

**A Qualitative Study Investigating Emotion Expression,  
Communication and Regulation and Gender Stereotypes  
among Men and Women in the Digital Age**

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June 30. 2023

## **Abstract**

Today's youth differs undeniably from foregoing generations in many aspects, like language, attitudes and behavior. Various traditional views are questioned and not valued any longer. This also applies to gender-based stereotypes, that throughout history limited men and women in their emotional expression. Nowadays, aforementioned limits are actively criticized on social media, which appears to be an impactful tool in reforming traditional views and shaping the younger generations. This research therefore investigates, by means of semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis, how men and women, despite social stereotypes, communicate and express their emotions nowadays. The results give insight into the emotionality development of young men and women and the impact that social stereotypes had on them. Furthermore, the effects that socioemotional content consumption on social media had were described and discussed. The findings of this research support the hypothesis that men and women were being socialized according to gender-based stereotypes, which impacted many of them in their emotionality development and emotion expression. It could also be confirmed that the general attitude towards social stereotypes is rather negative amongst youth and that change of societal values is aspired. In this process of change, social media is recognized as an important tool. As young people in this day and age grow up with social media further alienation from gender-based stereotypes and therefore further shifts in their communication and expression of emotions is implied.

## **Introduction**

Around November of 2022 and the following few months, a certain type of video edits arised on social media platforms. These videos (Appendix A), titled ‘female rage’ and carrying the hashtags #femaleraage or #womenrage, usually depict various scenes from movies and TV shows in which women display unfiltered anger, rage and frustration in an emotional outburst. Soon, more platform users created similar videos and the general concept of female rage went viral, resonating with a big audience. Since social media content is short lived and replaced very quickly, if specific content goes viral it always means that people feel entertained or fascinated by it, relate to it or identify with it enough to make it stand out (Omar & Dequan, 2020). This is also the case with #femaleraage edits. Not only do people keep creating and consuming TikToks and Instagram reels under that hashtag, but they also respond to these edits and talk about them, addressing the topic of female rage and emotions in general. People, especially women, explain how they can relate to these edits, that it feels good to see other women express their accumulated rage in such a raw and unfiltered way.

What also keeps being pointed out by users as well is the accumulation of rage among females over time and generations and the different views on genders on this topic. What might provide an explanation for this are societal norms, expectations and stereotypes of emotional regulation and expression when it comes to men and women. Men and women, depending on their age and social and ethnical background, are often socialized to have certain goals in life or to display or conceal certain types of behavior or mannerisms (Brody & Hall, 2008). Generally, women are believed to be more emotional, impulsive, and more emotionally labile than men (Alexander & Wood, 2000). Since these statements believed to be true by many people, women might feel unable to express their true emotions in order not to strengthen aforementioned stereotypes any further, which leads to an accumulation of emotions internally, such as the rage depicted in the TikToks.

Many societal issues (e.g. racism, homophobia, sexism and misogyny) are in current times addressed and discussed on TikTok, with especially younger people speaking up, expressing diversity, breaking stereotypes and inspiring change. #Femalerage can be connected to this movement. Actual conversations have started and platform users upload videos in which they explain what makes them relate to these videos. Additionally, other users have started making TikToks in which they compare ‘what men think female rage is vs. what female rage actually is’, pointing out differences in how men and women understand each other’s emotions.

There are also videos about men on social media. TikToks that show #malerage (appendix B) as well as men rebelling against social expectations that make them feel unable to feel soft and vulnerable emotions. Men are generally expected to be less emotional and to be ruled by logic, serving the purpose of functioning and performing well (Ridgeway, 1993), meeting standards that are generally set higher for them than they are for women (Foschi, 1996). Both men and women should be free to express and communicate any emotion, no matter the valence or arousal. The fact that this is not the case is problematic because it limits people and leads to build up emotions. The #femalerage TikToks are in this context a direct form of counteracting this problem, since they depict women expressing their emotions, build up frustration and anger, without minding anyone else or any social norm. They show the negative valence and the arousal of their emotions to the fullest extent and people are fascinated by it.

Gender roles and stereotypes have existed and been an issue in society for a long time. Therefore, emotional regulation, gender differences in emotional regulation and expression and gender stereotypes have been thoroughly researched and are therefore not new topics. This research, however, specifically focuses on younger people, who continue to question the ways of the generations before them and how they are affected by these stereotypes and the

social pressures on they should or should not communicate their emotions. Furthermore, the rise of social media and its popularity among young people expands the space in which emotions can be communicated and gives people new opportunities to express themselves. Therefore, the role of technology and social media, is being included and taken into account which also differentiates this research from previous research. This particular research therefore serves the purpose of investigating how men and women nowadays, despite social stereotypes, communicate and express their emotions. Furthermore, the role of TikTok and how it influences young people in communicating their emotions is also being researched.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Emotions**

#### **Definition of the Term “Emotion”**

The term “*emotion*” is a common but highly debated term. Researchers were so far unable reach a consensus on one singular universal definition of what emotions really are. However, there are partial definitions that most researchers seem to agree upon. Emotions are a subjective experience, a mental state, sometimes also referred to as a mental episode, and there is a broad range of emotions (Cabanac, 2002; Mulligan & Scherer, 2012). Anger, sadness, surprise, joy, fear and disgust are so called ‘*basic emotions*’ that can be found in any human culture and are part of humans’ evolutionary inheritance (Griffiths, 2002). According to Griffiths (2002) there are emotions, so called ‘*Complex emotions*’, that need to be interpreted based on the situation due to their complex nature and are thus, mediated social

interactions. Therefore, complex emotions cannot be generalized across cultures or entire groups of people.

Furthermore, there are two dimensions with which emotional experiences can be described. Firstly, *valence*, which is the extent to which an emotion is positive or negative. When an individual stops smoking, for example, and feels proud about this achievement then the feeling of pride is an emotion with positive valence. Secondly, *arousal* is the dimension which refers to the intensity of an emotion (Kensinger, 2004). If the emotion of pride, in the given example, is high enough in arousal then it contributes to resist the temptation of smoking again. However, if the arousal of pride is too low the individual might give in to the temptation, starts smoking again and experiences shame afterwards, an emotion with negative valence.

Furthermore, an emotion needs to possess certain characteristics. An emotion is being recognized as such if it is triggered and guided by at least one appraisal (hearing, seeing or remembering something), if it is intentional (directed at something), and if it is accompanied by bodily changes, such as arousal or facial expressions (Mulligan & Scherer, 2012). Researchers theorize that an emotion emerges when an existing drive or desire is satisfied or dissatisfied (Griffiths, 2002). Individuals can benefit from an emerging emotion by gaining a better understanding of a situation regarding possible actions that need to be taken and the urgency of these actions (Griffiths, 2002). The degree of understanding however is subjective to each individual.

### **Emotional Expressivity**

The extent to which individuals outwardly show their emotions, including changes in behavior, such as facial expressions, that emotions are usually accompanied by is called

“*Emotional expressivity*” (Fiorentini, 2013). As Frijda (1986) stated, the underlying purpose of expressive behaviors is to communicate emotional states towards another person, animal, or event. Someone might, for example, experience the emotion anger and expresses it by slamming their fist on the table and leaving the room, which serves no higher purpose than the expression itself. Nonetheless, some expressions can also have functional significance as they communicate personal boundaries, for example (Frijda, 1986). Therefore, emotional expressivity can have different causes and comes in various forms.

