented traits, such as empathy, research suggests that sex differences in empathic accuracy are much larger when people self-report their empathic skills (Eisenberg & Lennon, 1983). Thus, much like the rather small to non-existent male advantage in math performance during adolescence that is dwarfed by a quite large gender difference in math self-confidence (Else-Quest, Hyde, & Linn, 2010), men's knowledge of stereotypes that presume lower socioemotional skills among men also seems to bias their self-conceptions beyond what their true capacity or skill level might suggest. Furthermore, such endorsement of gender-stereotypic views of oneself are more likely when the

assumed status hierarchy between the sexes is unquestioned (Schmader, Johns, & Barquissau, 2004). Together, this evidence points to the ways in which men are less likely than women to internalize communal traits, values, and possible selves, and as a result, exhibit a relatively weaker internal motivation to take on communal roles.

*Active socialization efforts.* In addition to the passive process by which people learn and incorporate gender-normative behaviors into their self-concept, more active efforts at socialization by parents, teachers, and others also play a role in shaping the traits people incorporate into their self-concept, the values that guide their preferences, and the possible selves to which they aspire. Evidence suggests that socioemotional skills and interests, such as empathy and perspective taking, can be directly shaped in children (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, Solomon, & Schaps, 1989; Greenberg, Kusche, Cook, & Quamma, 1995; Schonert-Reichl, Smith, Zaidman-Zait, & Hertzman, 2012). In one recent intervention, elementary school-aged boys and girls showed equivalent understanding of an infant's needs after repeated experience with infants and new mothers over the course of the school year. Remarkably, students in this intervention were also rated as being more prosocial by their peers and less aggressive by their teachers (and again effects were not moderated by the child's gender). Even prosocial video games have shown some efficacy in increasing people's empathy for others (Greitemeyer & Osswald, 2011; Greitemeyer, Osswald, & Brauer, 2010).

Finally, emerging evidence that socioemotional skills can be cultivated even in children with autism spectrum disorders provides some suggestion that any biological differences existing between the sexes need not end the debate over encouraging more equal representation in caregiving roles. In one intervention program, autistic children between 4 and 7 years old showed significant improvement in emotion recognition after 4 weeks of watching an animated show where vehicles were portrayed with faces that displayed emotions (Golan et al., 2010). Importantly, their post-intervention success in anticipating people's emotional reactions in a new context did not differ from a non-autistic control group.

Taken together, this research reveals that the same socioemotional skills that people so often assume are lacking in boys and men can be taught and cultivated through direct socialization efforts. And yet, there is also evidence that boys systematically receive less exposure to such environmental experiences. For example, those who express and understand sadness and fear should find it easier to empathize with and help those in need, but as children, boys are often discouraged from feeling or expressing these emotions (Eisenberg, Cumberland, & Spinrad, 1998). Even with 18-month-old infants, caregivers use less emotion-related language when talking to boys than to girls (Dunn, Bretherton, & Munn, 1987). Thus, just as girls receive less socializing support for

the development of their math skills and early number concepts (Eccles, Jacobs, & Harold, 1990)—skills that might foster a later interest in science and technology—so too do boys receive less environmental support for the development of their socioemotional skills that might foster a subsequent interest in communal and caregiving roles.

*A lack of role models.* One of the ways that people develop a sense of what they value, who they are, or who they might become is through exposure to role models who provide representations of possible selves (Bandura, 1971; Markus & Nurius, 1986). Thus, boys and men might not internalize communal traits, abilities, and values because of the lack of exposure to other men who successfully embody these communal attributes. Men are not only underrepresented in communal roles in reality, but positive depictions of men in such roles are also rare in the media. Content analyses of television commercials show that media representations of men remain shrouded in masculinity and traditionalism; whereas stereotyping of women in commercials is less pronounced (Gentry & Harrison, 2010; Kaufman, 1999; Tsai & Shumow, 2011). Even print media (e.g., comic strips, children's books, newspaper articles) maintain the stereotypical division of labor between men and women, portraying fathers as secondary parents or passive subjects in the background (Diekmann & Murnen, 2004; Glascock & Preston-Schreck, 2004; Wall & Arnold, 2007). When men are shown in non-traditional female-dominated roles in mass media, they are often portrayed as inept clowns (e.g., men failing at domestic tasks, Scharrer, Kim, Lin, & Liu, 2006). The cultural message that is conveyed is not just that men *do not* do communal roles, but that, perhaps, they *should not* do them.

