

Gender and age differences in the internalization of gender stereotypes in early and mid adolescence

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Abstract

Introduction. Gender, understood as a social construction, determines the categorization of roles attributed to men and women by society. Adolescence is a critical period in the formation of gender identity, as well as in the development and consolidation of gender stereotypes and roles.

Method. The aim of the study was to analyze differences in gender stereotypes in early adolescence (11-13 years) and middle adolescence (14-16 years), according to sex and age. The sample was composed of 880 adolescents from Secondary Schools in Aragon (Spain), of which 48.4% were male and 51.6% were female, with a mean age of 13.7 years. The *Gender stereotypes* variable was assessed using the *Escala de Estereotipos de Género* (Gender Stereotypes Scale, Colás & Villaciervos, 2007). Using Levene's test and Cohen's *d*, differences were determined for each study variable and between the seventh- and tenth-graders, for both sexes respectively.

Results: The results show that there were significant differences in the internalization of gender stereotypes according to sex and age, where the transition to middle adolescence was critical. In the general scale, the presence of stereotypes was greater in males than in females. When analyzed by subtypes, there was a greater presence of these stereotypes in male youths: with a large effect size (Cohen's *d*) for the subtypes Body, Competence and Affect in tenth grade; an intermediate effect size in Competence in ninth grade, Affect in eighth and ninth grades, and Social Responsibility in tenth grade; and with a small effect size in Social Responsibility in ninth grade. On the other hand, there was a greater presence of stereotypes in females in seventh grade only, with an intermediate effect size in the Emotional subtype, and a small effect size in Social Behavior. Moreover, the evolution of the presence of gender stereotypes differed according to sex, tending to decrease in the female youths, and to increase in the males.

Discussion and conclusions. Psychological, educational and social repercussions are discussed. In conclusion, we offer orientation as to the need for age-adjusted, preventive interventions that include the gender perspective.

Key words: gender; stereotypes; adolescence; sex; age

Resumen

Introducción: El género entendido como una construcción social determina la categorización de roles propios atribuidos por la sociedad al hombre y a la mujer. La adolescencia es un período crítico tanto en la formación de la identidad de género, como en el desarrollo y la consolidación de estereotipos y roles de género.

Método: El objetivo del estudio es analizar las diferencias de género y edad en los estereotipos de género en la adolescencia temprana (11-13 años) y la adolescencia media (14-16 años). La muestra estuvo compuesta por 880 adolescentes de Centros de Educación Secundaria en Aragón (España), de los cuales el 48.4% eran hombres y el 51.6% mujeres, con una edad media de 13.7 años. La variable *Estereotipos de género* se evaluó con la Escala de Estereotipos de Género (Collás y Villaciervos, 2007). Se realizó la prueba de Levene y la *d* de Cohen con el fin de contrastar las diferencias por sexo para cada una de las variables de estudio y entre 1º ESO y 4º ESO para ambos sexos.

Resultados: Los resultados muestran que existen diferencias significativas en la internalización de los estereotipos de género por sexo y edad, siendo crítica la transición a la adolescencia media. En la escala general, la presencia de estereotipos es mayor en los hombres que en las mujeres. Analizado por subtipos, hay una mayor presencia en hombres con un tamaño de efecto grande (*d* de Cohen) en los subtipos Corporal, Competencial y Afectivo en 4º ESO; con tamaño de efecto intermedio en Competencial en 3º ESO, Afectivo en 2º y 3º ESO, y Responsabilidad social en 4º ESO; y con un tamaño de efecto pequeño en Responsabilidad Social en 3º ESO. Por otro lado, en las mujeres sólo hay una mayor presencia de estereotipos en 1º ESO con un tamaño de efecto intermedio en el subtipo Emocional, y pequeño en el Comportamiento Social. Por otra parte, existe una evolución diferencial en la presencia de estereotipos de género por sexo tendiendo a disminuir en las mujeres, y aumentar en los hombres.

Discusión o conclusión: Se discuten las repercusiones psicológicas, educativas y sociales. En conclusión, se orienta hacia la necesidad de intervenciones preventivas ajustadas por edad, incluyendo la perspectiva de género.

Palabras clave: género; estereotipos; adolescencia; sexo; edad

Introduction

Gender has been defined as “the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for women and men” (Council of Europe, 2011). Three key concepts are identified in gender studies: (1) gender identity, referring to the child associating himself or herself with a gender category, (2) gender stereotypes, or beliefs about the attributes that characterize men and women as groups (Tobin et al., 2010), and (3) gender roles, based then on the accepted social categorization that differentiates man from woman, and constituting prescriptions about ideal standards for masculinity or femininity (Delgado-Álvarez, Sánchez & Fernández-Dávila, 2012).

