THE FEMALE ADVANTAGE:
Gender and Self-presentational Strategies in the Judicial System

Bahareh Bakhshayesh

Advisor: Torun Lindholm
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STOCKHOLM UNIVERSITY
PSYKOLOGISKA INSTITUTIONEN
Warmth and competence are two universal dimensions underlying social perception. A negative relationship exists between the two dimensions in group/person perception: the “compensation effect”, such that when two individual/groups are compared/judged, the one judged more positively on one dimension is also judged less positively on the other dimension. This study explored whether men and women use warmth and competence in a compensatory way when managing impression in a judicial context. Moderating effects of ambivalent sexism was also investigated. Participants (N=123) partook in a web-based survey, and were randomly assigned either the role of suspect or witness to a crime. Results showed that women tended to display higher warmth and lower competence when expecting to be interrogated as a suspect, compared to witness, suggesting compensation. Men did not differ in their intended self-presentation across the two situations. It can therefore be concluded, that men and women do engage in impression management and display different traits according to assigned role.

Consider these statements: “Women are warm and good care-takers, men are competent and take charge”. “Men are strong, aggressive and dangerous, women are emotional, weak and in need of protection”. Although these statements feel outdated, they are still very relevant to perception. In social psychology, the term person perception explains the mental process that we employ to take bits of information about another person, piece them together in order to form a comprehensive impression, and compose social judgments. So, what sorts of information do we attend to when forming impression of others? Research on impression formation indicates that the impressions we form are disproportionally influenced by certain kinds of information, and odds are that people judge mainly on two fundamental dimensions: warm/cold and competence/incompetence (Abele & Wojciszke, 2007; Fiske, Cuddy, & Glick, 2007; Judd, Hawkins, Yzerbyt & Kashima, 2005). Consequently, it has captured the interest of social psychologists for more than half a century, generating numerous well established studies, illustrating its enduring function in judgment of both in-group and the out-group (Kervyn, Yzerbyt, Demoulin & Judd, 2008). Findings indicate that when we form a positive impression of a person in one area, we tend to view them positively in other more ambiguous or neutral areas as well (Judd et. al., 2005). This is referred to as “Halo effect” and is a type of confirmation bias.

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However, the dimensions warmth and competence are subjected to negative relationship when two targets are compared, a phenomenon known as “compensation effect”. Research indicates that social perception is frequently characterized by a compensatory relation between warmth and competence (Judd et al., 2005; Yzerbyt, Provost, & Corneille, 2005). Hence people have a tendency to view other individuals or groups as either warm and incompetent, or cold but competent.

Empirical evidence points to a close connection between impression formation and the attitudes, stereotypes (gender stereotypes), and biases that people hold. Hence, it’s not surprising that people tend to judge men and women differently on these dimensions (Cuddy, Fiske & Glick, 2004; Kervyn, Yzerbyt, Judd, & Nunes, 2010). Women are on average judged as warmer but less competent, and men as colder but more competent. In general, men seem to have the advantage over women when it comes to status and power. For instance, Cuddy et al. (2004) report that when working women become mothers they trade competence for warmth, which does not happen to men who become fathers. They not only maintain their perceived competence, but also gain perceived warmth after becoming father. Another example is that women’s work is less valued than that of men, as evident by gender differences in pay (Bayard, Hellerstein, Neumark, & Toroske, 2003; Blau & Kahn, 2007), and women are less represented in leadership or decision making positions (Franklin & Fearn, 2008). On the other hand, people generally respond more positively toward women than men. Women are deemed as being both nicer and warmer than their male counterparts (Eagly, Mladinic, & Otto, 1991). The judicial setting is the one area where this trade-off between warmth and competence appears to work generally in favor of women rather than men.

Previous research has investigated compensation between warmth and competence in impression formation. Only one study (Holoien & Fiske, 2013) to date has looked at these key dimensions in impression management. This study attempts to expand on this and look at these fundamental dimensions and its complex interplay with stereotypes (more specifically gender-stereotypes). Moreover, this study will explore how this trade-off between warmth and competence can influence perception, impression formation, and finally judgment, in the judicial proceedings. This has not been attempted to date.