There are multiple factors that affect the emotional expressivity of a person, like the emotion itself. On the one hand, Griffiths (2002) noted that each basic emotion causes a distinctive facial expression, physiological response, and cognitive phenomena, such as directing attention towards the emotion stimulus and focusing on it (Griffiths). On the other hand, scientists claim that emotions only display distinct facial expressions if this seems to be advantageous for the individual (Griffiths, 2002). An example for that is if a certain facial expression serves the purpose of signaling and communicating a certain emotion to another individual.

### **Emotional Awareness and Regulation**

To communicate and express an emotion properly *emotional awareness* is to some extent required. Agnoli et al. (2019) defines emotional awareness as an individual’s cognitive skill to identify and describe their own and other individuals’ emotional experiences. To be aware of one’s emotions is also the first step to regulate them, which is necessary to determine appropriate emotional responses in challenging situations. The term *emotional regulation* refers to “the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions” (Gross, 1998, p. 275). Two

of the most popular emotional regulation strategies are emotional reappraisal, where an individual practically re-frames an emotional situation cognitively (Eastabrook & Hollenstein, 2014), and emotional suppression, where an individual is unwilling to experience feelings with a negative evaluation (Campbell-Sills et al., 2006). For people with poor emotional awareness, it is especially difficult to identify appropriate responses to situational challenges they encounter (Eastabrook & Hollenstein, 2014). So, the difference in emotionality and emotion expression between individuals is caused by individual circumstances, such as emotional regulation, intelligence and awareness.

### **Emotionality Development in Childhood, Adolescence and Adulthood**

As toddlers, children are not able to regulate their emotions properly yet. They develop these skills slowly over the years with the transitioning into adolescence being the most critical time frame (Eastabrook & Hollenstein, 2014). During this time individuals are especially sensitive and experience factors, such as social, biological and cognitive changes that can cause increased negative emotional arousal and reactivity (Eastabrook & Hollenstein, 2014). Adolescent transition is also the time where individuals increasingly start to develop their emotional awareness and emotional regulation strategies and their individual differences in them (Eastabrook & Hollenstein, 2014). Additionally, females begin to experience increased negative social comparison and evaluation and overall societal pressures (Eastabrook et al., 2014).

Social pressures and expectations play a big role in the upbringing of males and females, as well as in the development of their emotionality and emotion expression. There are different expectations for men and women in society which often results in males and females being raised in ways that fundamentally differ from each other but that are in line with these



social expectations (Brody & Hall, 2008; Fulton, 2017). Parents and children alike report that boys are taught to inhibit their emotions to a greater extent than girls are (Fiorentini, 2013) and that they are typically raised to have the need for control and status (Brody & Hall, 2008). Women, in turn, are socialized to have the need for intimacy and to adapt to the power imbalances between themselves and men (Brody & Hall, 2008).

This is how a clear social distinction between the genders was being formed and reinforced over generations. This way of raising young men and women to embody certain social expectations also reinforces gender-based stereotypes. Gender-based stereotypes describe the belief that one gender is more prone to feel certain types of emotions while the other gender is inclined to feel other emotions. In western societies men are generally associated with expert and leadership roles. In contrast, women are more evaluated by and reduced to their appearance and are often associated with the role of the caretaker and therefore with a nurturing and positive attitude (Alexander & Wood, 2000; Ellemers, 2018; Fulton, 2017).

Similarly, there is also a gender division for emotion-specific stereotypes: certain types of emotions are more typical and acceptable of women, such as happiness, embarrassment, fear, surprise, guilt, and shame. On the other hand, emotions such as pride, contempt and anger are believed to be more common in men (Brody & Hall, 2008). The emotions associated with males versus females therefore clearly differ. As a result of the social expectation to act according to these stereotypes, women are often discouraged from expressing emotions with negative valence that do not fit the image of a caretaker. (Alexander & Wood, 2000). Though, in modern days, there are notably changes when it comes to gender gaps, women's roles in leadership and competitiveness between males and females (Porterfield & Kleiner, 2005). Nonetheless, social expectations of men and women still prevail, as well as the belief that emotionality correlates to an individual's gender.

While social stereotypes reinforce the belief that men and women are by nature different in their emotionality, previous research has shown that a range of individual factors is causing differences in emotional repertoires. These factors include emotional intelligence, emotional regulation, emotional expressiveness and outside factors, such as social context, status, age, and social expectations (Brody & Hall, 2008; Fiorentini, 2013; Grossman & Wood, 1993; Hollenstein, 2015). For example, a skill that can be attributed to emotional intelligence is the extent to which an individual believes in the controllability of their emotions (Schnell et al., 2023), which influences the way they deal with their emotions. On average, women verbalize emotions more than men and are believed to have higher emotional intelligence than men, which offers an explanation for the common belief that women are more emotional than men (Brody & Hall, 2008). Furthermore, “the occurrence, persistence and dissipation of emotional states” depends on individual differences rather than a person’s sex (Hollenstein, 2015, p.308). So, differences in the expression of emotions between males and females can be detected but researchers tie these differences to cultural beliefs rather than to the biological gender.

## **The Role of Social Media**

### **Social Media and the Younger Generations**

Stereotypes about men and women and their emotions, have a long history, especially in western society. However, these preconceptions seem to be resolved and broken apart in recent times, especially by younger generations (Nayak & Bonner-Thompson, 2022). This can also be observed in politics. It was found that younger people are more likely to hold political left-wing parties while older generations often rather stick to conservative views of right-wing

political parties (Milburn, 2019). Social media offers these younger generations additional space and opportunities to express themselves, which not only includes exchanging their political beliefs but also communicating their attitudes and emotions towards various topics.

Since social media is the link between so many people from all over the world it enhances the process of forming connections and exchanging information with each other exponentially and people are more connected now than they have ever been throughout history (Brady, 2017). This phenomenon is often referred to as “social contagion” based on the analogy that it mimics in the spread of a disease (Ugander et al., 2012). Together with the vast growth of social media in the past decade the social contagion phenomenon has changed the way people communicate with each other (Christensen, 2018). As a result, many forms of interaction and expression can be found on social media platforms and many conversations that would have happened in person some years ago are now happening via a digital channel.

Previous research indicates that people feel the need to share their strongly experienced emotions, positive and negative ones alike. The two main motivations for that are to satisfy socioemotional needs, such as receiving support or validation from others, and to satisfy cognitive needs, like receiving advice for sense-making purposes (Kross et al., 2021). Social media provides people with the opportunity to pursue and act on these motivations which can then end in positive or negative results. Nonetheless, this leaves the fact that social media can impact peoples’ lives in multiple ways: from spreading information and messages to connecting with other people, boosting political awareness and impacting emotions.

### **TikTok and Instagram Reels**

Although various social media platforms have features that make them stand out in their own way, this research focusses on TikTok and Instagram Reels. These two platforms serve as

representation and example of social media and its effect on the communication of emotions among young people, due to their popularity and the richness of content on these social media. TikTok and Instagram (Reels) are popular social media platforms across the world with the characteristic concept of short interactive videos that platform users can consume. In 2020, Instagram adopted a similar concept and launched Instagram reels (Menon, 2020). These two platforms are therefore impactful communication channels among the younger generations, used not only for entertainment purposes but also to share dissatisfaction with certain situations and views on specific topics that continue to be societal issues. Thus, these platforms offer a contemporary way of breaking down social expectations and stereotypes.