In this way, gender is considered a social construction that encompasses sociocultural content and is distinct from biological sex *per se*. Differential socialization of gender roles is a process that rests on assumptions of inequality, reflected through more or less explicit androcentric messages (Ferrer & Bosch, 2013), and corresponding to social constructions that are often highly schematized and may lead to contemptuous or aggressive behaviors.

From an early age, around 3-4 years old, boys and girls already manifest the beginnings of role awareness formed through experiences and through roles socially attributed to males and females (Tobin et al., 2010). Information consistent with one’s gender is better remembered and recognized than what is inconsistent with one’s gender (Cherney, 2005), where cultural guidelines and social reinforcement associate expressivity (emotional, affectionate, understanding, intolerant) mainly with women, and instrumentality (rational, intelligent, effective, unsteady) with men (Spence & Helmreich, 1978). This dichotomy extends to the subtypes considered in other studies, and is applied to role behaviors (caregiver role vs. protection role), vocations (more support-related for women vs. leadership positions for men), and physical appearance (delicateness and sensuality in women vs. muscularity and strength in men) (Deaux & Major, 1987). Moreover, there seems to be a pattern of maximum rigidity in gender stereotypes in five- to six-year-olds, evolving toward greater flexibility around ages 7 or 8 (Serbin, Powlishta & Gulko, 1993). Flexibility of gender stereotypes has been demonstrated as a learning experience determined by richness and variety in learning things that do not match the expected gender norm (Hughes & Seta, 2003; Spinner, Cameron & Calogero, 2018; Sagone, De Caroli, Falanga, Coco & Perciavalle, 2018) and by cognitive maturing

(Serbin et al., 1993). Consequently, educational and socializing processes will determine the individual's mental schemata that develop starting in childhood and become especially significant during adolescence.

Adolescence is a decisive stage in the process of acquiring and consolidating identity (Becht et al., 2016); differences are found according to age and sex (Meeus, van de Schoot, Keijsers & Branje, 2012), and specifically, between early and middle adolescence (Topolewska-Siedzik & Ciecuch, 2018). Early adolescence is characterized by cognitive processes that begin as a result of maturing brain structures during this period, and that encourage the development of one's personal identity. It is also when special significance is given to peer group membership and to identification with the reference group as a mechanism of inclusion and belonging. As a result, sexist, stereotyped mental schemata developed in early adolescence will be determining factors in the nature of social interactions with peers and in affective/sexual relations that begin in this stage. Along these lines, Morales (1993) indicates that gender identity refers to an individual's psychological relationship with the gender categories of a society or group; not only relations with the group they belong to, but also other associated, interdependent relationships. Social comparison, then, is the means by which a positive identity is spontaneously created and maintained through processes and strategies that allow harmonization within one's own cognitive sphere and that uphold the group identity (Tajfel, 1982). This mechanism acts as a maintainer and reinforcer of sexism and gender stereotypes.

As Capdevielle (2011) indicates, there must be a correspondence between social structures and mental schemata in the construction of gender identity from childhood on. Consequently, different educational and socializing contexts and agents play an important role in the transmission and reinforcement of sexist roles and gender stereotypes (Bem, 1982; Markus, Crane, Bernstein & Siladi, 1982), given that cognitive construction determines the roles and behaviors that are adopted and developed in daily life. Thus, sexual role acquisition is learned as the traits characteristic of each sex become adapted to these schemata that function as catalysts for one's perceptions about the world, about people, and the interactions that take place between them. Personal identity, therefore, and gender identity with it, go hand in hand with social identity, being the result of psychological, educational and social processes that take place throughout a person's developmental years. Nonetheless, because they are processes, it is possible to intervene and modify their course. In fact, a critical period has been identified,

between 15 and 16 years of age, when a greater presence of gender stereotypes is observed; this moment is therefore considered key for intervening in matters of equality and gender (De la Osa, Andrés & Pascual, 2013).

Objectives and hypotheses

The aim of this study was to analyze gender and age differences in internalization of gender stereotypes during early adolescence (11-13 years) and middle adolescence (14-16 years), and to establish the principal repercussions, including the psychological, educational and social. In each school grade, we expected significant differences in the presence of gender stereotypes as a function of sex (Hypothesis 1, H1). Likewise, we expected to find significant differences in the presence of gender stereotypes between the grade that corresponds to the beginning of early adolescence (seventh grade) and the grade corresponding to the beginning of middle adolescence (tenth grade) (Hypothesis 2, H2).