**Warmth and Competence: Fundamental dimensions in social perception**

Warmth and competence have consistently been shown to be the two universal dimensions underlying not only person perception, but also group perception. (Abele et al., 2007; Fiske et al., 2007). According to Yzerbyt, Kervyn and Judd (2008) these two fundamental dimensions emerge in social judgment regardless if the object of interest is individuals, social groups, cultures or nations. All are judged based upon to what degree they are agentic and achievement oriented or communal and warmth oriented. Due to the consistency with which these two dimensions appear, Fiske et al. (2007) argue that warmth and competence have an evolutionary basis, and essentially answer two basic survival questions: intent of another individual/group and their ability to enact those intentions. Hence, over time, people who were skilled in assessing these dimensions survived to a higher extent because they were able to quickly identify potential threats, as well as allies. Rosenberg, Nelson, and Vivekananthan (1968) were the first to provide evidence of these underlying dimensions to social perception. These authors asked...
participants to describe people by 64 commonly used personality traits, and found a two dimensional space effectively accounted for the similarity among all pairs of the 64 personality traits. These were given the labels “social good-bad” (warmth) and “intellectual good-bad” (competence). Following this line of research, Digman (1997) demonstrated that the Big Five personality dimensions can be organized into two themes: personal growth (agency) and socialization ( communion). Abele et al. (2007) asked participants in a study to rate a pool of 300 trait names based upon to what degree they expressed competence versus morality, individualism versus collectivism, agency versus communion, and masculinity versus femininity. They found that the majority of trait terms could be reduced to the two dimensions of agency and communion and that communion encompasses more item variance. The study moreover reports that whereas agency was predicted by self-profitability, communion was predicted by the profitability of others.

Compensatory relation between warmth and competence

As mentioned previously, there exists a negative relationship between these two fundamental dimensions in comparative contexts. This two-target comparative context is necessary in order to observe compensatory effect, which is unique to these dimensions (Judd et al., 2005; Kervyn, Yzerbyt & Judd, 2010). Judd et al. (2005) demonstrated that when one dimension is manipulated (competence or warmth) and ambiguous information is provided about two individual/groups on the other dimension, a constant negative relationship is found between the two dimensions. So, a group high on competence is seen as lower in warmth, and a group high on warmth is seen as low on competence. Recent work by Yzerbyt et al. (2008) demonstrates compensation effect to be unique to the dimensions warmth and competence, and does not work with any other pair of dimensions. Cuddy, Norton and Fiske (2005) found in yet another study, that when an older person was more alert and sharp (i.e. memory) than expected, participants in the study rated them as more competent but less warm, compared to an older person with for instance memory losses. In line with that, Yzerbyt et al. (2005) compared stereotypes held by French-speaking Belgians and by French about each other. They found that when asked to rate themselves and each other, both groups agreed that Belgians were less competent but warmer than the French. Kervyn et al. (2010) explain this compensation effect phenomenon with system justification theory. They argue that “compensation effect” is used as a tool by people in order to perceive the social world as just, and it is this motivation that leads to compensated stereotypes. This is supported by findings from studies where exposure to compensated statements such as “poor but happy” increased system justification scores, in contrast to statements such as “rich and happy” or “poor and miserable” (Kay & Jost, 2003).

Impression management

Impression management is a goal-directed conscious or subconscious process in which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). What motives underlie impression management has been a central question in this research area. Jones and Pittman (1982) distinguished between two common motives for use of strategic impression management: the concern with social evaluation and desire to be liked, and concern with ability and the desire to be seen as competent.
Warmth and competence in impression management

Warmth and competence appear to be fundamental not only to impression formation, but also impression management. A key study by Holoien and Fiske (2013), of great interest to this current study, asked participants to formulate an email message to a book club they had recently joined. Participants were encouraged to make a good impression and were given the goal to either appear warm or competent. Participants were then provided a list of twenty-four words high and low on both warmth and competence to choose from and use when completing the task. The study found that participants deliberately downplayed their warmth or competence to manage impression on the other dimension, suggesting that people utilize this trade-off pattern between the two dimensions when cultivating their own impression.