## **Research Objectives**

To summarize, there are various stereotypes about men and women and how they differ in their emotionality. However, multiple individual factors, such as emotional awareness and regulation, as well as socialization according to social norms are mainly responsible for varying emotional expressivity between men and women. Therefore, to begin the practical research the emotional development, including emotional awareness and regulation strategies, of the research participants should be investigated first. As a second step, this research needs to establish the attitude of the participants towards social stereotypes. The reason for that is that younger generations generally seem have different attitudes towards traditional social values, and how these social stereotypes influenced the participants' emotional development.

An additional factor and important role in this movement of change plays social media. Social media is integrated into many peoples' lives and changes the way people communicate and how messages are being spread. Also, emotions are expressed and affected through social

media channels, like TikTok, which is in recent days rising in popularity among younger people. It offers a digital space for various types of user-generated content, including political discussions or even socioemotional messages. Hence, as a third step, it is important to find out more about the study participants' use and perception of social media, specifically TikTok. Therefore, this research aims to look into the effect socioemotional content has on younger people, to what degree do younger people even come across this kind of content and if they feel like platforms such as TikTok contribute to connect and change their generation and society in general.

The difference in attitude and behavior between the younger generations and their foregoing generations, as well as the skills and usage gap concerning technology and social media, lead this research to focus on the younger Generations Y (Millennials) and Z (Gen Z). This leads to a target group of people between the ages of 18 and 35 years. Research on social media and how the use of it affects this specific target group's communication patterns and the way they express their emotions is lacking. Furthermore, since TikTok and Instagram Reels are rather new social media, there is little that can be found on the effects this specific social media platform has. This presents therefore a major research gap.

Thus, this research aims at identifying how men and women nowadays, despite social stereotypes, communicate and express their emotions. Based on the aforementioned literature, two hypotheses were being formulated that this research seeks to test and explore. Firstly, men and women were socialized in their childhood and adolescence to embody gender-based stereotypes, which still affects them in their emotionality development and emotion expression. Secondly, it is being hypothesized that social media offers the opportunity for today's youth to change traditional values and beliefs, such as gender-based stereotypes and therefore also affects them in their emotionality and manner of expressing emotions.

## **Methods**

### **Design**

The aim of this research is to investigate and gain more insight into how men and women nowadays communicate and express their emotions despite social stereotypes. For that a qualitative research method was used to study and have the opportunity to adapt to each participant to get the most out of their answers. To be able to adjust the data collection to each individual and to probe for answers in an adaptable and flexible way a series of interviews was conducted. In-depth interviews give non-numerical data and contribute to understanding human experience, mindsets, attitudes in a way that would not be quite as possible with quantitative research (Silverman, 2015). The way individuals see, think, act, and experience life is distinct to them and will remain in their own membrane of knowledge (Mears, 2012). In-depth interviews provide a way to understand an individual's personal perception and frame of reference that standardized research instruments could not (Mears, 2012). The study design and procedure were approved by the ethics committee of the Faculty of Behavioural Managements and Social Sciences of the University of Twente (approval 230776).

### **Interviews**

The interviews were semi-structured, meaning that an interview guide with pre-determined questions was used (Appendix C). These questions were derived from existing literature and every participant was asked these questions. The researcher also actively engaged in this interview, provoking explanations, probing and signaling agreement to reassure the

participants or to nudge them into further explanations of their answers (Silverman, 2015). Depending on their answers, other follow-up questions were asked intuitively by the researcher to probe for more detailed information and hence to enrich the collected data by gaining a better understanding of the study participant. Most questions were “what” and “how” questions related to lived experience of an individual or to their perception of certain matters.

Then, two respondents were selected for test-interviews, which lasted on average 45 minutes. The aim was to figure out, if the interview questions were sufficient, understandable and brought forth informative answers or if they were lacking. As a results of the test-interviews adjustments in the interview questions were made. As the interviews were then fully prepared and tested respondents were selected for the actual interviews.

The interviews were structured in four question blocks, each block representing its own topic so that a cohesive structure was provided (Appendix C). This structure also provided the flexibility to ask further questions in between the predetermined questions and then to return to the original structure (Boeije, 2010). The first block was about demographics and inquired about the participants’ age, gender, and educational status. The second block contained questions that were aimed at emotionality factors, such as emotional awareness, how the participants regulate and manage their emotions and to what extent they act upon them.

The third block was made up of questions about stereotypes. Here, the knowledge about and attitude towards gender-based stereotypes of the participants was investigated. What stereotypes they were familiar with, to what extent they believed in these stereotypes and how they felt towards these stereotypes are some of the objectives that were inquired with this block of questions. Most importantly, the participants’ experiences with stereotypes and social

expectations during their childhood and adolescence was inquired and how it affected their emotional development. The fourth and final block contained questions about social media and TikTok, the participants' use of it and its influence and effects on the participants, their emotions, and the way they communicate these emotions.

Additionally, the participants were shown a TikTok video, representing the #female rage TikToks mentioned in the introduction. Female participants were shown a #femaleraage TikTok (Appendix A), that showed multiple scenes from movies and TV shows, depicting women having emotional outbursts, expressing unfiltered emotions like anger and frustration. Similarly, male participants were shown a #maleraage TikTok (Appendix B), which also consisted of movie and TV show scenes that show men expressing their rage. The reactions to these TikToks were carefully observed and inferred upon with additional interview questions.

## **Procedure**

After suitable participants were found, they were asked if they would like to participate. If they did, then they received a brief description of the research and the interview was given, as well as the opportunity for the participants to ask questions. They did not receive the full extent of information about this study, its details and its purpose so that bias could be avoided. The answers of the participants were supposed to be genuine and not influenced by the researcher or the research itself. Additionally, the participants received an informed consent form before the interview. The form was an online document where the participants could read the given information on this research and give their consent.

After they read the form and given their consent to participate in the interviews a date and location for the interview was scheduled, so that there would be adequate time and both the researcher and the participant could meet and conduct the interview in a comfortable and



undisturbed environment (Boeije, 2010). Since the topic of this study is rather personal the interviews were conducted offline and in-person if possible. In addition to the information the participants received before, they were also instructed prior to the interview (approximately 2-4 days) to try to reflect on their communicative behavior when it comes to emotions and expressing emotions.

At the beginning of each interview the participants were informed about the definition of certain terms, such as emotional regulation and emotional awareness, that were being discussed in the interviews, to make sure that every participant had the same understanding of these terms and knew what concepts the questions were referring to. After the demographics block of questions was done the blocks of questions regarding emotionality factors, social stereotypes and social media were discussed in this same order. Each block was briefly introduced to the participants. Then, the interviews took place over a course of approximately two weeks.

