

ABSTRACT

THESIS: Exploring the effect of biological sex and psychological gender on evaluations of communication competence.

STUDENT: Dillon L. Small

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PAGES: 79

Research in the area of sex and gender communication has been largely relegated to the organizational setting and the superior/subordinate framework. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the effects of biological sex and psychological gender on evaluations of communication appropriateness within the interpersonal context. College students were first asked to complete a sex-role inventory. They were then presented with a series of scenarios depicting a communication encounter in which communicators adhered to gendered communication behavior norms, and a communication encounter in which communicators deviated from gendered communication behavior norms. After reading each transcript, participants completed a communication appropriateness scale for each character presented in the scenarios. The results show that within the interpersonal context, there are differences between males and females in evaluations of general competence, and that males enacting a feminine style of communication are evaluated as more communicatively appropriate than males enacting a masculine style of communication. Finally, this study provides a critique on the Bem Sex-Role Inventory based upon empirical evidence.