Method

Design

The study is cross-sectional and descriptive-relational, carried out in a natural school context, during academic year 2015-16, with students from seventh to tenth grade (compulsory secondary education in Spain). Stratified, random sampling was applied, considering the schools as units of grouping, having selected three of the four public secondary schools in Teruel (Spain).

Participants

The sample was composed of 880 students from seventh to tenth grades in compulsory secondary education (in Spain, *ESO*), of which 48.4% ($n=426$) were male and 51.6% ($n=454$) were female, with a mean age of 13.7 years old ($SD = 1.24$; range: 11-17). By school grade, the seventh-graders made up 22.95% ($n=202$) of the participants, of which 106 were male and 96 female, with a mean age of 12.17 years ($SD = 0.58$). The eighth-graders represented 30.68% ($n=270$), of which 130 were male and 140 female, with a mean age of 13.29 years ($SD = 0.69$). The ninth-graders made up 23.29% ($n=205$), of which 93 were male and 112 female, with a mean age of 14.26 years ($SD = 0.68$). And the tenth-graders made up 23.08% ($n=203$), of which 97 were male and 106 female, with a mean age of 15.12 years ($SD = 0.54$).

The inclusion criterion was enrollment in one of the three participating schools, in grades 7 to 10, and agreement to participate in the study.

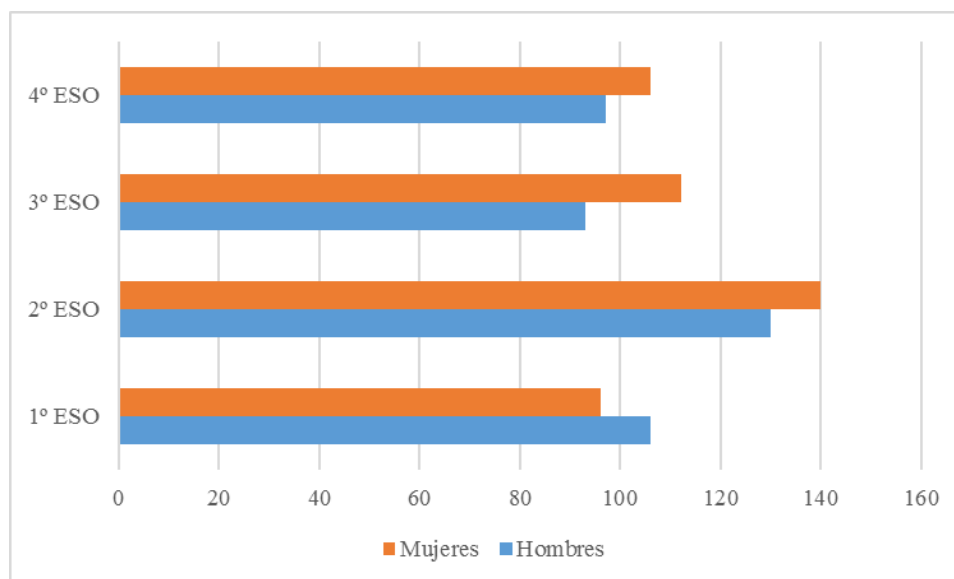


Figure 1. *Sample characteristics*. Legend: 4ºESO- tenth grade; 3º ESO- ninth grade; 2º ESO- eighth grade; 1º ESO- seventh grade; Mujeres- Female; Hombres-Male.

Instruments

The *Gender stereotypes* variable was assessed using the *Escala de Estereotipos de Género* (Gender Stereotypes Scale, Colás & Villaciervos, 2007). Participants had to answer a dichotomous scale of 22 items, indicating their agreement (1) or disagreement (0) with a series of statements. The choice and relevance of this instrument was based on its division into six areas that assess different subtypes of gender stereotypes, making it possible to carry out both a general analysis (GE) and analysis by subtypes, and to explore their variability according to the objectives of the present study. The first subtype relates to the notion of *Body* (BO) (3 items) and asks about physical attractiveness of men and women and about body care. The second subtype relates to *Social Behavior* (SB) (2 items) assessing attitudes toward behaviors that might be expected in both men and women in certain situations. The third subtype assesses stereotypes related to *Competence and capacities of men and women* (CO) (6 items). The fourth subtype assesses *Emotional expression* (EM) (4 items). The fifth subtype refers to *Expression of gender-related affective behaviors* (AF) (5 items). Finally, the sixth subtype assesses gender stereotypes related to *Social responsibility* (SR) (2 items). The Gender stereo-

types scale (Colás & Villaciervos, 2007) had adequate reliability according to Cronbach's alpha, $\alpha=.83$ (Nunnally, 1978).