## **Participants**

To select adequate participants for this research purposive sampling was used. Purposive sampling is a strategy used to select participants that are most likely to contribute useful and information rich answers in the interviews that lead to valid and reliable data (Campbell et al., 2020). To participate in this study people needed to fulfil certain requirements to qualify to be interviewed: they should be familiar with and aware of their emotions, thoughts, and actions to give more detailed and accurate answers to the interview questions. They also needed to be using social media, specifically TikTok or Instagram Reels, on a regular or semi-regular basis. All study participants were between the ages of 18 and 35 years old, with the youngest participant being 20 years old and the oldest participant being 32 years old. From the in total

16 participants 11 were younger than 27 years and therefore part of Generation Z, while the remaining 5 participants were 27 years old or older

As this study also includes the concept of gender and gender-based stereotypes there were both male and female participants included to an equal amount. Overall, there were 8 women and 8 men who participated in the interviews. 13 participants indicated a high school diploma as the highest education they have obtained so far, 3 participants had a bachelor's degree. All 16 participants are using social media on a daily basis and have a high consumption of social media content while 14 of them expressed that they are creating social media content themselves, mostly in form of posting stories and creating posts on social media platforms such as Instagram.

### **Data Analysis and Strategy**

Firstly, a codebook was created (Appendix D) that was used in the analysis process later on. A codebook contains sets of categories and constructs (codes), as well as their definitions and descriptions (Heydarian, 2016). Additionally, the codebook contains numbers indicating how often each code was used and was structured in a way that is in line with the interview guide, organized in 4 blocks (demographics, emotionality factors, social stereotypes, social media). Figure 1 presents the beginning of the codebook, the demographic section, as an example.

### **Figure 1**

*Except of the codebook: demographics section*

Question block	Concept	Variable	Meaning	Citatio
1) Demographics	age	Millenial	The generation a participant belongs to.	5
		Gen Z		11
	gender (identity)	male	The sex a person identifies with.	8
		female		8
		non-binary		0
		other		0
	educational background	high school	The highest educational certificate the	13
		Bachelor's degree	participant has received thus far.	3
		Master's degree		0

All interviews were recorded with a phone audio application. At this point the data management began (Boeije, 2010). The recordings were saved and stored in separate data files in the same archive. Then, the interview recordings were transcribed and all information from the transcripts that could identify the participants were taken out to ensure their anonymity (Boeije, 2010). Afterwards, the transcripts needed to be coded.

The coding process contained multiple steps, using the predefined codes in the codebook, which was created using codes derived from pre-existing literature. However, since the topic of this research is rather complex and people have different opinions and viewpoints of this topic, which the interviews had the purpose of investigating, new codes had to be added in the coding process since some participants gave answers that could not be anticipated beforehand. Overall, thematic analysis was used for this part of the data analysis. This coding method entails organizing the data in the transcripts into meaningful groups (themes) using the codebook (Boeije, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis also combines deductive and inductive approaches, as some themes were more data-driven and depended exclusively on the given data and some themes were theory-driven when the data was approached with certain questions and theories in mind (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Assigning codes and organizing data can be highly subjective to the researcher, which is why, to create more reliability, a second coder received approximately 10% of the thus far

accumulated data and coded these using the same codebook as the researcher. The results of the second coder were then compared with the coding results of the researcher. The Cohen's Kappa was calculated, which accumulated to 0.62, meaning there was 86% overlap (Appendix E). This result represents sufficient intercoder reliability (O'Connor & Joffe, 2020). The remaining transcripts were then coded by the researcher using the computer program atlas.ti. After the data analysis was complete and all results were saved, the interview recordings were destroyed.

## Results

### Emotional Awareness

The majority of participant ( $n = 13$ ) believed themselves to be (highly) emotionally aware. In their reasoning they indicate that they are good at identifying their emotions and have a good or slightly belated understanding of their emotionality ( $n=10$ ). Some participants stated that they only encounter rare struggles: "Sometimes but in rare cases, I would say. Most of the time, I'm quite sure how my emotions work." (Participant 6, personal communication, May 28, 2023). Furthermore, most of the participants ( $n=10$ ) claim to have sufficient control over their emotions "I can like think rationally about 'okay, well, I'm feeling this, but like, don't get too overwhelmed with it!'" (Participant 8, personal communication, May 28, 2023) and are capable of successfully influencing their emotions ( $n=9$ ). There was also a subgroup of people who deemed themselves somewhat emotionally aware ( $n=3$ ). Overall, this subgroup, as well as some other participants, seemed to struggle with understanding their emotionality ( $n=8$ ) and lacking control over their emotions, especially negative ones ( $n = 11$ ) "There are times when it's too much. I don't know how to handle it, my own emotions." (Participant 12, personal communication, May 30, 2023).

## **Emotional Regulation**

The category “emotional regulation strategies” was not derived from one specific interview question but from the overall answers participants gave throughout the interview. A majority of participants described that reflecting on their emotions ( $n=14$ ), feeling the emotions ( $n=9$ ) and finding the cause of their emotions ( $n=8$ ) is an important step in their regulation process: “Then I tried to understand why it happened, what caused it, why am I behaving that way? If it's fair, if it's in sync with how I want myself to be.” (Participant, 16, personal communication, May 31, 2023). Additionally, many participants ( $n=13$ ) rationalize their emotions, in order to not get overwhelmed by them. Suppression was also often named, 11 times to be exact, as an emotion regulation strategy: “Yeah, I tried to run away from them, basically. So I don't think about them, because I don't want to feel them.” (Participant 14, personal communication, May 31, 2023). Many participants ( $n=11$ ) also described how they sometimes distract themselves from certain emotions by strategically counteracting them, for example through sport, music, or actions of self-care.

## **Emotion Expression**

There was a big emphasis on communicating emotions ( $n=18$ ). “I have some people where I can like, really go deep with and that's my kind of safe place to go.” (Participant 9, personal communication, May 29, 2023), was one of the sentences that were given this code. Although facial expressions and body language were mentioned, most participants ( $n=10$ ) preferred to communicate their emotions, needs and boundaries verbally: “Okay, well, that makes me sad' or 'well, thank you. that makes me happy'.” (Participant 8, personal

communication, May 29, 2023). Some participants ( $n=5$ ) also described how they use emotion expression as a tool to build and strengthen relationships with other people.

However, most participants ( $n=12$ ) pointed out that the degree to which they expressed their emotions depends on the people they are surrounded by and, in addition to that, a small group of participants ( $n=4$ ) consider the possible reaction of other people before expressing their emotions. If the evaluation of the surrounding people and their anticipated reaction is rather negative, most participants ( $n=10$ ) prefer to internalize their emotions and deal instead of expressing them. It seemed to be important to maintain a certain appearance to the outside by not showing and communicating negative emotions: “I don't think that I will always make people aware like ‘Yeah, I’m having a negative day today’ or something. So that is something I would not do.” (Participant 2, personal communication, May 20, 2023). Participant 11 clearly indicated: “But if I'm really happy, I tend to externalize. If I'm, if I feel negative emotions, I internalize.” (personal communication, May 30, 2023).

### **Perception of Stereotypes Nowadays**

Overall, participants expressed a rather negative attitude towards stereotypes. In their reasoning, participants believe that people should be judged individually ( $n=6$ ), think of stereotypes as inappropriate ( $n=5$ ), and therefore try to avoid using stereotypes themselves ( $n=6$ ). “Sometimes I catch myself having stereotypes as well. And then I get really upset about it because it's just not fair to generalize a certain group of people.” (Participant 4, personal communication, May 21, 2023). Similarly, participants barely expressed positive opinions towards gender-based stereotypes. They were all familiar with the most common stereotypes, that “men can't show emotions. Men need to be like, reserved, more calm.”

