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## THE SELF-CONCEPTS AND SEX ROLE IDEOLOGIES OF UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

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The study of similarities and differences between the sexes is an area with a rich cross-cultural history. The relevance of such research is unquestionable when one considers the salience of an individual's sex in any culture. People continuously and unconsciously categorize the world, and sex is arguably one of the most frequently used social cognitive categories. Unlike any other human characteristic, the apparent dichotomy of one's sex facilitates such basic categorization. Although sex may appear to be a true dichotomy, sexual dimorphism is far more complex. Indeed, the simplistic, categorical qualities of sex disappear when one considers the psychological counterpart of sex: gender. Unlike the apparent all-or-none quality of a person's physical sex, there is great variability in the behaviors and beliefs of the members of each sex.

The social climate within which an individual grows up can be an important determinant of one's behaviors and beliefs, and these influences often differ between the sexes. Divergent socialization practices for boys and girls are major components of many cultures (Block, 1979; Barry, Bacon, & Child, 1957). Differential reinforcement for the behaviors and activities of boys and girls provides an impetus for personal identification consistent with the ideals and expectations of a society. This pattern of socialization leads one to expect discrepancies between the self-concepts of men and women. Previous studies have shown that when differences emerge, they often are consistent with the gender stereotypes of a particular culture (e.g. Bem, 1974; Williams & Best, 1982). A more surprising observation has been that the differences are often rather insignificant in magnitude. The variation in self-concepts within gender is often greater

than the difference between the average self-concepts of the two genders (Williams & Best, 1982).

In addition to differential gender socialization, the members of a particular culture tend to share a conceptualization of what it means to be male or female. Certain characteristics and behaviors are considered appropriate for males, and these often differ from those associated with females. The different characteristics attributed to males and females can be described in terms of masculinity and femininity. This concept of masculinity/femininity (M/F) has received extensive attention in the psychological literature. Much debate has occurred concerning the most appropriate way to conceptualize this dimension, and the interested reader is referred to Bealle and Sternberg (1993) for a consideration of these concepts.

The present study represents an initial consideration of the self-concepts and sex of Ukrainian men and women. An additional consideration in this study was sex role ideology, or the views held by men and women regarding the appropriate roles of the members of each sex. Cultures embodying traditional ideologies tend to endorse male dominance and a general view of men as more important than women. Modern sex role ideologies endorse more egalitarian views of the roles of men and women. Previous research (Agarwal & Lester, 1992; Kalin, Heusser, & Edwards, 1982; Williams & Best, 1990b) has shown that women frequently report more modern sex role ideologies than men.

As a result of the tremendous economic, political, and social changes that have occurred in the post-Soviet era, current investigations of masculinity/femininity and gender roles in former Soviet republics show an interesting contrast between current economic and social pressures toward democracy and the vestiges of communist doctrine and traditional home life. In previous research (Toronchuk, 1997), the gender stereotypes reported by Ukrainian participants closely resembled the pattern of responses obtained from other nations (Williams & Best, 1990a). However, to date no studies have assessed the self-descriptions of Ukrainian men and women. A second objective of this study was to expand previous research on gender issues among Ukrainians (Toronchuk, 1997, Shafiro et. al. , 2003) and make additional contributions to the extensive cross-cultural literature on the global understanding of gender stereotypes through self-descriptions (Williams & Best, 1990a, 1990b.).

## Method

The participants in this study were 194 students (129 women) from three universities in Eastern Ukraine. Participants ranged from 17-28 years of age ( $M = 19.7$ ) and were predominantly Russian Orthodox. Nearly all of the participants were of Eastern Ukrainian or Russian descent, and most were teenagers when Ukraine gained independence from Russia in 1991.

Participants completed the Adjective Check List (ACL; Gough & Heilbrun, 1980) during normal class time. The ACL is a list of 300 adjectives frequently used to describe people and personalities (e.g. deliberate, idealistic, self-seeking, tolerant), and it was translated into Russian by a bilingual (Russian/English) Ukrainian university professor. Two additional bilingual professors independently checked this translation for accuracy, and any inconsistencies were discussed by the translators and first author and subsequently were resolved. The version of the ACL used in this study listed both the Russian and English translations of each adjective. Williams and Best (1990b) used this measure in numerous cultures and languages and found it differentiated the self-perceptions of men and women in consistent, meaningful patterns. In their study, native translators performed extensive translations into several languages, and none reported concerns about the cultural appropriateness of the items. In the present study, Russian translators did not voice any concerns about the cultural relevance of the items.