Gender Stereotypes

Stereotypes are deeply ingrained in our society and consciousness, and warmth and competence are key features in stereotyping. According to Gill (2004), all stereotypes in essence describe what a certain group member is like, and include beliefs of what a category member ideally ought to be like. With the Stereotype Content Model (SCM) Fiske et al. (2007) presented a comprehensive model of social perception based on the dimensions warmth and competence. SCM explains how social structural variables influence different emotions felt toward different groups. The warmth dimension reflects “the intentions” of the group, whereas competence reflects the group’s “ability to carry out its intentions”. Warmth is linked to traits such as friendliness, sincerity, helpfulness and trustworthiness, whereas competence is linked to intelligence, conscientiousness, efficiency and skill (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick & Xu, 2002).

Gender stereotypes shape the foundation of sexism, or the biased belief that value one gender over another. Gender stereotyping is both normative and prescriptive. Normative gender roles are socially constructed, assigned by society, and they relate to expected social roles. So if the norm of the western world is traditional heterosexual gender roles, then ideas of gender and sexuality become established and expressed through “normative” discourses. Gender prescriptions are beliefs about what traits men and women should possess and uphold to avoid derogation and reprimand (Gill, 2004). There is consensus amongst researchers that the prescriptive component that we assign different groups, members or individuals, play an important role in gender bias and discrimination (Delacollette, Dunmont, Sarlet & Dardenne, 2013). Findings clearly indicate that men and women are indeed not prescribed traits according to warmth and competence dimensions, to the same extent. Women are primarily given warmth traits such as warm, kind, sensitive, friendly, cooperative and polite. Men on the other hand are mostly given traits associated with competence, such as business sense, leadership abilities, ambitious, and assertive (Prentice & Carranza, 2002). Therefore, it’s not inconceivable to believe that perceived gender roles form the basis for the developments of gender identity. There are several psychological theories of gender role and gender identity, but two relevant ones to this study are Social Role Theory and Ambivalent Sexism Theory.
Social Role Theory (SRT)
This theory prescribes the divide in the skills ascribed to each gender to the historical divide in work tasks. Historically, women have been expected to stay at home and take care of household and children, whereas men have been expected to work and provide income for the family. This divide has led to the development of traits beneficial to these tasks: communal traits for women and agentic traits for men. The communal role is characterized by attributes (e.g. nurturing and emotional expressiveness) commonly associated with domestic activities, and thus, with women. The agentic role is characterized by attributes (e.g. assertiveness and independence) commonly associated with public activities, and thus, with men. This development and divide of traits has been encouraged throughout time and history, and deviation from these expectations discouraged. It is therefore argued that gender-based expectations stem from the observation of this divide between men and women - across various types of roles and occupations - instead of these traits necessarily being present within the gender at birth (Eagly & Wood, 2012; Bosak, Szczesny & Eagly, 2012).

Ambivalent Sexism Theory (AST)
Glick and Fiske (1996) argue that there exist two types of stereotypic perceptions of women, and have developed the Ambivalent Sexism Theory (AST) in order to capture the complexity of gender stereotypes, and account for the two distinct forms of sexism that coexists in many diverse societies. Fundamentally, these two constructs rely on the underlying dimensions warmth and competence. They argue that prejudice against women takes on two forms: a mix of benevolent and hostile sexism. Benevolent sexism believes women to be high on warmth dimension but low in competence, and therefore need to be looked after and provided for (by men). Hostile sexism, on the other hand, views women as a highly competent group in competition with men (thus low in warmth).

Impact of gender stereotypes on judicial proceedings
Biases and stereotypes held by legal actors influence their perception, and are accordingly essential to judicial proceedings. According to Fiske (1998), stereotypic biases might influence the perception, memories, behaviors and decision of legal actors (as cited in Lindholm & Cederwall, 2010, p. 230). Accordingly, there has been vast interest in studying whether social institutions are fair, or heavily influenced by stereotypic associations and therefore biased along the lines of ethnicity, race and gender.