(Participant 6, personal communication, May 28, 2023) and that women “are too emotional. And that, that makes them weak, and that they cannot make sound decisions based on their emotional states.” (Participant 4, personal communication, May 21, 2023).

Half of the participants called gender-based stereotypes outdated, pointing out that nowadays stereotypes are starting to change and being more disregarded. When talking about this, one participant even refers to the role of technology and social media in this context, unknowingly addressing the core of this research: “I think it's related to us switching from only personal physical exchange of emotions to also doing it so much digitally, that suddenly the guys are able to express way more than they've ever been before.” (Participant 15, personal communication, May 31, 2023). Furthermore, participants ( $n=7$ ) also commented that some stereotypes about men and women and their emotions might be partially true and that many people, including themselves, embody parts of these stereotypes. However, they believe that this is only the case because people grow up being socialized and being taught to adapt to social expectations:

[...] you really learn sort of what your role in society is, from a really, really young age based on your gender. So, I think most of it, honestly, is coming from like, social standards, I guess. [...] maybe you cannot have everything neutral growing up, but I think females and males would develop very differently if they would grow up in an environment that is way less gender based. (Participant 4, personal communication, May 21, 2023).

Additionally, some participants ( $n=5$ ) added that there should be no differences between men and women and what they are by social standards allowed to express and what they should not express.

## Social Expectations in Childhood and Adolescence

Only two participants, both male, claimed that they did not experience social expectations in their childhood or adolescence. In contrast, a majority of participants ( $n=11$ ) were corrected in their language, communication and behavior while growing up to adapt to social norms and expectations: “Because that wasn't lady like, like, you have to be caring, you have to be soft, and you have to be understanding, and everything.” (Participant 8, personal communication, May 29, 2023). Such experiences were primarily made by female participants.

I feel like when you're young, you grew up with a certain like, mindset that is put on to you. Like you learn to be nurturing as a child, as a girl. Because already, if you look at like girls' toys, their dolls for like little girls to take care of, and you, you really learn sort of what your role in society is, from a really, really young age based on your gender. So, I think most of it is coming from social standards. (Participant 4, personal communication, May 21, 2023)

Both male and female participants ( $n=7$ ) described that they were prepared for a certain role in life when they were growing up. Females were prepared for the role of a wife and males were prepared to become “the man of the household” (Participant 5, personal communication, May 26, 2023). Lastly, many participants ( $n=6$ ), half of them male, the other half female, described how they were discouraged in their childhood and adolescence from expressing their emotions openly. When asked if growing up with stereotypes had an impact on the participants, a majority of them ( $n=11$ ) answered that it did affect them. 7 of the



participants were actively rebelling against the stereotypes by doing the opposite of what was expected of them. However, participants ( $n=6$ ) expressed that nowadays they struggle to find their balance in what they want to embody and what is part of their identity.

I tried to actively go against them, I think that's how it affected me a lot. Like I tried to find a balance in actually accepting being a female and accepting our differences. But still like being who I am and not trying to put myself in this serotype that men have of me [...]. (Participant 12, personal communication, May 30, 2023)

### **Social Media and Socioemotional Content**

The two most used and mentioned social media platforms in the context of content consumption were indeed Instagram and Instagram Reels ( $n=16$ ) and TikTok ( $n=10$ ). A lot of different content is being consumed by the participants on these platforms and almost all the participants ( $n=15$ ) claimed that they also consume that is emotional or directly addresses or displays emotions. After being shown the #femaleraige (appendix A) or the #maleraige TikTok (appendix B), whichever one correlated with the participants' gender, some participants ( $n=6$ ) indicated that they encountered this kind of content before, while others ( $n=9$ ) did not.

### **Effects of Socioemotional Content**

When describing the effects that the TikTok video had on them, half of the participants explained that they could relate to the people who express their anger in these videos and that they see themselves reflected in the type of content since they also feel this anger inside of them or were once in a similar position. Some participants ( $n=6$ ), primarily women, felt

inspired and empowered and a big group of the participants ( $n=9$ ) expressed that watching the TikTok gave them satisfaction.

I really barely feel any rage but I do want to feel it sometimes. And it's really frustrating for me as a person so I guess that's why I find it very satisfying because I can sort of live through other women who have the confidence to like really speak out and scream and speak up about their feelings that way. (Participant 4, personal communication, May 21, 2023)

Only a small subgroup of participants ( $n=3$ ) said that they do not feel affected or merely commented the acting ( $n=4$ ). When talking about the influence of social media in general, though, a majority of participants ( $n=10$ ) expressed that they feel influenced in their moods and attitudes. Furthermore, in the context of emotionality most participants ( $n=11$ ) stated that through social media they “understood emotions more and better” (Participant 12, personal communication, May 30, 2023). Furthermore, social media helped participants ( $n=4$ ) to express their emotions more freely.

I think in a way, it's teaching me to express more of my emotions. As a woman, I feel like since I'm on like feminist TikTok, and teaches me to speak up more and sort of accept that I deserved my place in society, which is a good thing. (Participant 4, personal communication, May 21, 2023)

Half of the participants also use the space social media provides to express their emotions and share them with other people online. For example: “I had a really good gig and I'm feeling great now or I'm still on, still reminiscing about last weekend” (Participant 9, personal communication, May 29, 2023). However, mostly participants are only comfortable with expressing only positive emotions or expressing them indirectly, with a picture, a song or a reposted meme.

### **Social Media Influences on Younger Generations**

Throughout the interviews it was expressed by all participants that they believe social media to be quite influential on younger people. It helps to start conversations about critical topics and most participants ( $n=9$ ) are convinced that social media helps younger people to inspire and enact positive change, regarding social expectations towards men and women.

But I think in some ways it really helps them to break what older generations built because you see everything, you know everything is possible that there's not one way to live. Like you can have different, multiple different worlds, and I think they are very aware of that. (Participant 13, May 31, 2023)

However, negative concerns were also expressed. A subgroup of participants ( $n=5$ ) believe younger generation, specifically Gen Z, to be less aware and reflective with their emotions and emotion expression than older generations who did not grow up with social media: “And I think I can imagine that different generations can have a very big, very big gap in the

understanding of what words are okay to use, and how to say things.” (Participant 16, personal communication, May 31, 2023). Lastly, the political attitudes and beliefs of the new generation were also mentioned by the participants. It was mentioned that social media might have the biggest impact of forming those, the language people use, referring to political correctness, as well as forming attitudes towards happenings all over the world.

## **Discussion**

This study aimed to identify how men and women nowadays, despite social stereotypes, communicate and express their emotions by means of interviews. The results gained from the interviews will be discussed and interpreted in the following section, according to the order of existing research that was introduced in the theoretical framework. Based on existing literature, two hypotheses were made. Firstly, it was hypothesized that, growing up, men and women were socialized to embody gender-based stereotypes, affecting them in their emotionality development and emotion expression. Secondly, the hypothesis that social media offers the opportunity for today’s youth to change traditional values and beliefs, such as gender-based stereotypes and therefore also affects them in their emotionality and emotion expression, will be discussed in terms of results. Both hypotheses can be supported by the findings of the interviews.