As with any descriptive evidence of biased representations in the media, it is not possible to ascertain whether these one-sided portrayals help to create the existing role asymmetry we see or are merely a reflection of it. However, given causal evidence that stereotypic TV commercials can affect women's interest and achievement in leadership and science (Davies, Spencer, & Steele, 2005), we might reasonably assume that a steady diet of biased media depictions limits the degree to which men develop a possible self that includes communal roles, further alienating them from these domains (Gentry & Harrison, 2010). Moreover, just as positive role models of female leaders promote the internalization of leadership among women (Stout, Dasgupta, Hunsinger, & McManus, 2011), men might also internalize a more communal self-concept with greater exposure to communally oriented male role models.

### *Status Moderates Gendered Internalization of Communal Roles*

Taken together, the research just reviewed reveals that the prevalence of strong gender stereotypes (and the gendered division of labor they promote) prevents boys and men from

internalizing communal traits, values, and possible selves because of a passive learning of implicit gender associations, fewer efforts to socialize boys to develop communal skill-sets, and a lack of salient communal male roles models. Although the processes by which people internalize stereotypical associations and normative behaviors into their self-concept are likely to be the same for both men and women, the status asymmetry described earlier likely magnifies the degree to which boys and men fail to internalize communal traits and roles (Figure 3, Box C<sub>1</sub>).

First, people are generally less motivated to seek out low-status roles or adopt the characteristics of a lower status group (Schmader et al., 2001). In addition, because societies can function more efficiently when the status hierarchy is accepted as legitimate, there are psychological and cultural incentives for both men and women to justify and endorse the existing status hierarchy between men and women (e.g., Glick & Fiske, 2001; Jost & Banaji, 1994). The accepted lower status of communal roles means that fewer efforts are made to include examples of successful communal men in advertising and media as role models, compared with the efforts to represent more women in agentic roles. Similarly, if men accept that communal roles have lower status in society, their reluctance to internalize communal traits and values into their own self-concept will be enhanced. This pressure against men's internalization of communion is likely to be stronger than the pressure against women's internalization of agentic traits and values, which are counter-stereotypic for women but are still widely viewed as having high status. Finally, boys, more so than girls, are directly socialized to adhere to stereotypical gender roles from an early age by being rewarded for congruent and chastised for incongruent behavior (Blakemore, 2003; Fagot, 1995; G. Levy, Taylor, & Gelman, 1995). In sum, although many of these mechanisms of internalization have been applied to understand the underrepresentation of women in science and leadership domains, the lower status assigned to communal roles makes it less likely that communal traits, values, and skills become associated with men.

The asymmetry in how gender roles are changing might also have interesting implications for the development of implicit theories about these more communal traits and abilities (S. R. Levy, Stroessner, & Dweck, 1998). As women's roles in society are beginning to change, the explicit and implicit stereotypes surrounding women's roles are also becoming increasingly fluid, further facilitating changing roles. Consider, for example, that women with more egalitarian views are less likely to do domestic chores than are women with traditional views (Hoffman & Kloska, 1995; Stevens, Minnotte, Mannon, & Kiger, 2006), and as more women eschew traditional roles, people's stereotypes about women's roles will continue to evolve (Diekmann, Goodfriend, & Goodwin, 2004).

In contrast, because men's roles are not changing at the same pace, the stereotypes about men are also much more

rigid (Diekman & Eagly, 2000; Diekman et al., 2004; Feinman, 1981; Hort, Fagot, & Leinbach, 1990; G. Levy et al., 1995; Martin, 1990). This is perhaps why masculine traits and concepts are essentialized to a greater degree than are feminine traits, especially among men themselves (Smiler & Gelman, 2008). In other words, because people do not see men's roles evolving, they might also come to believe that men's interests and/or abilities in these roles are less changeable. Such beliefs reinforce the legitimacy of the existing gender status structure. We argue that the asymmetric status placed on agency over communion has led to relatively meager efforts to represent salient communal male roles models in the media or to actively promote the socialization of communal traits and values among boys. As a result, we see relatively faster internalization of agency among girls and women, as compared with the much slower internalization of communion among boys and men.

### *How Men's Lower Internalization of Communion Undermines Their Interest in Communal Roles*

People tend to seek out roles that fit their values and self-concept. Not only does the internalization of gender-normative behaviors lead boys and men to develop weaker associations of the self with communal traits, values, and ability, but this weaker internalization of communion will then predict their career interests and personal pursuits (Figure 3, the link between Boxes E and G). For example, according to goal-congruity theory, people pursue occupations and roles that they perceive as a good fit to their internalized values and goals (Brown & Diekman, 2010; Diekman, Brown, Johnston, & Clark, 2010). Because women tend to internalize more communal, other-oriented goals and men tend to endorse more agentic, status-oriented goals, women and men are drawn to different careers (Heilman, 1983). Careers that are female-stereotypic are seen as affording communal goals, and because men endorse these goals less strongly, they are less motivated to engage with communal roles (e.g., Block, Schmader, & Croft, 2014; Diekman et al., 2010; Evans & Diekman, 2009). One study even found that when college students made projections about their future possible selves, both men and women hoped for a role-congruent self and actually feared a role-incongruent self (Brown & Diekman, 2010).