We know that, within judicial proceedings, men tend to be treated and judged more harshly both as perpetrators and victims, than do women. Research on the effect of gender on sentencing has been relatively consistent. Studies that have systematically looked at actual crime processes in Great Britain, the United States and New Zealand - and compared how men and women involved in similar crimes are judged - report consistent and similar result: female offenders are typically shown more leniency in sentencing, are more likely to be released prior to trial, are more likely to be declared legally insane, are less likely to be sent to prison, or receive shorter imprisonment than their male counterparts (Engen, Gainey, Crutchfield, & Weis, 2003; Franklin et al., 2008; Jeffries, Fletcher, & Newbold, 2003). Other findings suggest that violence against women is judged more harshly by both genders. Hence, offenders who victimize men
are more likely to receive shorter sentencing than those who victimize women (Curry, Lee, & Rodriguez, 2004).

How credible a perpetrator or victim comes across is vital to the outcome in the judicial system. Displayed emotions strongly influence judgment (Dahl et. al., 2006), and credibility is strongly influenced by social (i.e. emotional expressions) and gender stereotypes (Kaufman, Dreland, Wessel & Magnussen, 2003). Kauffman et al. (2003) found credibility judgments to be strongly influenced by emotions, and based on the manner in which a testimony was given, rather than the factual content of the testimony. This finding is further supported by Bollingmo, Wessel, Eilertsen, and Magnussen (2008), who examined the credibility judgments made by police investigators. Investigators viewed one of three video-recorded versions of a rape victim’s statement which were given in free recall with identical wording, but differed in the displayed emotion: neutral, congruent and incongruent emotions. The study found that police officers are often affected by the emotions displayed by rape victims. The victims who cried and showed despair were considered more credible than those who were neutral or expressed positive emotions.

Study Objective
In view of recent research suggesting that people may actively engage in impression management by downplaying their competence when they wish to appear warmer and vice versa (Holoien & Fiske, 2013), and that men and women are generally prescribed different types of traits, it seems reasonable to assume that men and women’s actions (both as victim and offender) can be understood in a way to fit/match these prescribed stereotypes. Following this reasoning, the first objective of the present study is to examine how men and women choose to portray themselves on the two dimensions in a legal context. The second objective is to examine how the participant’s degree of ambivalent sexism moderates self-presentation. It is predicted that participants will primarily aim to give a competent impression when in a police interrogation situation. However, when interrogated as suspect rather than witness to a crime, being perceived as warm should also be critical for others judgment. It is predicted therefore that participants will increase their intended warmth and decrease their competence in the role of suspect. Since gender roles prescribe warmth for women, but not for men, it is expected that women in particular will show this effect of role, and that men will show it to a lesser extent. Moreover, men high on ambivalent sexism scale are expected to be those particularly prone to not display warm traits in the role of suspect. Hence, participant’s gender is expected to interact with role (suspect/witness) and trait dimension. Moreover, it is expected that this three-way interaction will be moderated by sexism, leading to a four-way interaction.

Method

Participants
The study included 160 participants. Thirty-seven participants were excluded from the study as they failed to complete the survey, leaving a total of 123 who participated anonymously through the web-based survey Qualtrics. Of these, 66 were female and 57 were males. Participants’ age ranged between 20-66 years ($M = 37.1$ years, $SD = 10.56$).
and represented people from general population, with a wide range in vocational backgrounds (e.g. students to teacher, social workers, nurse, doctor, business men, polis, psychologist etc..) in Sweden (primarily Stockholm).

Materials
Case Vignette: Participants were randomly assigned to read one of two versions of a written vignette. Both versions described a scenario of a theft. Theft was chosen because it is a criminal offense likely to be committed by both genders. The vignette was constructed such that the gender of target person could not be known. The vignette describes a scenario where an employee in a grocery store, described from a first person perspective, is closing the store one night. The next day a theft is discovered. In one version of the vignette, a customer has contacted the manager, claiming to have seen the clerk/participant take the money. The manager has filed a police report of the theft and the clerk is interrogated as a suspect. In the other version the participant is interrogated as a witness of the theft.