### **Discussion of Results**

#### **Emotion Regulation and Expression among Young People**

Almost all participants see themselves as (highly) emotionally aware. This can be seen as a sign of high emotional intelligence (Agnoli et al., 2019). Overall, most participants seem to be good at identifying their own emotions and have a good understanding of their emotionality in terms of causes and context of their emotions. Additionally, they possess a sufficient level of control over their emotions and are capable of successfully influencing them. When it comes to understanding and regulating their emotions properly, though, especially in challenging situations, participants experience struggles. In their reasoning, a certain amount of time is needed to assess their mental state and determine appropriate regulation strategies, emotional and verbal responses.

Most interview participants seem to have adapted a very strategic emotional regulation strategy: they internally reflect on their emotions, trying to find out what caused them, feeling the emotion and letting it resonate. However, outside factors, such as the participants' surroundings, day-to-day schedules and duties are usually being prioritized, hindering the participants from feeling and reflecting on their emotions properly. Finally, participants tend to rationalize their emotions by cognitively reframing an emotional situation. This approach, also called emotional reappraisal, is generally one of the two most commonly used emotional regulation strategies (Eastabrook et al., 2014), together with emotional suppression (Campbell-Sills et al., 2006), where emotions are being pushed away to avoid feeling them.

This is where the participants could be split in two factions: while the first faction tries to regulate their emotions carefully in multiple healthy steps the other, smaller, faction directly uses suppression as regulation strategy. These specific findings of this research are therefore in line with previous research results from Campbell-Sills et al. (2006) and Eastabrook et al. (2014). Another strategy described by the participants was to strategically counteract

emotions. For example, if they were in a bad mood, they would listen to uplifting music, do sports or self-care.

Emotional expression is influenced by multiple outside factors. Overall, participants expressed that they communicate their emotions for multiple reasons, either to get external validation for their emotions and receive help to manage their emotions, to draw boundaries and improve situations for themselves, as suggested in previous research by Frijda (1986) or to strengthen relationships with other people. However, emotion expression seems to depend strongly on an individual's current environment and the people present. Participants expressed that they only express themselves to very specific people. Otherwise, they would strongly consider which emotions they express to other people, what affect that could have on their reputation and what reaction they might get from the other people. If the right conditions were not given, most participants preferred to internalize their emotions.

### **Stereotypes and Social Expectations Nowadays**

The general attitude towards stereotypes was rather negative among the interviewed participants. Stereotyping people was mainly seen as inappropriate since participants held the opinion that people should be judged individually. The two stereotypes that women are more emotional than men and are being more consumed by them and that men are more rational are still very widespread (Alexander & Wood, 2000; Brody & Hall, 2008), as all participants named them when they were asked what gender-based stereotypes they are familiar with. However, a majority of participants called these stereotypes outdated or pointed out the change of gender roles in modern society, as described by Porterfield & Kleiner (2005), and the attitude change towards stereotypes in these modern days, that stereotypes are being increasingly disregarded and rebelled against.

Men and women still partially embody stereotypical behavior and show differences in emotionality and emotion expression. Many participants are convinced that socialization processes in childhood and adolescence are responsible for that, as well as social expectations in general. These notions align with various previous studies (Fiorentini, 2013; Grossman & Wood, 1993). The fact that many participants recognized and mentioned that in the interviews emphasizes the abstract and modern thinking towards gender-based stereotypes, as well as stereotypes in general, of these younger generations, as stated in the research findings of Nayak and Bonner-Thompson (2022).

### **The Impact of Stereotypes on Emotionality Development**

Experiencing social pressures while growing up and being socialized to adapt to gender-based stereotypes still seems to be common, though not everyone experiences them to the same degree. Brody and Hall (2008) and Fulton (2017) found that due to social stereotypes males and females are being raised fundamentally different, to which the findings of this research can also attest. Male participants were often discouraged from expressing vulnerable emotions, as Fiorentini (2013) also found in her research, which could be connected to many of the participants' preferences to internalize emotions instead of expressing them. Females, on the other hand, were criticized in their way of communicating, the language they used, their appearance and their behavior. Many were raised to embody characteristics of a nurturer and caretaker (Alexander & Wood, 2000; Ellemers, 2018; Fulton, 2017). However, this research found that many females started to rebel against stereotypes by acting in opposition to them. Participants reported that the constant urge to oppose female stereotypes in their childhood and adolescence lead them, later in life, to struggle with fitting in a specific category of femininity.

## **Social Media Effects on the Communication of Emotions**

Even though almost all participants claim to consume emotion related content regularly, a slight majority of the participants did not encounter either #femalerafe or #malerafe videos before. Still, the videos had an effect on almost all participants. Since rage is a stereotypical male emotion (Brody & Hall, 2008) and some females were reportedly discouraged from acting and talking in ways that are not “lady-like” (Participant 8, personal communication, May 29, 2023) watching the women in the #femalerafe TikTok express their anger freely inspired a feeling of satisfaction and empowerment in many female participants. Both male and female participants expressed anger the same way before or would like to express their anger more openly and could relate to the TikToks. A reaction that only males expressed after being shown the #malerafe TikTok was to comment on the acting of the people portrayed in the video instead of describing their own current emotional state. The hesitation of emotion expression could again be related to acting according to social expectations, since it is stereotypical for men.

Most participants recognized short- and long-term effects of social media on themselves but also on younger people in general. Mood, attitude and behavior changes as well as educational influences and shifts in emotion expression were named as effects. Social media platforms, specifically TikTok and Instagram, are frequently being used as a channel for emotion expression, as participants report. It seems to become more common to communicate emotional states in online spaces, though participants are only comfortable to express positive emotions. Negative emotions are expressed indirectly, through music and memes.

TikTok and Instagram also present online spaces where many social issues are being discussed and rebelled against. Young people, especially members of Gen Z, grow up



witnessing these discussions and displays of rebellion and change, which therefore impacts these younger people too, since they consume this content in their critical stages of development (Eastabrook et al., 2014). However, since young people grow up, watching other people express themselves freely, they might copy this behavior without reflecting on it thoroughly. So, overall, concerns for the level of emotional awareness were expressed among many participants.

### **Research Limitations**

The interviews were semi-structured and used open-ended questions to which the researcher added questions intuitively makes the result difficult to replicate since they are very subjective and can vary greatly depending on the participants that are chosen for the interviews. Emotions, emotional regulation and expression are quite complex concepts and the interview questions required a high degree of self-reflection and awareness and included multiple variables which might have made it difficult to answer these questions accurately. Also, self-assessments are quite subjective in general, as well as the coding process of the interview answers and their interpretation. A quantitative research method would have provided more reliable and valid results, however it would have also limited the research in depth and information richness.

Purposive sampling was used as a sampling method. All participants fulfill the requirements for this research (aged between 18 and 35 years, decent level of emotional awareness and uses social media). Both generations, Millennials and Gen Z were represented in this study, however not in an equal amount. To ensure equal circumstances, under which male and female participants were interviewed, both were shown a #rage TikTok during the interviews. However, if a similar study was to be conducted in the future it would be

interesting to see how results might differ if the male participants were shown a video that breaks away from the male stereotype. So, since the stereotypical man is prone to the emotion of anger, instead of male rage they could be confronted with a video or TikTok that displays not male rage but for example a man crying or showing other emotions that display vulnerability instead of aggression.