From this goal-congruity perspective, the underrepresentation of men in communal roles stems in part from these roles being perceived by men as a poor fit to their self-concept. For example, men's conceptions of themselves as a worker and a parent are more highly overlapping than they are for women, because for men, both roles are defined to some degree in terms of competence-based traits whereas for women, motherhood is defined in terms of communal attributes rather than competence (Hodges & Park, 2013). This evidence can explain why women experience more role conflict in their professional lives; but it might also suggest that

men who try to take on a more communal and nurturing role as a parent experience high conflict. Similarly, just as an implicit sense of fit plays a role in women's lack of interest in computer science (e.g., Cheryan, 2011; Cheryan, Plaut, Davies, & Steele, 2009), men's lack of interest in English as a college major (a field dominated by female students) is mediated by their perceived dissimilarity to others in the field (Cheryan & Plaut, 2010).

Because communal roles are so closely tied to femininity, occupying these roles likely induces gender role conflict in men. Indeed, men who enter stereotypical feminine professions report experiencing more role conflict than do men who enter stereotypically masculine professions (Bagilhole & Cross, 2006; Dodson & Borders, 2006; Simpson, 2005). Furthermore, gender role conflict is related to feeling less at home in one's chosen career. For example, male elementary school teachers who report high gender role conflict are less satisfied with their jobs and report lower overall well-being (Wolfram, Mohr, & Borchert, 2009). Therefore, out of a motivation to maintain consistency between their goals and roles, as well as an avoidance of tension resulting from these identity conflicts, men choose not to enter communal roles or feel as if they do not belong there when they do.

### *Future Research Directions on Men's Internalization of Communal Traits and Goals*

As we have described, gender stereotypes prevent the internalization of communal traits, values, and future selves. Before transitioning into a discussion of external barriers, we first outline a few important directions for future research on the internal pathway to men's underrepresentation in communal roles.

*Increasing the intrinsic value of communal roles.* As we have argued, a key reason for men's slower adoption of communal roles is the lower status these roles are given. Thus, one strategy for increasing men's interest in communal pursuits is to reeducate men (and women) on the value and significance of these roles. One way to increase the value that we perceive as inherent to communal roles would be to reframe the broader significance of these roles and disassociate them from women as means of strengthening the perceived congruity between men's internalized goals and communal roles. For example, efforts to reframe science professions in more communal terms have been successful at increasing women's stated interest in science (Diekman, Clark, Johnston, Brown, & Steinberg, 2011). Similar experimental work intended to reframe helping and caregiving professions as facilitating agentic goals might also elevate men's interest in these roles.

If successful, broader interventions and programs could scale up these processes. In the past decade, a collective interest in recruiting women into science and technology fields has led to large-scale (and sometimes controversial) efforts to advertise science and math to girls at a very early

age. For example, GoldieBlox is a line of construction toys designed by a female engineer to “give girls more choices than dolls and princesses.” Similarly, classroom-based interventions have been successful at increasing girls’ interest and pursuit of science-related fields (Fadigan & Hammrich, 2004). To our knowledge, no comparable programs have tried to increase boys’ interest in and engagement with communal activities or roles. Such interventions could take the form of educational programs designed to disassociate socio-emotional skills from gender, and reframe these as important and beneficial human universals. Importantly, these programs need not target only boys, because both sexes seem to benefit equally from sensitivity and emotionality training (Schonert-Reichl et al., 2012).

*Questioning the legitimacy of the status asymmetry.* Another strategy for fostering greater interest in communal roles for men is to call into question the perceived legitimacy of the current status asymmetry that assigns lower status to communal roles. Only as the Women’s Movement began calling into question prevailing assumptions that women lack the ability for work or leadership did women begin to value agentic roles for themselves (not just for men) and internalize beliefs that they might excel in these roles. Similarly, only by questioning the legitimacy of the lower status assigned to communal roles and men’s presumed lack of ability for communal tasks will more men internalize these traits and values into their self-concept.