Design and Procedure
The study used a 2 (male/female) x 2 (Experiment/ control) x 2 (warmth/competence) x 2 (High on sexism/low on sexism) between-subjects design. After providing information about the aim of the study and conditions for participation (That participation is voluntary and anonymous and they can be discontinued at any moment), participants were randomly assigned to read one of the two vignette versions and hence were delegated either the role of suspect (n = 61, 33 women and 28 men) or witness (n = 62, 33 women and 29 men). They were given a role-appropriate scenario to read after which participants were asked to complete four different tasks.

Trait Rating: The first task asked participants to imagine themselves at the police interrogation regarding the theft. Participant’s aim was to convince the police officer of their credibility, as an innocent suspect or as a witness, by rating to what degree they wished to exhibit 16 different personality traits. The traits used were from Kervyn, Yzerbyt, Judd and Nunes (2009) and had been presented as either high or low in warmth (caring, tolerant, warm, sociable, cold, hostile, insensitive, unfriendly) or as high or low in competence (capable, skilled, determined, competent, disorganized, lazy, unreliable, incompetent). These traits are also commonly attributed to women and men (Glick & Fiske, 1996). The answers were indicated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (do not want to appear this way) to 7 (would very much like to appear this way).

Word selection task: In the second task, participants were provided with a list of 24 words and asked to yet again imagine themselves being questioned by the police about the theft. They were then asked to choose 12 words they would like to use during the interrogation in order to appear as credible as possible. The list of words were provided by Holoen and Fiske (2013), and is comprised of six high warmth/high competence words (i.e. euphoric), six high warmth/low competence words (i.e. happy), six low warmth/high competence words (i.e. melancholy) and six low warmth/low competence words (i.e. sad).
**Ambivalent Sexism Inventory**: The third task asked participants to complete the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) created by Glick and Fiske (1996) in order to record participant’s benevolent as well as hostile sexist tendencies. Participants expressed their agreement with 22 statements (half of which assessed benevolent sexism, while the other half assessed hostile sexism) on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree). Six questions that implied low sexism were reversed before use, in order to indicate high sexism.

**Description**: The fourth and final task asked participants to write down a few lines about themselves, who they are and why they should be considered credible. Instructions informed that previous experience indicates that a personal description of who they are can increase their credibility in the investigative proceedings. This task was intended for a future study and will not be reported further.

**Results**

**Data preparation**
Indices were created for both the dependent variables (trait ratings and words) and the ASI. Personality traits for which ratings indicated low warmth and competence were first reversed, and two separate indices were then created, one with the mean scores of warmth and one with the means of competence. For the words selection task, each word was given a score of 1 or 0 depending on whether the participant has chosen it or not. The mean warmth and competence values of each word, as presented by Holoein and Fiske (2013), were then multiplied with the score for this word (1 or 0). Finally, the mean values of warmth and competence in the words that participants had chosen were calculated to arrive at word indices indicating warmth and competence. For the ambivalent sexism scale, 2 indices were created indicating benevolent and hostile sexism (each containing of eleven questions on the scale). The mean score of hostile and benevolent sexism were dichotomized and participants separated into low (benevolent: n = 53, hostile: n = 59) and high (benevolent: n = 55, hostile: n = 54) sexism on the respective scale, by recoding the median value into different variables. These were subsequently entered as an in between subject variable in a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA).

**Trait ratings results**
The trait rating indices were entered into a 2 (dimension: warmth/competence) x 2 (gender: male/female) x 2 (role: suspect/witness) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) with dimensions as a repeated measure variable. The means and standard deviation are presented in Table 1. The analysis found a main effect for dimension $F(1,119) = 35.00, p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .22$ indicating that participants generally scored higher on competence ($M = 6.12, SD = .66$) than on warmth ($M = 5.70, SD = .80$). The analysis further showed a significant interaction between trait dimension and role, $F(1,119) = 8.19, p = .005$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. The nature of this interaction was investigated by examining warmth and competence scores depending on role condition. An independent sample t-test was first computed with warmth scores as dependent variable and role as independent variable. Warmth ratings were significantly higher.
when participants were assigned the suspect role \((M = 5.86, SD = .87)\) compared to when assigned witness \((M = 5.55, SD = .70)\), \(t(121) = 2.12, p = .036\). Next, the same process was repeated to look at competence scores. This analysis showed no significant difference between the two role conditions (suspect, \(M = 6.06, SD = .69\); witness, \(M = 6.18, SD = .63\), \(t(121) = -1.020, p = .310\).