Participants were instructed to read each adjective carefully and to select items from the checklist that were "descriptive of you as you really are, not as you would like to be." These procedures replicated those used in previous cross-cultural research with the ACL (e.g. Williams and Best, 1990b).

Self-descriptions were scored using the affective meaning indices derived by Williams and Best (1990a). In their study university students from the United States rated each adjective on three dimensions: favorability, strength, and activity. The ratings for each adjective were standardized with a mean of 500 and a standard deviation of 100, thereby yielding an empirical assessment of the subjective qualities of each adjective in the ACL. The dimensions of favorability, strength, and activity were chosen based on Osgood et al.'s (1975) assessment of the pancultural generality of these three factors as reflections of affective meaning.

To date the United States provides the only affective meaning assessment locus for the items in the ACL. Due to the imposed etic of this procedure, caution is urged when comparing the affective meaning of Ukrainian self-concepts with those of other nations. However, Williams and Best (1990b) noted that relative comparisons within each culture could be made with less apprehension. Therefore, gender discrepancies in affective meaning scores can reliably be pitted against those derived from other nations. With these considerations in mind, the goal of this research was to yield empirical insight into the self-perceptions held by Ukrainian men and women and to interpret these in light of those held by individuals in other nations.

Following completion of the ACL, participants completed the Sex-Role Ideology scale (SRI; Kalin & Tilby, 1978). The SRI consists of 30 statements reflecting opinions concerning the roles and relationships of men and women. Half of the items reflect a traditional approach (e.g., "A wife's activities in the community should complement her husband's position.") and half reflect a more modern perspective (e.g., "A woman should have exactly the same freedom of action as a man.").

Participants were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement or disagreement with each of the statements on a 7-point Likert scale designed such that 1 = "*strongly disagree*" and 7 = "*strongly agree*." Items indicative of traditional views were reverse scored; therefore, higher scores suggested more modern perspectives. For this study, the SRI underwent the same translation procedure as the ACL. Both measures were completed during a single classroom session and collected by the first author.

## Results

Participant responses were scored on affective meaning dimensions of favorability, strength, and activity as detailed by Williams and Best (1990a). Male and female means and standard deviations for each dimension are presented in Table 1. The differences between male and female affective meaning scores were negligible for favorability,  $t(1, 192) = .836$ ,  $p = .40$ , and activity,  $t(1, 192) = .519$ ,  $p = .60$ , but approached significance for strength,  $t(1, 192) = 1.77$ ,  $p = .08$ .

These scores were further examined through comparison with values obtained from 14 other nations (i.e., Canada, England, Finland, Germany,

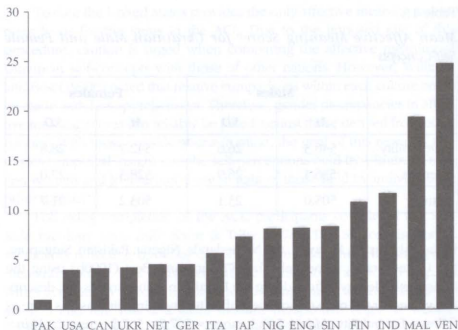
Table 1

*Mean Affective Meaning Scores for Ukrainian Male and Female Self-Concepts*

	Males		Females	
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Favorability	546.3	26.6	542.7	28.8
Strength	536.4	26.9	528.3	27.0
Activity	505.0	23.1	503.2	21.7

India, Italy, Japan, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, the United States, Venezuela) by Williams and Best (1990b) using the same methodology. After adding the Ukrainian values to this list, descriptive values for the male self-concept affective meaning dimensions were as follows: favorability, *Mdn* = 546.3, range = 507.2 – 567.3; strength, *Mdn* = 537.9, range = 500.0 – 553.9; and activity, *Mdn* = 504.9, range = 493.1 – 544.0. Consideration of the female affective meaning scores yielded the following values: favorability, *Mdn* = 543.5, range = 505.6 – 566.6; strength, *Mdn* = 530.4, range = 491.3 – 549.1; and activity, *Mdn* = 502.1, range = 487.2 – 507.9. The self-concepts of Ukrainian men and women appeared to be relatively representative of this group of nations, given that their affective meaning scores were consistently close to the 15-nation median. In particular, the mean Ukrainian male favorability, strength, and activity scores were 546.3, 536.4, and 505.0 respectively, while the Ukrainian female values were 542.7, 528.3, and 503.2, respectively.