Although research has shown that the perceived legitimacy of status hierarchies is important for shaping internalization processes among lower status groups (Schmader et al., 2004; Schmader et al., 2001), no research has directly examined whether higher status groups (i.e., men) might also find more personal value in the traits of those lower in status when they see the system as unjust. However, existing research does suggest that both men and women perceive it to be a problem that men’s communal tendencies have not changed over time, to the degree that they expect men to take on more communal roles in the future (Diekmann & Goodfriend, 2006; see also Diekmann & Eagly, 2008). Furthermore, when men and women are prompted to think that gender roles are changing, both predict that they could be successful (although not necessarily more interested) in non-stereotypic occupations (Diekmann, Johnston, & Loeschner, 2013). Such findings provide preliminary evidence that, as people’s beliefs about the rigidity of male gender roles soften, men might be more likely to internalize communal traits (Eagly & Diekmann, 2003).

*Retraining implicit self-concepts.* If, as discussed, identity balance processes implicitly block internalization of communal traits and values, then implicit retraining of relevant concepts (e.g., Forbes & Schmader, 2010; Kawakami, Steele, Cifa, Phillips, & Dovidio, 2008) might weaken automatic associations between communal and female (and not male) and

strengthen automatic associations between self and communal. For example, repeatedly training a tendency to associate “communion” with “men” or to approach communal activities might also elevate men’s interest and motivation for pursuing communal roles. This strategy of direct retraining may be an especially fruitful approach given that people’s implicit cognitions can, in some circumstances, be better predictors of subsequent automatic behavior and preferences than people’s explicitly reported beliefs (Greenwald, Poehlman, Uhlmann, & Banaji, 2009).

One obstacle to such programs is that deeply entrenched gender stereotypes might lead to reactance against counter-stereotypic information. For example, when men are given a subordinate, lower status role compared with a female confederate in a lab task, they show stronger patterns of “me = male” implicit self-stereotyping than when they are given a superior role (McCall & Dasgupta, 2007). Such evidence suggests that retraining efforts need to create a profile of balanced implicit cognitions to avoid the activation of identity threats (Greenwald et al., 2002; Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008). In other words, it might be important to simultaneously encourage associations between “male = communal,” “self = male,” and “self = communal.”

*Exposure to successful role models.* Although direct retraining efforts provide experimental control to test theoretical claims, they are often impractical as real-world interventions. However, exposure to counter-stereotypic role models can shift people’s implicit associations (e.g., Asgari, Dasgupta, & Cote, 2010; Stout et al., 2011). Thus, men might internalize communal values and skills to the degree that they see other men successfully embody these roles. The challenge of this approach is that the characteristics of a “successful role model” are not always clear (Sevier & Ashcraft, 2009). If role models are too idealized, they can promote contrast effects (i.e., a motivation to avoid rather than approach the behavior that is modeled) rather than assimilation or imitative effects (Rudman & Phelan, 2010). As such, the most effective role models might be those who embody both high levels of agency in conjunction with high levels of communion (Frimer, Walker, Lee, Riches, & Dunlop, 2012).

## Summary

In sum, stereotypic beliefs about gender roles that are maintained and perpetuated in society are likely to have a profound impact on men’s adoption of communal roles. Importantly, the scarcity of men in communal roles establishes strong behavioral norms about what constitutes appropriate behavior for men and women. These norms are then readily internalized, both directly by incorporating stereotype knowledge into the self-concept, and indirectly through biased patterns of socialization (Figure 3, Boxes D and E). Without adopting the goal to be communal, and perhaps instead holding a distinct notion that being communal is

counter-normative for one's gender, men are not attracted to and might even be repelled by communal roles. This internalization of gendered norms and stereotypes alone presents a clear explanation for the underrepresentation of men in communal roles. But even if men do internalize communal goals, they must also combat external pressures to adopt more stereotype-congruent roles. In the next section, we will turn to discussing the factors reflecting what men stand to lose and the external barriers they face if and when they do seek to enter communal domains.

## External Factors That Preclude Men From Being More Communal

Cultural stereotypes that associate women more than men with communal roles not only prevent men from internalizing communal traits, values, and possible selves into their self-concept, they can also create external barriers or costs to men's involvement in communal roles. In this section, we review several of these externally based barriers (Figure 3, Box F) and consider how the relatively lower status of communal roles might make these barriers somewhat more powerful than the barriers that women currently face to their entry into agentic roles (Figure 3, Box C<sub>2</sub>). Finally, we review why external barriers undermine men's interest in communal roles and outline possible avenues for future research.