Moreover, a paired sample t-tests of warmth and competence were conducted separately for each of the two role conditions. The analysis showed no significant difference in the scores for warmth \((M = 5.86, SD = .87)\) and competence \((M = 6.06, SD = .69)\) among participants who were assigned the suspect role, \(t(60) = -1.93, p = .06\). However, in the role of witness, participants scored significantly lower in warmth \((M = 5.55, SD = .70)\) than in competence \((M = 6.18, SD = .63)\), \(t(61) = -6.60, p = .001\). Results further indicated a tendency towards a three-way interaction (dimension x role x gender) although this interaction was not significant, \(F(1,119) = 2.34, p = .13\), partial \(\eta^2 = .019\). However, since this three-way interaction had been predicted, follow-up analyses were conducted to detail the pattern. Two ANOVAs were first conducted regarding the two-way role x dimension interaction for men and women separately. For women, this analysis showed main effects of dimension \(F(1, 64) = 17.19, p = .001\), partial \(\eta^2 = .21\), and a two-way dimension x role interaction \(F(1, 64) = 11.82, p = .001\), partial \(\eta^2 = .16\). To explore the interaction between role and dimension among female participants, independent sample t-tests was conducted using role as independent variable, and warmth and competence as independent variable in separate analyses. The analysis found a significant difference in warmth scores for females, with higher warmth as suspects than as witnesses, \(t(64) = 3.09, p = .003\), but not for the competence scores \(t(64) = -1.29, p = .20\). For men the dimension effect was also significant. However, men showed no difference in their intended self-presentation depending on role, dimension x role interaction \(F(1, 55) = .73, p = .40\), partial \(\eta^2 = .01\). The two sexism indices were entered into a factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA), with dimension as within subject variable, and role, gender and sexism as a between subject variable. However, no effects or interactions involving sexism were found.

Table 1. Means and standard deviation for warmth and competence in trait ratings across gender and role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Female Offender</th>
<th>Female Witness</th>
<th>Male Offender</th>
<th>Male Witness</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td>6.16</td>
<td>5.70</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>5.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>6.23</td>
<td>6.40</td>
<td>5.87</td>
<td>5.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.49</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.69</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
**Word Selection Task results**
The word selection task indices were entered into a 2 (dimension: warmth/competence) x 2 (gender: male/female) x 2 (role: suspect/witness) factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) with word dimensions as a repeated measures variable. The means and standard deviation are presented in Table 2. A significant main effect was found for the variable word $F(1,119) = 16.22$, $p = .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .12$ suggesting that competence words score generally higher ($M = 2.26$, $SD = .11$) than warmth words ($M = 2.16$, $SD = .29$).

Similar to trait-ratings a significant interaction was found for the variables word-dimension and role $F(1,119) = 3.96$, $p = .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. This interaction was examined by looking at how competence vs. warmth related words depend on the variable role. An independent sample t-test was computed with competence scores as dependent variable and role as independent variable, in order to compare if participants differed in their usage of competence related words depending on assigned role. This process was repeated for warmth related words. The study found no significant difference in the usage of warmth words for suspects ($M = 2.20$, $SD = .26$) and witnesses ($M = 2.13$, $SD = .31$) based on role $t(121) = -1.43$, $p = .16$. Nor was any significant effect found for competence words between suspects ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .11$) and witnesses ($M = 2.28$, $SD = .12$), $t(121) = 1.41$, $p = .16$.