Procedure

The three participating schools were contacted by telephone in the first half of September, to inform them of the study and its objectives, and to request their collaboration. Prior to administering the questionnaires, each school took responsibility for informing the families or guardians of the minor children in grades 7 to 10, with a written request to authorize their student's participation in the study.

A battery of instruments was administered following a protocol, including the instrument used for this study. The instrument was completed in the classroom as a group, during regular class hours and under the supervision of an expert. The time required for questionnaire completion ranged from 30-45 minutes, according to the age of the participants.

Participation in this study was subject to the ethical standards of the Helsinki Declaration (Asociación Médica Mundial, 2013) and the Spanish Data Protection Act 15/1999: voluntary participation of individuals, free and informed consent for the use of their data for research purposes, and advising them that they were able to discontinue their participation in the study at any time. The data were treated confidentially, respecting the participants' privacy.

In addition, we checked whether the participants had received any type of specific intervention in gender stereotypes in the past 12 months, and found that the ninth-graders (except those who were repeating the grade) had been the beneficiaries of an intervention, a universal prevention program called "*Sé tú mismo, sé tú misma*" ["Be yourself", repeated in its masculine and feminine forms] (Villanueva, 2017); the program includes one session that addresses prevention of gender stereotypes.

Data analyses

A univariate descriptive analysis of the sample of participants differentiated them according to sex and year in school. The descriptive analysis was carried out by calculating the central tendency indices (mean and standard deviation), as well as difference of means be-

tween males and females using Levene's test and Cohen's d to obtain the effect size at each of the grade levels. This same analysis procedure was carried out to establish the difference of means between seventh grade and tenth grade for both sexes, given that these school years correspond to the beginning of early adolescence and of middle adolescence, respectively. All analyses were carried out using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 21.

Results

Regarding the *General Scale* on gender stereotypes, Table 1 reveals that there were statistically significant differences in the means, according to sex, in every year except in seventh grade. In 8th grade, the males showed a greater presence of gender stereotypes $M=8.85$ ($SD=4.97$) than the females $M=7.62$ ($SD=4.15$), $t(268)=2.21$, $p<.05$, with $d=0.27$, indicating a small effect size. In 9th grade as well, the males showed a greater presence of gender stereotypes $M=8.38$ ($SD=4.55$) than the females $M=6.7$ ($SD=4.51$), $t(196)=2.64$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.37$, indicating a small effect size. Finally, in 10th grade, the males showed a greater presence of gender stereotypes $M=9.33$ ($SD=4.86$) than the females $M=6.2$ ($SD=4.27$), $t(192)=4.86$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.68$, indicating a large effect size.

Regarding gender stereotypes of the *Body* subtype, the total percentages of males in each school grade who presented these gender stereotypes, as well as their mean scores, were higher than for the females. However, significant differences were found only in 10th grade, where the males showed a greater presence of *Body* gender stereotypes $M=1.25$ ($SD=1.05$) than the females $M=.75$ ($SD=.96$), $t(195)=3.55$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.5$, indicating a large effect size.

Table 1. Comparison of prevalence and means in gender stereotypes between males and females according to year in school