## **Conclusion**

It could be confirmed that most men and women experience social expectations and pressures in their childhood and adolescence and are socialized to act according to gender-based stereotypes. With exceptions, most male and female participants reported that these socialization attempts affected them in various ways, including emotionality and emotion expression. This research also found that through social media, specifically Instagram Reels and TikTok, attitudes in younger people that contradict traditional gender-based stereotypes can be strengthened. Social media seems to enhance the process of breaking up stereotypes and social expectations and offers new space for emotion expression. People have the chance to educate themselves further about their emotionality and are encouraged to express themselves more freely.

Newer generations have already tackled a great number of stereotypes by pointing them out, as well as the issues they cause, by questioning their validity and starting to normalize to look beyond those stereotypes. The stereotypes of gender and emotions, which are limiting people in their freedom of expressing their emotions, is to some extent a societal issue. Therefore, this can be a very important moment. The #femalerafe TikToks already gained attention and triggered a certain curiosity. Taken further, this can contribute to questioning the

status quo in society and possibly leading to more equality and balance between the genders, breaking up gender roles when it comes to emotional regulation and expression.

The #femalerafe TikToks have had their viral moment and inspired ongoing conversations. How these conversations develop in the future and what other content will be contribute to this topic leaves room for further research, especially in regard to emotion expression of Millennials, Gen Z and the youngest of generations, Generation Alpha. This generation will grow up with the kind of social media platforms and content, that already fueled so many changes, which implies further shifts in attitudes, behavior and emotionality in these young people.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Female Rage TikTok shown to the participants



Female Rage.mp4

### Appendix B

#### Male Rage TikTok shown to participants





Male Rage.mp4

## Appendix C

### Interview Guide

#### Interview Questions

Start out by explaining terms (stereotypes, emotional awareness, etc.)

**Emotion:** Emotions are a subjective experience, a mental state and there is a broad range of emotions. Emotions can be responsible for attitudes, attitude changes or setting up goals for example.

**Emotional expressivity:** describes the extent to which individuals outwardly show their emotions, including changes in behavior, such as facial expressions, that emotions are usually accompanied by

**Emotional awareness:** Emotional awareness is defined as an individual's cognitive skill to identify and describe their own and other individuals' emotional experiences.

**Emotional regulation:** "the processes by which individuals influence which emotions they have, when they have them, and how they experience and express these emotions".

**Stereotype:** a simplified and generalized image people have about an aspect of reality.

#### Demographics

- 1) How old are you?
- 2) What gender do you identify as?
- 3) What is the highest education you have obtained so far (e.g. high school diploma, Bachelor's degree, Master's degree)

#### Emotionality factors:

- 1) Would you think of yourself as a person who is emotionally aware?
- 2) Do you sometimes have difficulties to understand the causes, contexts and consequences of your emotions?
- 3) How would you describe your emotional states in regards to their occurrence, persistence and dissipation?
- 4) How good do you think you are in controlling your own emotions?
- 5) Do you try to influence your emotions whenever you have them? How? When? To what extent do you succeed?
- 6) Are you usually rather more or rather less expressive with your emotions? How do you express your emotions?
- 7) Do you experience troubles in determining appropriate emotional responses to daily situational challenges?
- 8) Do you feel like you tend to internalize your emotions rather than expressing them?

#### Stereotypes:

- 1) What is your attitude towards stereotypes?
- 2) What stereotypes do you think there are about men and their emotions and about women and their emotions?

*Confront people with existing stereotypes and document their reaction:*

- 3) Do you feel like these stereotypes hold truth? To what extent?
- 4) Do you feel like these stereotypes describe you well? Do you feel that they apply to you?
- 5) Do you remember any gender specific limitations or social expectations that you experienced in your childhood or adolescence?
- 6) Do you feel that these stereotypes and expectations impacted you in any way (in gender identity, behavior, beliefs, emotional expression)?

#### Social Media and TikTok:

- 1) Do you use social media on a daily basis?
- 2) Do you produce social media content yourself?
- 3) Do you consume a lot of social media content created by other people?
- 4) When using social media, specifically TikTok, what type of content do you mostly consume?
- 5) Do you come across content that discusses or displays emotions in any type of way?  
 → *In case the participants do not know what this question is referring to they will be shown a #femaleraage TikTok or a similar one displaying males expressing their emotions.*
- 6) Does this type of content (emotional displays) affect you in any way? What do you think and feel when you see this?
- 7) Do you feel satisfaction from watching other people express their emotions (reference to #femaleraage TikToks)?
- 8) Did you or do you ever use social media to express your own emotions?
- 9) Do you feel influenced by social media?  
 → mood changes, emotions that are being triggered (voluntarily or involuntarily)  
 → attitude (becoming aware of certain topics and aspects, getting new perspectives, being persuaded by peers' opinions)  
 → behavior (do you act on these attitude changes or enhancements?)
- 10) do you feel like social media has an impact on younger people and contributes to the mindset of these generations (Millennials and Gen Z)?
- 11) Do you feel like it changes the way you think about emotionality? For example, what emotions are allowed to express or how you should express your emotions?

## Appendix D

### Codebook with all codes used

Question block	Concept	Variable	Meaning	Citations
1) Demographics	age	Millenial	The generation a participant belongs to.	5
		Gen Z		11
	gender (identity)	male	The sex a person identifies with.	8
		female		8
		non-binary		0
	educational background	other		0
high school		The highest educational certificate the participant has received thus far.	13	
Bachelor's degree			3	
	Master's degree		0	
2) Emotionality	emotional awareness	somewhat emotionally aware	The degree of emotional awareness the participants recognize in themselves.	2
	Factors	emotionally aware		13
unaware			0	
struggles with empathy			1	
understanding emtional appraisals		difficulties in the past / improving	How well the participants understand the causes, contexts and consequences of their emotions.	1
		good at identifying emotions		5
		rare struggles		7
		good understanding		6
		belated understanding		4
time process of emotional states		struggles in understanding emotionality		8
		situational differences		3
		sudden occurance	How the participants' emotions emerge, last and dissipate.	1
		gradual occurance		0
		long persistance		5
emotional regulation strategies		short persistance		3
		slow dissipation		0
	abrupt dissipation		0	
	emotions building up and lingering		4	
	depending on the emotion		11	
	depends on the cause of the emotion		2	
	goes in periods		3	
	strategically counteracting emotions	How participants deal with their emotions.	11	
	finding cause of emotion		8	

		music		8
		journaling		2
		communicating the emotions		18
		adapting emotions to schedule		3
		internal reflections		14
		rationalizing		13
		supressing emotions		11
		feeling the emotions		9
	emotional control	sufficient control	The amount of control the participants have over their emotions	10
		lacking control		3
		denpending on context		4
		depending on the emotion		11
		struggling to regulate negative emotions		8
	actively influencing emtions	not trying to have influence	If participants try to influence their emotions when they emerge, how they try to influence them and how successfully they do it.	3
		successfully influencing emotions		9
		trying without success		1
		gradually improving in regulating emotions		3
		partial success		4
		only influencing negative emotions		5
		seeing influencing emotions as negative		2
	emotional expressivity	voluntarily expressive	How expressive participants are with their emotions or whether participants prefer to internalize their emotions.	5
		unintentionally expressive		4
		high emotional expressivity		2
		frequent expressions		4
		rather less expressive		5
		dependent on the people		12
		emotion expression as tool for relationships		5
		role of other peoples' reaction		4
		trying to be more expressive		5
		not showing negative emotions to the outside		6
		maintaining a certain appearance		2
		situational differences		3
		internalizing emotions		10