A paired sample t-test was conducted after the variable role was split, to compare whether participants in the assigned role (suspect vs. witness) differed on their usage of words related to warmth and competence. There was a significant difference when participants were assigned the role of witness, where they showed higher competence than warmth scores $t(61) = 4.01$, $p = .001$. When assigned suspect, there was no difference between the dimensions, $t(60) = -1.48$, $p = .14$, suggesting that when participants are assigned witness role, they use more competence related words than warm related words. There were no other main or interaction effects. Finally, there were no effects involving either type of sexism.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for warmth and competence in selected words across gender and role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offender</td>
<td>Witness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warmth</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.19</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Competence</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>2.23</td>
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<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
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Discussion

The aim of the study was to explore how men and women choose to portray themselves on the two dimensions in a legal context. This study predicted that men and women would engage in impression management, which is in line with the work of Holoien and Fiske (2013). Hence, this current study investigated to what degree people engage in impression management considering the dimensions warmth and competence. As a large body of research points to findings that men and women are treated and judged differently in the justice system (Engen et al., 2003; Franklin et al., 2008; Jeffries et al., 2003), this study looked specifically at how men and women choose to portray themselves in a judicial context. In line with our expectations, results from the trait rating task indicate that people actively engage in cultivating impression when they stand more to lose (e.g. when they are suspected of having committed a crime) than otherwise, suggesting a slight compensation effect. Mean values (see Table 1) indicate that this observed differentiation is mainly due to female participants. A tendency to a three way interaction between the variables gender, role and dimension was also observed, in line with study expectations. Although this interaction was not significant, the tendency goes in the anticipated direction and might be replicated significant in a larger sample size. For this reason, and considering that mean scores support the study hypothesis (Table 1) – which in turn rests on strong empirical foundation – this finding was explored further through a two-way interaction, looking at the relationship between variables role and dimension among men and women. The results from the factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) confirmed that women increase displayed warmth where men do not. There are at least two possible explanations for this. One explanation could be that men simply do not understand that increasing the display of warmth in a judicial setting (when they are suspected of a crime) will be helping them. Secondly, it could be that men are aware of this fact, but do not utilize it, as they believe that the expression of warmth would not favor them, or be interpreted the same as for their female counterparts, as warmth traits are not traits generally ascribed to the male stereotype. This is supported by Hess, Adam and Kleck (2005), who argue that prescription of emotion follows the same rules as trait, and that emotions are attributed differently to men and women. Men are generally prescribed emotions that are closely related to dominance, such as anger and contempt. Women, on the other hand, are often prescribed emotions which are linked to submission, such as fear, happiness and surprise. Following this line of thought, the outcome could be that men would be penalized for the same act (e.g. crying) that would help females appear more credible.

Similar to trait rating, the word selection task found an interaction between the word-dimensions, and the role participants were allocated. The study explored participants’ use of warmth/competence related words depending on the role they were allocated. Here it could be observed that when participants were assigned the role of witness, they wished and strived to appear more competent and credible, than warm. No difference could be seen for participants in word selection task ratings when they were allocated the suspect role. Essentially when participants were assigned suspect role, they sought to appear both warm and competent, however when they were assigned witness role, appearing competent held more importance.
Limitations and Future Research

Participants in this study were evenly distributed across gender, education, age, and vocational background. However, one of the primary limitations of this study was the sample size. A larger sample size might have offered more definitive conclusions and possibly resulted in significant interaction between for instance the variables gender, role and dimension.

Previous research has demonstrated that compared to women, men are treated more harshly for similar crimes within the judicial system. This study shows that women, unlike men, strive to appear warm in situations where it might be important to be seen as warm. This is fascinating and begs the question whether women are actually better at demonstrating warmth traits, or if they merely choose to do so more frequently than men, as these are prescribed the female gender. Another relevant factor is intent. Women are generally seen as less competent compared to their male counterparts, and therefore are viewed as having less intention to harm (intention leads to much harsher punishments). Finally, another important factor here is the crime itself. Men are grossly over-represented in all major crime categories and commit crimes at higher rates than do women. This is possibly a contributing factor in the different judgment of men and women, even when they commit similar crimes. One explanation could be that judges not only fall victim to gender stereotypes, but also to expectations based on previous experience. Furthermore, women tend to commit other types of crime, such as shoplifting, which are both less noticed and less frequently reported. An interesting observation would be if women were treated more harshly when they deviate from the female social norms.