Variable	Year in School	Male (n=426)		Female (n=454)		Test ^a (t)	p ^b	d ^c
		n (%)	M (SD)	n (%)	M (SD)			
GE	7th gr.	95 (91.5)	8.49 (4.94)	92 (95.8)	8.47 (4.54)	.03	.97	
	8th gr.	123 (94.6)	8.85 (4.97)	137 (97.9)	7.62 (4.15)	2.21*	.03	0.27
	9th gr.	91 (97.8)	8.38 (4.55)	103 (92)	6.7 (4.51)	2.64**	.01	0.37
	10th gr.	96 (99)	9.33 (4.86)	93 (87.7)	6.2 (4.27)	4.86**	.001	0.68
BO	7th gr.	52 (49.1)	.8 (.94)	40 (41.7)	.61 (.85)	1.49	.14	
	8th gr.	75 (57.7)	.98 (1.03)	72 (51.4)	.9 (1.01)	.68	.50	
	9th gr.	47 (50.5)	.85 (.97)	43 (38.4)	.66 (.98)	1.38	.17	
	10th gr.	67 (69.1)	1.25 (1.05)	48 (45.3)	.75 (.96)	3.55**	.001	0.50
SB	7th gr.	55 (51.9)	.76 (.82)	63 (65.6)	.99 (.83)	-1.94*	.05	-0.27
	8th gr.	72 (55.4)	.80 (.81)	73 (54.6)	.74 (.8)	.58	.56	
	9th gr.	59 (63.4)	1.01 (.87)	59 (52.7)	.88 (.9)	1.1	.27	
	10th gr.	56 (57.7)	.89 (.85)	57 (53.8)	.89 (.9)	-.01	.99	
CO	7th gr.	66 (62.3)	2.18 (2.13)	70 (72.9)	1.95 (1.79)	.83	.41	
	8th gr.	71 (54.6)	1.78 (2.02)	73 (52.1)	1.46 (1.77)	1.36	.18	
	9th gr.	61 (65.6)	1.89 (1.74)	43 (38.4)	1.23 (1.88)	2.60**	.01	0.37
	10th gr.	65 (67)	2.21 (2.05)	38 (35.8)	1.08 (1.68)	4.31**	.001	0.61
EM	7th gr.	88 (83)	1.72 (1.08)	90 (93.7)	2.17 (.99)	-3.09**	.002	-0.44
	8th gr.	112 (86.2%)	1.98 (1.12)	125 (89.3%)	1.99 (1.01)	-.12	.90	
	9th gr.	79 (84.9)	1.77 (1.11)	98 (87.5)	1.93 (1.05)	-1.02	.31	
	10th gr.	88 (90.7)	1.89 (1.03)	87 (82.1)	1.73 (1.08)	1.08	.28	
AF	7th gr.	89 (84)	2.53 (1.54)	84 (87.5)	2.21 (1.42)	1.53	.13	
	8th gr.	117 (90)	2.85 (1.57)	113 (80.7%)	2.21 (1.46)	3.50**	.001	0.43
	9th gr.	81 (87.1)	2.55 (1.55)	85 (75.9)	1.85 (1.4)	3.36**	.001	0.47
	10th gr.	88 (90.7)	2.88 (1.42)	74 (69.8)	1.68 (1.48)	5.88**	.001	0.83
SR	7th gr.	36 (34)	.5 (.76)	39 (40.6)	.54 (.72)	-.40	.69	
	8th gr.	43 (33.1)	.45 (.71)	35 (25)	.31 (.59)	1.77	.08	
	9th gr.	20 (21.5)	.3 (.62)	14 (12.5)	.15 (.43)	2.03*	.04	0.29
	10th gr.	15 (15.5)	.23 (.57)	8 (7.5)	.08 (.31)	2.23*	.03	0.31

Note: GE (General stereotype); BO (Body stereotype); SB (Social Behavior stereotype); CO (Competence and Capacities stereotype); EM (Emotional Expression); AF (Affective Behavior); SR (Social Responsibility stereotype)

Regarding the presence of gender stereotypes of the *Social behavior* subtype, significant differences in means according to sex were observed only in seventh grade, where the males showed a lower presence of these stereotypes $M=.76$ ($SD=.82$) than the females $M=.99$ ($SD=.83$), $t(198) = -1.94$, $p<.05$, with $d=-0.27$, indicating a small effect size.

In the *Competence* subtype, significant differences were found in 9th and 10th grades, where the presence of these gender stereotypes was higher in males in both school years. In 9th grade, the males showed a greater presence of these gender stereotypes $M=1.89$ ($SD=1.74$) than the females $M=1.23$ ($SD=1.88$), $t(201) = 2.60$, $p<.01$, with $d= 0.37$, indicating an intermediate effect size. The same situation appears in 10th grade, where the males showed higher figures $M=2.21$ ($SD=2.05$) than the females $M=1.08$ ($SD=1.68$), $t(201) = 4.31$, $p<.01$, with $d= 0.61$, indicating a large effect size.

Regarding presence of the *Emotional* subtype, the differences of means according to sex were significant only in seventh grade, where the males showed a lower presence of these gender stereotypes $M=1.72$ ($SD=1.08$) than the females $M=2.17$ ($SD=.99$), $t(200) = -3.09$, $p<.01$, with $d= -0.44$, indicating an intermediate effect size.

Regarding the *Affective* subtype of gender stereotypes, the differences of means were statistically significant in eighth, ninth and tenth grades, with greater presence in males. In 8th grade, the males showed higher figures $M=2.88$ ($SD=1.42$) than the females $M=1.68$ ($SD=1.48$), $t(262) = 3.50$, $p<.01$, with $d= 0.43$, indicating an intermediate effect size. In 9th grade, the males showed $M=2.55$ ($SD=1.55$) and the females $M=1.8$ ($SD=1.4$), $t(188) = 3.36$, $p<.01$, with $d= 0.47$, indicating an intermediate effect size. In 10th grade, the males showed $M=2.88$ ($SD=1.42$) and the females $M=1.68$ ($SD=1.48$), $t(200) = 5.88$, $p<.01$, with $d= 0.83$, indicating a large effect size.

