

## ***How are masculinity and femininity culturally constructed?***

Masculinity and femininity have, in western societies, traditionally been considered binary constructs, and the gender and identification as male or female is a result of their particular cultural origin, perceptions and expressions experienced via the norm of community interactions.

This is reflected in many traditional family units where childrearing and housework are expected of women, who are also likely to be subservient to the male parent, who is expected to be the dominant partner in the provenance and defence of the family unit. Enculturation often demands expectations of a child in direct relation to the culture in which they are embedded, and male and female parent partnerships are the primary role models for their offspring.

Hence, the often-seen girls playing with dolls as surrogate children of their own and boys playing football or pretending to kill each other with their plastic swords. But there are many different cultures besides those that communities in western society identify with; the construction of gender may have differences.

Hofstede's (2001) theory says that cultures can be categorised by gender based on how they stress the balance between individual achievement and social nurturing. Moreover, Hofstede says that people within societies often take on gender roles prescribed by whether a society is masculine or feminine. According to Hofstede, a masculine culture or society stresses different expectations for men and women. In a masculine culture, men are

expected to be assertive, competitive, and focused on material success. Women are expected to be nurturing and focused on people and quality of life. In contrast, Hofstede says a feminine culture or society is one where gender roles are more fluid. Both men and women are expected to be nurturing and focused on people and quality of life.

It's important to note that Hofstede's descriptions of these cultural types are based on gender stereotypes. That doesn't mean that every woman is nurturing and thinking about how to live a fulfilling life or that every man is out to make the most money possible. It just means that those are the stereotypes. Even within so-called masculine cultures, which stress the stereotypical gender roles, there are women who focus more on competition and achievement and men who focus on nurturing people. Of course, there are also people of both sexes focused on both achievement and enjoying time with the people around them.