Moreover, people are products of their particular society and culture, and of the gender norms and stereotypes prominent in that culture. This study was surveyed in Sweden, a country that places 4th on the Global Gender Gap Index (2014) when it comes to gender equality. This places Sweden at the forefront, compared to many contemporary societies and cultures. This merits the questions whether the same results would be found in other cultures (e.g. USA which coincidentally occupies 20th place on the Global Gender Gap Index) and if so, would it be more prominent? A replication of this study, in for instance USA, with a much larger sample size could offer more comprehensive conclusions. It could also possibly offer insight into whether ambivalent sexism could be a contributing factor. This was not evident in this study.

Finally, it would be interesting to use the data collected in the descriptions section of this current study to conduct a smaller follow-up study, where participants are assigned the role of investigator and asked to judge participants (from current study) credibility based on their description of themselves. This would offer insight into the question of whether the judgment of legal actors is influenced by gender, role or displayed warmth and competence traits.

Concluding remarks

We live in a progressively more complex, multicultural world. Having a good understanding of what affects perception, impression formation, and how stereotypes and biases can impact everyday decisions is imperative, especially in a judicial setting. Access to justice, non-discrimination and equality are all basic human rights. Current
research and its findings open the door to a new direction in the area. Based on current findings, it can be argued that gender disparity in criminal court is at least in part a consequence of how men and women engage in impression management, and choose to represent themselves, both as suspects and as witnesses. How a suspect is judged and sentenced is not based solely on offense, but also factors such as gender stereotypes, biases and emotional displays. The implications can be wide-ranging. For example, this might influence a judge’s perception of the culpability of the offender, or the credibility of a witness, influence the directions given to juries, misinterpretation or misapplication of laws, and ultimately it can lead to undermined access to justice. Therefore, understanding how men and women cultivate impression is a first step toward eradicating judicial stereotyping.
References


Prentice, D. A., & Carranza, E. (2002). What women and men should be, shouldn’t be, are allowed to be, and don’t have to be: The contents of prescriptive gender stereotypes. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 26*, 269-281.


"Appendix A"

Case Vignette: 2 versions (suspect/witness) and instructions

Vignette (suspect)

Instruction to participants:

Vignette (witness)

Instruction to participants:
Appendix B

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI): Relationships between men and women


1. Oavsett hur fulländad han är, är en man inte riktig fullkomlig som en människa förrän han har en kvinnas kärlek.
2. Många kvinnor är faktiskt ute efter särskilda förmåner, till exempel vid anställningsförfaranden som gynnar dem mer än män, under täckmanteln att de ber om ”jämställdhet”.
3. De flesta kvinnor tolkar oskyldiga kommentarer eller handlingar som sexistiska.
5. Vid katastrofer bör kvinnor räddas före män.
6. Människor är inte verkligt lyckliga i sina liv utan en romantisk relation med en person av det andra könet.
7. Feminister är ute efter att kvinnor ska ha mer makt än man.
8. Många kvinnor har en drag av renhet som män inte har.
10. De flesta kvinnor uppskattar inte fullt ut allt som män gör för dem.
11. Kvinnor söker makt genom att ta kontrollen över män.
12. Varje man bör ha en kvinna som han avgudar.
15. När en kvinna väl fått en man att binda sig till henne, försöker hon vanligtvis att hålla honom i strama tyglar.
16. När kvinnor förlorar mot män i rättvis tävlan, klagar de ofta över att ha blivit diskriminerade.
17. En bra kvinna bör sättas på en piedestal av sin man.
18. Många kvinnor får en kick av att reta män genom att verka sexuellt tillgängliga för att sedan avvisa mäns näranden.
19. Kvinnor i jämförelse med män, brukar ha en överlägsen känsla för moral.
20. Män bör vara beredda att ofrira eget välbefinnande för att sörja ekonomiskt för kvinnorna i sina liv.
21. Feminister ställer orimliga krav på män.
22. Kvinnor, i jämförelse med män, brukar ha ett mer förfinaa sinne för kultur och god smak.

Hostile sexism score= Medelvärde av frågor: 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18, 21
Benevolent sexism score= Medelvärde av frågor: 1, 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20, 22