Finally, in relation to gender stereotypes of the *Social responsibility* subtype, the male ninth- and tenth-graders showed a greater presence of these stereotypes. In 9th grade, the males showed $M=0.3$ ($SD=.62$) and the females $M=0.15$ ($SD=.43$), $t(203) = 2.03$, $p<.05$, with $d= 0.29$, indicating a small effect size. And in 10th grade, the males showed $M=0.23$ ($SD=.57$) and the females $M=0.08$ ($SD=.31$), $t(201) = 2.23$, $p<.05$, with $d= 0.31$, indicating an intermediate effect size.

In the analysis of male-female differences in the internalization of gender stereotypes at the beginning of early adolescence (seventh grade) and of middle adolescence (tenth grade) (Table 2), statistically significant differences were not found on the *General Scale*, for the male students. By contrast, the differences were significant for female students, $t(195)=3.65$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.51$, indicating a large effect size.

When considering each subtype separately, the only statistically significant differences in males were in the subtypes *Body*, $t(193)=3.17$, $p<.01$, with $d=-0.45$ indicating an intermediate effect size; and in *Social responsibility*, $t(201)=2.88$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.41$ indicating an intermediate effect size. In the case of females, significant differences were found for subtypes *Competence*, $t(195)=3.56$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.50$, indicating a large effect size; *Emotional*, $t(200)=3.02$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.43$, indicating an intermediate effect size; *Affective*, $t(199)=2.59$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.37$, indicating an intermediate effect size; and for *Social responsibility*, $t(200)=5.92$, $p<.01$, with $d=0.83$ indicating a large effect size.

Table 2. Male vs. female gender stereotypes at the beginning of early adolescence (seventh grade) and of middle adolescence (tenth grade).

Gender Stereotypes	Sex	Year in School		Test ^a (<i>t</i>)	<i>p</i> ^b	<i>d</i> ^c
		7th grade <i>M (SD)</i>	10th grade <i>M (SD)</i>			
GE	Male	8.49 (4.94)	9.33 (4.86)	-1.22	.22	
	Female	8.47 (4.54)	6.2 (4.27)	3.65**	.001	0.51
BO	Male	.8 (.94)	1.25 (1.05)	-3.17**	.002	-0.45
	Female	.61 (.85)	.75 (.96)	-1.028	.31	
SB	Male	.76 (.82)	.89 (.85)	-1.04	.30	
	Female	.99 (.83)	.89 (.9)	.84	.40	
CO	Male	2.18 (2.13)	2.21 (2.05)	-.09	.93	
	Female	1.95 (1.79)	1.08 (1.68)	3.56**	.001	0.50
EM	Male	1.72 (1.08)	1.89 (1.03)	-1.15	.25	
	Female	2.17 (.99)	1.73 (1.08)	3.02**	.003	0.43
AF	Male	2.53 (1.54)	2.88 (1.42)	-1.67	.10	
	Female	2.21 (1.42)	1.68 (1.48)	2.59**	.01	0.37
SR	Male	.5 (.76)	.54 (.72)	2.88**	.004	0.41
	Female	.23 (.57)	.08 (.31)	5.92**	.001	0.83

Note: GE (General stereotype); BO (Body stereotype); SB (Social Behavior stereotype); CO (Competence and Capacities stereotype); EM (Emotional Expression); AF (Affective Behavior stereotype); SR (Social Responsibility stereotype)

Discussion and Conclusions

In the present study, the presence of gender stereotypes occurred in every grade level in both females and males, although predominantly in males. The results lead us to conclude that internalization of gender stereotypes had already occurred in early adolescence, although in general this internalization was greater in males. We also conclude that internalization of gender stereotypes was influenced developmentally according to age and sex. While the presence of gender stereotypes in females tended to decrease with age, its presence in males was increasing, with the transitional period from early to middle adolescence being critical. Other studies have indicated that agreement with sexist beliefs declines over the school years, finding no significant differences between males and females, although the males manifested greater agreement with sexist beliefs than the females, as in the present study (De la Osa, et al., 2013).

Considering the particular subtypes analyzed, our results indicate that the *Body*, *Competence* and *Affect* subtypes show greater internalization in males than in females from the beginning of early adolescence, and tend to increase with age. However, the subtypes *Social behavior*, *Emotional* and *Social responsibility* show greater internalization in females at the beginning of early adolescence, but tend to decline in later years, showing lower internalization indices than those of males of their same age.

