Stereotypes: why people form them

- Social learning theory: We learn stereotypes from parents (our first and most influential teachers), significant others (e.g., peers), and the media.

And also:

- Cognitive psychology: People like to, want to, need to categorize the world, both the social and physical world, into preferably neat little groups.
Stereotypes: Why we need them

People inevitably categorize for 3 reasons:

1) it’s cognitively efficient - once you have categorized you no longer need to consider information about each individual member of the group.

2) it satisfies the need to understand and predict the social world.

3) it’s a way to feel better about yourself; we think our groups (ingroups) are better than other groups (outgroups).
The use of stereotypes is a major way in which we simplify our social world; since they reduce the amount of processing (i.e. thinking) we have to do when we meet a new person.

- **Advantage:** enable us to respond rapidly to situations because we may have had a similar experience before.
- **Disadvantage:** make us ignore differences between individuals; therefore we think things about people that might not be true – make generalizations.
Stereotypes about masculinity and femininity

Masculinity – a set of traits related to:
• Dominance
• Competence
• Rationality
• Activity
• Independence
• Adventurous
• Brave
• Strong
• Hard, tough
• Aggressive
• Intelligent
• Decides quickly

Femininity – a set of traits related to:
• Communication
• Conformity
• Dependence
• Warmth
• Emotional support
• Patience
• Tolerance
• Forgiveness
• Obedience
• Softness
• Loving

Two sets are not equivalents. And this is the problem.
Why gender perspective matters?

• Gender stereotypes limit individual development and opportunities

• Rigid gender prescriptions encourage discrimination in public and private spheres, hinder addressing social and economic challenges