### External Barriers Faced by Men Who Pursue Communal Interests

**Financial costs.** One external factor that deserves some initial discussion is the financial cost that comes from choosing communal roles—especially occupations—over more lucrative agentic career options. Sociologists have documented clear evidence of a conspicuous gap in salary for communal, female-dominated occupations compared with agentic, male-dominated occupations (Cohen & Huffman, 2003a, 2003b; England, 1992). For example, simply compare the average US\$90,960 a year an engineer makes with the US\$67,930 annual salary of a registered nurse (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013d). Both these careers require a similar amount of education and the hours for a nurse are arguably more demanding. Sociologists have provided evidence that the lower pay in female-dominated occupations not only explains the majority of the wage gap in earnings between men and women but is also evidence of the devaluation of women's roles (see Cohen & Huffman, 2003a, for a review).

This evidence that female-dominated occupations pay lower salaries could be a clear disincentive to men who have been socialized to earn a higher salary to provide for their families. For example, people automatically associate men more than women with higher salaries and greater wealth (M. J. Williams et al., 2010), suggesting that men might feel an implicit expectation to enter into jobs with a higher earning potential. Furthermore, there is some evidence that in

more sex-segregated labor markets, men incur a steeper wage penalty for working in female-dominated jobs as compared with more integrated labor markets (Cohen & Huffman, 2003b). Taken together, this economic standpoint could alone explain men's relative lack of interest and involvement in communal roles. However, we believe it is unlikely that these economic concerns fully account for the constraints against men's entry into these roles.

**Threats to masculine identity.** One significant social psychological perspective that attempts to understand the challenges men face when they enter female-stereotypic roles is grounded in research on precarious manhood (Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Vandello & Bosson, 2012). According to this perspective, men are especially sensitive to judgments that threaten their gender identities, because manhood is precarious—meaning that masculinity, and the advantaged status that accompanies it, is something that can be lost and must thereby be constantly validated and reaffirmed (Vandello, Bosson, Cohen, Burnaford, & Weaver, 2008). The presumed theoretical rationale underpinning the precariousness of manhood, but not womanhood, is based in the evolutionary pressures of mate selection (see Vandello & Bosson, 2012, for a review). Specifically, to attract desirable mating partners, men must compete with other men in displays of physical strength and bravery. Presumably, those who did not sufficiently prove their masculinity could not win the attention of female mates.

One aspect of these threats to masculinity, and precarious manhood in general, is the fear of being misclassified as effeminate or gay (Bosson, Prewitt-Freilino, & Taylor, 2005). To prevent being misclassified (or to avoid having their gender identities scrutinized at all) and to bolster their precarious state of manhood, men engage in “macho” acts of aggression and use disclaimers to establish and advertise their masculinity or heterosexual orientation (Bosson et al., 2005; Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Bosson, Vandello, Burnaford, Weaver, & Wasti, 2009; Prewitt-Freilino & Bosson, 2008; Weaver, Vandello, Bosson, & Burnaford, 2009). In some cases, these gender affirming acts extend to derogating gay men (Carnaghi, Maass, & Fasoli, 2011). The threat of gender identity misclassification is a clear impediment to (heterosexual) men entering into roles associated more with women.

**Social sanctions and discrimination.** Although the fear of feeling or being seen as less of a man might prevent some men from entering into communal roles, the broader social psychological barrier is likely a threat to social status or perceived dominance in a social hierarchy (e.g., Diekmann, 2007). Because the initial push for gender equality stemmed from a desire to increase upward mobility, women have had strong incentives to enter male-dominated domains but men have not demonstrated a motivation to enter female-dominated domains (England, 2010). As a result of these clear status differences between agentic and communal roles, men

who do enter into communal roles can face more objective social sanctions and discrimination.

Across development and in different domains, evidence of these social sanctions is clear. Around the time they begin grade school, children enforce adherence to gender norms (Feinman, 1981). Furthermore, boys are significantly more likely to be teased or admonished for transgressing gender role norms than are girls (Blakemore, 2003; G. Levy et al., 1995). Among adults, men who have children but still work full-time are held to more lenient employment standards than are women (Crosby, Williams, & Biernat, 2004; Fuegen, Biernat, Haines, & Deaux, 2004), but this leniency has its limits. Stay-at-home fathers perceive more external losses (e.g., income, career progress) than do stay-at-home mothers (Helford, Burroughs, Frank, & College, 2003) and men, more than women, worry that taking leave from their jobs after the birth of a child would falsely indicate to those around them that they are less serious about their careers (McKay & Doucet, 2010). And these worries are not unfounded; research reveals that men who take time off from work for family reasons are perceived less positively, less masculine, and earn less money over the course of their career (Berdahl & Moon, 2013; Brescoll & Uhlmann, 2005; Brescoll, Uhlmann, Moss-Racusin, & Sarnell, 2012; Coltrane, Miller, DeHaan, & Stewart, 2013; Rudman & Mescher, 2013; Vandello, Hettinger, Bosson, & Siddiqi, 2013). For example, men who report spending more time caring for their children are made to feel as if they are not tough enough by other colleagues (Berdahl & Moon, 2013).