Also of interest in the current study was a comparison of the degree of affective meaning gender differentiation in Ukraine and the 14 nations previously studied by Williams and Best (1990b). This comparison was conducted by computing the difference between male and female scores on each of the affective meaning dimensions within each country. These three difference scores were then averaged to give each nation a mean gender differentiation score. These differences are represented in Figure 1. As can be seen in this figure, the degree of gender differentiation in Ukraine was small relative to that of other nations.



CAN = Canada, ENG = England, FIN = Finland, GER = Germany, IND = India, ITA = Italy, JAP = Japan, MAL = Malaysia, NET = Netherlands, NIG = Nigeria, PAK = Pakistan, SIN = Singapore, UKR = Ukraine, USA = United States of America, VEN = Venezuela.

*Figure 1.* Gender differentiation in affective meaning analyses in 15 countries.

Analysis of the items frequently chosen by each sex indicated that, as a group, Ukrainian women appeared to have a more extensive self-concept than Ukrainian men. Within each sex group, adjectives selected by two-thirds of the respondents were considered to be reflective of the normative self-concept of the respective sex, and these were termed focused self-concepts. For women, 18 items were above this frequency criterion; however, for men only 11 items met this criterion. Table 2 lists the focused self-concept items with corresponding affective meaning scores within each sex. Mean values for the male focused self-concept affective meanings scores as follows: favorability,  $M = 611$ ; strength,  $M = 542$ ; and activity,  $M = 442$ . The values for women were favorability,  $M = 610$ ; strength,  $M = 560$ ; and activity,  $M = 487$ . As can be seen, men's and women's focused

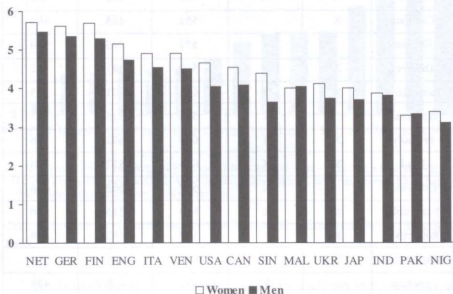
Table 2

*Focused Self-Concept Adjectives, Affective Meaning Scores*

Adjective	Men	Women	Favorability	Strength	Activity
Adaptable		X	634	603	496
Affectionate		X	611	571	563
Appreciative	X	X	618	546	488
Attractive		X	620	559	464
Capable	X	X	626	583	486
Cautious	X		551	463	405
Curious		X	572	563	588
Discreet	X		560	487	382
Easy-going	X	X	604	481	395
Emotional		X	508	513	587
Friendly	X	X	649	602	566
Kind	X	X	645	557	466
Outgoing		X	627	663	658
Peaceable	X	X	620	513	318
Reflective	X	X	567	492	378
Responsible	X	X	641	646	534
Sensitive		X	592	498	426
Sympathetic		X	603	527	418
Tactful		X	606	567	489
Understanding	X	X	638	595	442

self-concepts were comparable in terms of favorability, and unexpectedly, women's self-concepts appeared to be higher on the affective dimensions of strength and activity. However, these differences did not reach statistical significance: favorability,  $t(1, 27) = .057$ ,  $p = .955$ ; strength,  $t(1, 27) = -.851$ ,  $p = .402$ ; and activity,  $t(1, 27) = -1.442$ ,  $p = .149$ .

The Ukrainian participants' responses on the SRI replicated the trend previously observed in other nations (Williams & Best, 1990b). Women's responses ( $M = 4.12$ ,  $SD = .50$ ) were more modern than men's ( $M = 3.73$ ,  $SD = .58$ ),  $t(1, 192) = 4.70$ ,  $p < .001$ . Figure 2 displays the Ukrainian scores in relation to those from other countries. When compared to other nations, the average Ukrainian sex role ideology appears to be relatively traditional. No significant relationships between affective meaning dimensions and SRI scores emerged, and this was consistent with the findings of Williams and Best (1990b).



CAN = Canada, ENG = England, FIN = Finland, GER = Germany, IND = India, ITA = Italy, JAP = Japan, MAL = Malaysia, NET = Netherlands, NIG = Nigeria, PAK = Pakistan, SIN = Singapore, UKR = Ukraine, USA = United States of America, VEN = Venezuela.