According to sex, results from the *General* scale showed significant differences in 8th, 9th and 10th grade, where the differences became greater from one year to the next, and were especially marked in the final year. Regarding the subtypes assessed, greater internalization of gender stereotypes was observed in males than in females in all four grades in the subtypes *Body*, *Competence*, and *Affect*. However, in the *Body* subtype, significant differences were only observed in 10th grade; for the *Competence* subtype they were significant starting in 9th grade; and for the *Affect* subtype they were significant starting in 8th grade. For the subtypes *Social behavior*, *Emotional* and *Social responsibility*, females presented greater internalization of gender stereotypes than the males in 7th grade, with differences in subtypes *Social behavior* and *Emotional* being statistically significant. Later, the results showed that the presence of these gender stereotypes in females declined over the following school years in both subtypes, while increasing in the case of males. Therefore, there was greater internalization of subtypes *Social behavior* and *Social responsibility* in males than in females starting in 8th

grade, and in the subtype *Emotional* in tenth grade. These results partially confirmed H1 of this study, where significant male-female differences were expected in the presence of gender stereotypes, in each school grade.

The presence of gender stereotypes in adolescents is an indicator of educational and cultural transmission of sexism and patriarchy. The reproduction of mental schemata that foster stereotyped beliefs and sexist behaviors facilitates the persistence of social structures that partition personal development spheres according to sex. Although some studies indicate high internalization of cultural gender stereotypes in adolescents (Colás & Villaciervos, 2007), other results point toward a change in stereotypes in Spanish adolescents, since they seem to be more aware of the traditional stereotypes and they perceive themselves less stereotypically and less sexually differentiated (Oberst, Chamarro & Renau, 2016).

In any case, the presence of gender stereotypes in adolescents implies that discriminatory processes as a function of sex continue; and in addition, they have a number of repercussions on psycho-affective and social development, given that this is a crucial stage for developing the first affective relationships. Regarding body-related stereotypes, gender ideology in Western society is responsible for beliefs about the body, which can lead to certain eating disorders such as anorexia, bulimia, and also muscle dysmorphia. Studies such as the one by Aruguete, Yates and Edman (2006) indicate that women internalize gender ideology and therefore are more concerned about their own body; men externalize these beliefs, they focus their attention more on others and present more attitudes of rejection toward non-thinness. Several studies have in fact related gender ideology with body dissatisfaction (Murnen & Smolak, 2009) and with eating preoccupation in women. Other studies have indicated that men with a more masculine ideology develop fewer problems in relation to food, less body dissatisfaction and less internalization of thinness (Magallares, 2016). Gender studies in Spain point in this direction and one can note a tendency toward androgyny as a desirable value in stereotypes of men and women, whether in adult populations (García-Retamero, Müller, & López-Zafra, 2011) or adolescents (Oberst et al., 2016; García-Vega, Robledo-Menéndez, García-Fernández, & Rico-Fernández, 2010).

In the relational area, in line with Aruguete et al. (2006), externalization of these beliefs in males can encourage between-peer aggressive behaviors having to do with physical body appearance. In addition, the internalization of body-related stereotypes may involve the

commodification or objectification of the couple, thus determining the type of affective-sexual relationship that the adolescent couple forms, and application of direct or indirect pressure to adapt to specific body standards.

Repercussions at the social level are obvious in the internalization of social behavior or competence stereotypes. These stereotypes can determine the adoption of social roles and influence male and female adolescents' perceived self-efficacy. Numerous studies have analyzed the influence of stereotypes on differences between men and women in social or competence aspects. De Lemus, Moya, Bukowski and Lupiáñez (2008) indicated that competence in general is a more important dimension for the evaluation of men, and that sociability in general is more important in evaluating women. This means that there is a tendency to evaluate a person according to the dominant gender stereotype that is attributed to one sex or the other. For example, a woman who is evaluated according to the general group stereotype will tend to be considered for her sociability and not as much for her competence, even though the latter may be exceptional. The automatic activation of the stereotypical gender dimensions, competence and sociability, referring to a man or a woman, could explain certain social processes such as differences in positions of power (De Lemus et al., 2008; Expósito & Moya, 2005), or prior to this, segregationist processes in choice of studies and vocational sphere. Furthermore, this fact can lead to invisibility of women in certain notable vocations, as well as salary discrimination based on the vocational sphere.

Referring specifically to gender stereotypes of *Competence*, perceived self-efficacy is decisive. Spencer, Steele and Quinn (1999) found that the act of believing that as a female you will have lower performance in certain areas, such as mathematics, predisposes and leads to self-fulfillment. Other studies, however, have indicated that eliminating stereotype threat can improve women's academic achievement (Miyake et al., 2010) and also men's academic achievement (Hartley & Sutton, 2013). The evidence suggests that when stigmatized individuals reappraise their experience, group differences in performance may be reduced or even eliminated (Schmader, 2010).