Furthermore, although men sometimes ride the “glass escalator” in female occupations, more quickly rising to positions of authority (C. L. Williams, 1992), there is greater evidence that men experience backlash for demonstrating highly communal traits and abilities. For example, men who violate gender roles by succeeding at a counter-stereotypical task are more likely to experience sabotage, stigmatization, and unfavorable ratings of competence and likability (Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Rudman, 2010; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004; Rudman et al., 2013). When men behave counter-stereotypically by self-effacing (rather than self-promoting) in work contexts, they are viewed as less competent and less hireable and experience more prejudice (Moss-Racusin et al., 2010; Rudman, 1998; Schmader, Croft, Whitehead, & Stone, 2013).

Finally, as a result of strong stereotypes that presume that men lack socioemotional traits and abilities, men sometimes experience direct forms of discrimination whereby their entry into these roles is blocked. For example, some women openly restrict men from infringing on their domestic territory, a phenomenon known as maternal gatekeeping (S. Allen & Hawkins, 1999; Schoppe-Sullivan, Brown, Cannon, Mangelsdorf, & Sokolowski, 2008). And when men are successful in female occupations, people rate them as less deserving of respect than either successful women in female occupations or successful men in male occupations (Heilman & Wallen, 2010). This kind of gender-role-related

discrimination has a negative impact on men’s emotional well-being (Vandello et al., 2008) as well as on their cognitive ability and attentional self-control (Funk & Werhun, 2011), paralleling research showing similar kinds of decrements for women who confront stereotyping and discrimination in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) domains (Schmader, Johns, & Forbes, 2008). Furthermore, both men and women express overtly negative judgments of men who choose to enter into stereotypically female roles (Cross & Bagilhole, 2002; Heilman & Wallen, 2010; Rudman & Fairchild, 2004).

Importantly, being faced with such strong social sanctions, identity threats, and financial costs to taking on communal roles is also likely to prevent men from internalizing communal traits, values, and possible selves into their self-concept (Figure 3, link between Boxes F and E). Because the stereotypes associating men with masculinity are openly endorsed and freely expressed in society, boys’ and men’s awareness of the external barriers at play poses yet another reason why men might be more reluctant to develop a strong communal self-view. In this way, the external barriers that exist to keep men in their traditional, masculine roles continue to reinforce the belief that boys and men also belong in such roles.

### *Status Moderates External Barriers to Men in Communal Roles*

Just as status perceptions are purported to moderate the degree to which gender stereotypes block men’s internalization of communal traits and values, the lower status of communal roles is also likely to exacerbate the external barriers men face when adopting traditionally female pursuits (Figure 3, Box C<sub>2</sub>). For women, stepping into agentic roles, though counter-stereotypic, can still be justified by the higher social status these roles have in modern society. For men, communal roles are both counter-stereotypic and of lower status. As a result, the financial costs, identity threats, and actual discrimination experienced by men in communal roles are likely to be much higher.

As one example, the connection of masculine roles to higher status may trigger particularly strong backlash against men (vs. women) who violate prescriptive gender stereotypes. According to the status incongruity hypothesis, it is violations of status—rather than violating the specific role in question—that are most likely to result in backlash against transgressors (e.g., Moss-Racusin et al., 2010; Rudman, Moss-Racusin, Phelan, & Nauts, 2012). Men’s violations of gender roles are therefore seen as especially grave to the extent that they call the existing societal hierarchy into question (Eagly et al., 2000; Moss-Racusin, 2014; Moss-Racusin et al., 2010). Thus, although women too are admonished for transgressing traditional gender role norms (e.g., women in leadership roles), society is quicker to punish men who take “demotions” in status to enter female-dominated domains.



Similarly, an underlying tenet of work on precarious manhood is that one's identity as a man is more easily threatened than one's identity as a woman. Importantly, women also fear seeming unfeminine when performing well in agentic roles, leading them to bifurcate their identity into a feminine private self and a masculine work self (Pronin, Steele, & Ross, 2004; C. von Hippel, Walsh, & Zouroudis, 2011). Yet, the same threat of being misclassified as a lesbian is not as severe as women's roles have become more flexible. Thus, we argue that there is not anything inherently more rigid or precarious about masculinity as compared with femininity. Our contention is that the precariousness of manhood (in comparison with womanhood) instead reflects the higher status we give to agency as a masculine trait. As a result of the status asymmetry processes described above, losing one's standing on this valued dimension simply carries greater weight than losing one's standing on the less culturally valued dimension of communion.