Figure 2. Sex role ideologies of 15 nations.

## Discussion

The data presented in this paper represent an initial effort to characterize Ukrainian self-perceptions using empirical methods. These efforts

stem from an extensive line of gender stereotype and self-perception studies conducted in many diverse cultures (e.g. Williams & Best, 1990a; Williams & Best, 1990b). When viewed in the context of this larger, cohesive body of research, the findings of this study and the future directions for inquiry contribute to a global understanding of gender stereotypes and self-perceptions.

When considered in relation to the pattern of results obtained from the 14 nations in the study by Williams and Best (1990b), the most notable aspect of the Ukrainian data is its highly representative quality. The affective meaning of men's self-descriptions was second only to the Netherlands in proximity to the multi-nation mean, and the women's data was third after the Netherlands and India. This observation is of conceptual interest, yet it must be considered tentatively due to the imposed etic of the affective meaning analyses.

Also of interest was the tendency for the Ukrainian women to report a more extensive self-concept than Ukrainian men. This observation was based on the set of items reported by two-thirds or more of the respondents within each gender. Analyses revealed that this pattern could not be attributed to differential response rates. This finding is inconsistent with the pattern of gender stereotypes revealed by Toronchuk (1997). She found that the Ukrainian male stereotype was much more extensive than the female stereotype. In her study, 106 adjectives were associated two-thirds of the time with men, yet only 48 items were associated as often with women. In the present study, considerable overlap was observed between the male and female focused self-concepts. Males and females agreed with nine of the adjectives above the frequency criterion. Females frequently reported nine additional items, whereas males only agreed with two other adjectives.

Ukrainian responses on the Sex Role Ideology scale (Kalin & Tilby, 1978) followed the trend observed in most of the nations studied by Williams and Best (1990b). Women were more modern than men in their views of the roles of men and women. As noted earlier, previous research has supported this observation (e.g., Kalin et al, 1982). The combined sex role ideology of Ukrainian men and women appeared to be relatively traditional in light of the ideologies of other nations.

The pattern of relatively little gender differentiation in the self-concepts of Ukrainian men and women in comparison to other nations (Wil-

liams and Best, 1990b) is consistent with both the stated Soviet ideals of gender equality (e.g., Soviet Constitution, Article 35) as well as the egalitarian ideals of democratic societies. In addition, historical events in Ukraine may shed some light on the apparent small gender differentiation. Discussions with Ukrainian colleagues revealed that as a consequence of many wars when men were absent, Ukrainian women assumed greater family, economic and social responsibilities. This pattern was probably internalized and passed down to subsequent generations as young women emulated their mothers and other female role models. The high level of education and current poor economic conditions in Ukraine seem to have reinforced the active role of women. Almost all Ukrainian women work outside the home and continue to assume responsibilities similar to their male partners. However, contrary to this degree of similarity are the relatively traditional sex role ideologies expressed by both Ukrainian men and women, a finding supported in a recent study comparing Ukrainian and U.S. American females (Shafiro, Himelne, & Best, 2003). Other studies (Kerig Alyoshima, & Volvovich, 1993; Kulik, 1995) suggest that the apparent gender equality espoused by the Soviet ideology was not consistent and particularly was absent in the private and family sphere. Future research with these concepts among Ukrainian respondents should yield valuable insights into the pattern of change in self-concepts and sex role ideologies as the ideals of a democratic society are achieved and the vestiges of a communist regime gradually disappear.

Insights into Ukrainian self-concepts and sex stereotypes are soon to come. Emic analyses of the M/F of the adjectives of the ACL will permit comparisons between the Ukrainian self-concepts and those held by members of other nations. These data will yield the first extensive assessment of sex stereotypes and self-concepts within a post-Soviet Block country. Information regarding the relationship between Ukrainian actual self-concepts and ideal self-concepts will also facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the self-perceptions held by Ukrainians. The findings of the present study yield interesting predictions and uncertainties for the outcomes of these more conclusive analyses. In this study Ukrainian self-concepts appeared strongly to reflect the cumulative pattern of other nations, yet evidence of tentative gender differences emerged as well. Future analyses should yield a more definitive characterization of the Ukrainian self-concept and an integration with other multi-national data.

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