		expresses emotions rather than internalizing them		2
		timing in communication		1
		trying to be less expressive		1
	form of emotion expression	verbal expression	The way in which participants express and	10
		outburst	communicate their emotions.	2
		facial expression		5
		body language		5
		behavior (changes)		1
	determination of emotional re-	troubles in exceptionally challenging situat	The extent to which partipants may experience	5
	sponses	experiences trouble in determining emotio	troubles in determining appropriate emotional	2
		troubles with daily challenges	resppones in daily challenges.	1
		no troubles		2
3) stereotypes	attitude towards stereotypes	hold truth	The participants' attitude or mindset	1
		natural	regarding stereotypes.	3
		potentially harmful		3
		can be valid at times		2
		inappropriate		5
		using them but trying to avoid it		6
		funny		1
		people should be judged individually		6
		mixed attitudes		2
		men have it harder expressing their emotions		3
		feeling responsible to change them		2
	known stereotypes	stereotypes men	Stereotypes that the participants are familiar	16
		stereotypes women	with, regarding gender and emotion.	17
		emotion stereotype		1
	belief in stereotypes	truthful	To what degree the participants think the	1
		inaccurate	stereotypes hold truth, if any at all.	8
		partially true / applicable		7
		there should be no difference between men and women		5
		they (might) only exist because of society		7
		outdated		8
		men and women are biologically prone to be different		3

	described by stereotypes	identifying with stereotypes of own gender	If the participants feel well described by the	6
		stereotypes do not apply to self	stereotypes.	4
		both male and female stereotypes are applicable		6
		mentions people embodying stereotypes of opposite gender		5
		described by stereotypes to a limited extend		3
	stereotypes in childhood and	did not experience social expectations in ch	If the participants experienced stereotypes or	2
	adolescence	duties	gender-based limitations in their childhood or	3
		being prepared for a gender-specific role in	adolescence and, if yes, in what ways they	7
		language, communication, behavior	experienced this.	11
		appearance		6
		limited emotion expression in childhood / adolescence		7
		social expectations		8
		personal story		7
	impact of social expectations	had an impact	In what ways these stereotypes in childhood /	11
		no impact	adolescence affect the participants long-term.	5
		actively going against stereotypes		7
		trying to find balance nowadays		6
		mentions cultural differences		6
4) Social Media	social media use	daily social media use	If the participants use social media daily or not.	16
and TikTok		sometimes		0
		rarely		0
		high social media consumption		13
	content creation	posting stories	If and in what ways the participants also create	10
		no content creation	content themselves.	1
		creates content		14
		crating posts		8
	Social media platforms	TikTok	Social Media platforms that participants prefer	10
		Instagram (reels)	using.	16
		YouTube		3
		BeReal		2
		WhatsApp / direct messages		2
	type of content consumed	memes/funny content	What kind of content the participants	7
		motivation / self help	mostly consume on social media/TikTok.	4

		education / news / politics		7
		fashion, beauty		7
		food, health, recipes		6
		sport / gym		4
		emotional content		15
		women's stories, feminist content		3
		various content		10
	Appearance of content	algorithm	If the participants came across #femalera or	11
		encountered this content before	#male rage videos on TikTok or Instagram in	6
		need to actively seek specific content	the past.	1
		did not encounter this content before		9
	effect of #rage TikTok	no effect	What effect the #femalera / #malera con-	3
		expresses that they feel affected	tent has the participants.	7
		sad		3
		relating		8
		no satisfaction		6
		satisfaction		9
		inspired, empowered		6
		amused		3
		triggered		1
		mentions lack of context		3
		commenting the acting		4
		found the portrayed anger intimidating		2
	personal rage	afraid to show their anger	The factors that might cause participants to	2
		see themselves in the TikTok	relate to the TikTok.	4
		prone to anger		7
		limited emotional reaction		3
	social media influence on self	mood changes	The kind of influence social media has on the	10
		attitudinal changes	participants.	9
		behavioral changes		5
		feels influenced by social media		8
		higher influence through TikTok		6
		feels influenced in their emotionality		11

		educational influence		11
		social media as safe space/presentation tool		1
		negative affect on concentration		1
		doesn't feel influenced by social media		3
	social media impact on younger generations	influential on younger people	The effect social media might have on younger	21
		starting conversations	people in general, as a generation.	4
		inspiring positive change		9
		depend on influencers		2
		reinforcing negative beliefs		2
		less aware / reflected than older generations		5
		interfering with development		3
		bigger impact on Gen Z and younger people		3
		impacting political beliefs and attitudes		3
	effect on emotions and emotion expression	has taught enhanced expression	How social media and #femalera similar con-	4
		feel influenced in emotionality	tent might influence younger generations regar-	11
		social comparison	ding their emotions and emotion expression.	1
	social media as emotion expression tool	viewed as useless	If participants do use or would use social media	3
		sharing memes / music	to express their own emotions.	3
		stories / posts		2
		uses social media for emotion expression		8
		not accepted, cringe		3
		does not express emotions through social media		4
		used to express emotions on social media in the past		1
		only expressing positive emotions on social media		4
		not understanding the question		17

## Appendix E

### Calculation of Intercoder Reliability

## Please enter number of studies that:

Both judges agree to include

Both judges agree to exclude

Only the first judge wants to include

Only the second judge wants to include



## Results

% of agreement: 85.98130841121495%

Cohen's k: 0.6150155912688894

Substantial agreement

## Appendix F

### Literature Search Log

Date	Database	Search String	Amount of hist	Relevant sources
15.03.2023	Scopus	I used authors as search criterium and typed in 'Tom Hollenstein'	1 author, 94 documents	6 (the reference lists of 2 sources provided additional sources relevant to my research)
15.03.2023	Scopus	"emotion" AND "stereotypes"	1,375	4
17.03.2023	Scopus	"gender" AND "emotion"	13,387	0
17.03.2023	Scopus	"gender" AND "emotion" AND "socialization"	403	1
20.03.2023	Google Scholar	"socialization" AND "gender roles"	153,000	3
20.03.2023	Google Scholar	"social expectations" AND "men" AND "women"	101,000	2
20.03.2023	Google Scholar	"younger generations" AND "social media"	39,500	2
23.03.2023	Google Scholar	"social media" AND "effects"	3.830,000	3
23.03.2023	Scopus	"TikTok" AND "Instagram" AND "emotionality"	1	0
23.03.2023	Google Scholar	"generational differences" AND "attitudes" AND "emotionality"	12,600	3
27.03.2023	Scopus	"social media" AND "emotion expression"	44	1
27.03.2023	Scopus	"emotion" AND "expression" AND "social" AND "stereotypes"	100	3
07.04.2023	Google scholar	"generational differences" AND "political attitudes"	3 370	2
07.04.2023	Scopus	"women" AND "leadership positions"	1 953	1
30.04.2023	Google Scholar	"in-depth" AND "interviews"	2.200,000	1
30.04.2023	Google Scholar	"thematic" AND "analysis"	2.890,000	1
05.05.2023	Google Scholar	"intercoder" AND "reliability"	58.000	1