Finally, differences in financial compensation to agentic and communal occupations might also stem partly from the status asymmetry in men's and women's roles. Because health care- and education-related professions often emphasize communal qualities and caregiving, one is assumed to go into health care or teaching for the sheer love of helping others (i.e., because it is morally right), rather than for some extrinsic compensation (i.e., for status or money) that we would associate with equitable or meritocratic exchange relationships. Thus, status-based stereotypic assumptions about traits that underlie these occupations might also be used to justify the observed, systematic differences in compensation.

### *How External Barriers Undermine Men's Interest in Communal Roles*

The external barriers we have reviewed provide another explanation for men's lack of interest in communal roles (Figure 3, the link between Boxes F and G). People go to great lengths to be accepted and included by their peers in everyday life, and seeking social inclusion at one's place of work is no exception (for a review, see K. D. Williams & Nida, 2011). Interestingly, being socially rejected is not only unpleasant, but research suggests that the human body reacts similarly to both physical pain and social pain (i.e., ostracism; DeWall et al., 2010). Thus, people generally avoid situations where they might be ostracized or excluded as a means to maintain a strong sense of self-worth (Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995).

Because of the severe social sanctions faced by men who do engage in communal activities, men in communal roles can find themselves feeling very isolated, and might distance themselves from their female coworkers as a way of preserving their own sense of masculinity (Cross & Bagilhole, 2002). For example, as the proportion of women in a given

industry increases, men report feeling less coworker support (Cook & Minnotte, 2008). Moreover, when female coworkers endorse strict beliefs that men's behavior should be in line with traditional male stereotypes, men in female-dominated occupations are more depressed and less satisfied with their occupations (Sobiraj, Korek, Weseler, & Mohr, 2011). These effects are surprisingly similar to the kinds of negative impacts that women experience in male-dominated domains, and yet, they have not received the same empirical attention. Such threats to inclusion prevent men from entering and promote their early exit from communal roles.

It is not only these concrete social sanctions that diminish men's interest in communal roles. The fear of being judged negatively or misclassified as gay presents an additional social psychological obstacle to heterosexual men's adoption of communal roles. This goes beyond merely the absence of a possible self in communal roles among men to the development of a feared self in these roles (Carver, Lawrence, & Scheier, 1999). The risk of misclassification can also constrain men's performance in these roles (Sargent, 2004). For example, men who perform stereotypically feminine tasks related to teaching and nursing after being primed with homosexuality cues have more negative experiences and are less motivated to do well (J. Allen & Smith, 2011).

### *Future Research to Understand and Remove External Barriers to Men in Communal Roles*

In this section of the article, we have reviewed the external barriers men face when trying to adopt communal roles, particularly, the economic costs, symbolic threats to identity, and social sanctions and discrimination from others. As in the earlier section on internal barriers, we next suggest directions for future research aimed at understanding and dismantling these external barriers in an effort to increase men's interest and inclusion in communal roles.

*Raising awareness about the external barriers faced by communal men.* People are motivated to engage in social change when they believe the current social system is unjust. Thus, the first step for research in removing external barriers is to better understand people's perceptions of the root causes for gender inequality in traditionally male (as compared with female) domains. We might expect, for example, that people endorse efforts to change gender inequalities only to the degree that they see those imbalances as stemming from the presence of unfair external barriers rather than from the presence of an inherent lack of interest or ability. Furthermore, if people generally believe that men are underrepresented in communal roles because they are inherently uninterested or ill equipped for these roles (i.e., due to internal factors) and not because of the presence of social backlash or discrimination (i.e., external factors), these beliefs might promote a general lack of interest in policies aiming to increase the

recruitment of men into these roles. Once these beliefs about inequality are better documented, research can then identify ways of changing these perceptions of inequality in communal roles. For example, presenting the evidence for the social constraints on men's development of communal traits and abilities (as opposed to beliefs about inherent biological differences) might increase people's support for men's involvement in communal roles.

*Destigmatizing communal men.* One prong of any effort to increase the representation of men in communal roles is to remove the potential threat of discrimination and loss of masculine identity or status that men in communal roles face (Bosson et al., 2005). Efforts to integrate communal activities into the traditional male role might be one way to reduce the extent to which men fear being stigmatized by others for being communal. For example, framing help seeking as more congruent with the male role seems to diminish gender differences in help-seeking behavior (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). Similarly, framing child care as an opportunity to have a lasting influence on children or describing social work as a way to realize one's vision for society could allow perceivers to reconcile communal pursuits with agentic goals and divorce these activities from masculine or feminine associations. Such reframing might also highlight that moral heroes throughout history have been those who integrate agentic behaviors in the pursuit of communal goals (Frimer et al., 2012).