Social responsibility stereotypes encourage the idea that the man can focus on meeting his professional and personal goals for attaining success, while the woman must often do so while also taking on domestic responsibilities and the care of other family members. This is a relational pattern that, if it happens in adolescence, can influence future academic and work

expectations of women. Women's access to traditionally male positions is not free from stereotypes and discrimination; in fact, when this discrimination is openly perceived, it has been related to lower levels of well-being in the women affected (Bahamondes, Miranda, Avenaño & Estrada, 2017).

Under the socially constructed conception of masculinity, internalizing gender stereotypes of the emotional sub-type may result in penalization of expressing emotions and difficulty to effectively manage emotions. By contrast, extroverted and/or competitive behavior receives more positive responses from the context, and is therefore found more often in men than in women. In this way, gender manifestations are reinforced positively or negatively by the social situations in which the presence of others results in a response that is contingent upon certain behaviors. The consequences are adaptive or maladaptive depending on the context and on the objectives and values adopted at that moment (Addis, Mansfield & Syzdek, 2010).

Men and women may also be differently impacted by Affective-type gender stereotypes. The naturalization of gender stereotypes would encourage reproduction of stereotyped roles in couple relationships, with inequality between the members, and in some cases becoming a precursor to gender violence (De la Osa et. al., 2013).

Similarly, certain stereotypes are identified not only by sex, but also by sexual tendency, encouraging development of homophobic stereotypes that result in social and educational integration issues for persons in the LGTBI group (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersexual). In these cases, identity issues and physical and psychological health problems, especially in adolescence, have been related to greater risk of suicidal ideation, attempted suicide, mental disorders and alcoholism (Ortiz, 2005). Internalization of negative attitudes toward one's sexual orientation can produce negative consequences in the mental health of gays and lesbians. In fact, some studies have related self-stigmatization with low self-esteem and the development of depressive symptomatology in lesbians and gay men (Longares, Escartín & Rodríguez-Carballeira, 2016).

In the light of such repercussions, it becomes essential to implement preventive programs based on scientific evidence, allowing this problem area to be adequately addressed. As other studies show (De la Osa et al., 2013; Bermúdez, Teva & Buela-Casal, 2009), the transi-

tion period from early to middle adolescence is critical for intervention with adolescents. In this regard, our results confirm study Hypothesis 2. In the male-female internalization of gender stereotypes as a function of grade level, significant differences were observed between females at the beginning of early adolescence (seventh grade) and females who were reaching middle adolescence (tenth grade) on the *General Scale*, and for subtypes *Competence*, *Emotional*, *Affect* and *Social responsibility*, showing a decline in all cases. Significant differences for the males were observed only in the subtypes *Body* and *Social responsibility*; in their case, however, the gender stereotypes increased.

On the other hand, according to our results with regard to subtypes *Body*, *Emotional*, and *Affect*, in the sample of male ninth-graders, there was a notable change of trend in the rising internalization of gender stereotypes. Given that the students in this grade level were recipients of a preventive intervention that specifically addressed gender stereotypes, we may consider that it had a positive effect.

In short, the preventive approach may generate a change based on cognitive restructuring and emotion management, toward deconstruction of the group's negative stereotypes (Forbes & Schmader, 2010). In addition, it should be complemented with educational programs designed to focus on improving cognitive skills in both sexes (Miller & Halpern 2013) and programs oriented toward knowledge and understanding of stigmatized groups (González, Riggle & Rostosky, 2015).

As indicated above, the ideal stage for intervention is at the beginning of early adolescence, and the school setting is well suited to carrying out these interventions, integrating them within the ordinary curriculum and homeroom activities. It is important that the intervention design takes into consideration the characteristics and needs of the target population. In this regard, based on the results found in the present study, there is evidence of the need to intervene in preventing gender stereotypes, from seventh grade, using universal programs aimed at adolescents as a whole. The results also indicate that more intensive action should be taken concerning stereotypes belonging to competence, emotional and affective subtypes, since these show the greatest prevalence and highest means. Similarly, based on findings from this study, we can conclude that configuring selective, targeted prevention programs for adolescents would be appropriate, especially for males, where the presence of stereotypes was higher than the mean, and this presence rises as they advance in age.

Finally, following recommendations from Donovan and Vlais (2005), it would be beneficial to combine different measures such as universally applied youth education and school-based programs, along with ongoing national prevention campaigns and community mobilization interventions. Consequently, although adolescents are a priority focus group, it is important to take measures that have a community focus, including the families and the teachers themselves. As indicated earlier, the latter are educational transmitters and reinforcers through their modeling of sexist, stereotyped attitudes and behaviors.

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