*Women's role in removing barriers.* In heterosexual relationships, women can play a unique role in incentivizing communal behaviors among men. For example, as women gain status and power, they tend to prefer partners who can balance the work-family trade-offs that working couples with children face (Zentner & Mitura, 2012). Men who are made aware of women's changing mate preferences, and embrace more communal values as a result, might come to have a competitive advantage in the dating pool. Similarly, another important way to promote men's involvement in communal roles at home is to reinforce to mothers that they can share or even relinquish caregiving responsibilities and domestic management to fathers.

*Changing the societal incentive structure.* Oftentimes, the way to change public attitude is to first change public policy. Thus, just as funding agencies have invested in research and programs to support the recruitment and retention of women into science, we as a society might consider the broader economic and sociocultural advantages to encouraging men's interest in communal roles. As outlined earlier, such efforts have the potential to rectify labor shortages in certain caregiving and educational sectors as well as to serve broader goals of achieving gender equality. For example, the acronym STEM was first coined in the early 2000s by the National Science Foundation to describe a combination of interrelated disciplines where funding and educational efforts

could be focused to foster innovation in these fields (Dugger, 2010). Later that decade, social scientists began adopting the term to focus attention on the underrepresentation of women in many of these same disciplines, and since that time, there have been targeted funding initiatives to improve the status of women in STEM. We suspect that having STEM as a shorthand for referring to a range of careers where stereotypes block women's progress might have helped to galvanize funding efforts and research on the underrepresentation of women in scientific fields. Rather than having to narrowly define research implications for math or computer science specifically, research in these areas is often generalized to STEM as an umbrella category where women run into similar stereotypes.

By the same token, we suggest that researchers and funding agencies might represent communal roles using the acronym HEED (to include *health care, elementary education, and the domestic sphere*). Importantly, this acronym captures a variety of caregiving roles in which men are underrepresented (health care: nursing, social work, occupational therapy, and hospital administration; elementary education: preschool and elementary teachers, special education teachers, school counselors, and librarians; and domestic labor: child care and household management). Although neither acronym, STEM nor HEED, includes all roles dominated more by one gender than the other, these labels have utility for highlighting a collection of roles that rely on a core set of skills and abilities (e.g., math and science competence in the case of STEM, communal values and attributes in the case of HEED) and are culturally relevant for the broad impact these roles have on society.

*Taking a multi-pronged approach to addressing external and internal barriers.* The complex system of obstacles to men's interest and success in communal roles likely warrants a multi-pronged approach to overcoming these barriers. For example, combining threat reduction and education efforts to minimize external barriers alongside interventions that increase the internalization of communal goals and values could be the key catalyst in effecting change. Specifically, if men come to recognize the intrinsic value of communal roles (perhaps through early training programs) and see ways to combine communal roles with their masculine identities (perhaps through reframing of these roles), personal interest is perhaps most likely to be maximized. Once larger numbers of successful exemplars are visibly thriving in communal roles without experiencing external costs, the traits ascribed to men should change, as predicted by social role theory (Eagly & Steffen, 1984). All of these changes could lay the groundwork for a future shift in the broader culture and context surrounding gender stereotypes.

### Summary

In sum, just as women experience backlash and discrimination when they excel in highly agentic domains, men can

confront these same social sanctions when they engage in communal tasks or enter into communal roles. In addition, the threat of identity misclassification or risk of losing status might mean that the costs of behaving counter-stereotypically are even more pronounced for men than they are for women. Because transgressors of gender norms openly fear backlash and discrimination, they might often try to hide their role violations from perceivers (e.g., Rudman & Fairchild, 2004). The penalizing consequences of transgressing the existing gender role structure are bitter enough that even a small taste is likely to be enough to dissuade potential trailblazers from going against the grain.

## Concluding Remarks

Gender role stereotypes are changing over time, although there is a marked gender-based discrepancy in the composition of that change. Although women are entering previously male-dominated roles at a surprisingly rapid rate, men are not coming forward to fill the corresponding gaps in female-dominated roles. The aim of the current article was to shed light on this distinction and to explain it from a social psychological perspective. To this end, we have outlined the benefits of encouraging men to enter communal roles, offered a framework for understanding the status asymmetry in gender role change, and presented a model outlining the role of gender stereotypes in creating internal and external psychological and social barriers to men's adoption of communal roles. We are optimistic that by synthesizing the various literatures about the asymmetrical gender revolution and providing a framework for understanding the phenomenon, researchers will be better able to design interventions that can bring society closer to achieving gender equality across domains.

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