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8-25-2022

Changing Perceptions of Masculinity and Femininity in America?: Revisiting the Bem Sex-Role Inventory

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ABSTRACT

This study replicated previous research regarding college students' perceptions of personality and character traits as "masculine", "feminine", or "neutral ." The sample consisted of 56 undergraduate students recruited from introductory sociology classes at a public university in New England. Participants completed online surveys where they ranked how desirable it is in American society for a man or for a woman to possess each of 60 traits used in the Bem Sex-Role Inventory. While participants ranked some traits as less gendered than 20 years ago, aligning with previous research, they ranked other traits as more gendered than those traits had previously been rated. This ran counter to predictions in previous research that all the traits on the BSRI would become less gendered over time.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of "gender" has long been a key feature in the study of society. Gender is significant at every level, from the personal and individual to the institutional. On the personal level, gender markers (such as how we dress, speak, and carry ourselves) are mechanisms through which individuals express themselves and a fundamental way in which we read cues about those with whom we interact. Gender is used as a marketing tool, where products and stores are divided into men's and women's (or boys' and girls') sections. The gender binary is replicated throughout the very organization of our society, from single-gender schools to public restrooms to greetings of "ladies and gentlemen" at events. Presentation and proper performance of gender is policed in different ways in different societies, where men or women are supposed to dress, look, and act in certain ways.

Many societies place value on one gender over the other, leading to social and institutionalized inequality. In the United States, gender identity and gender stereotypes impact a myriad of mental, emotional, physical, fiscal, and social health outcomes. Differential treatment begins the moment a child is labeled “male” or “female” at birth. Baby boys are wrapped in blue and told they are big and strong while baby girls are wrapped in pink and told they are little and pretty. The babies may not remember these first praises, but the differential treatment and expectations to conform to dominant notions of “male” and “female” follow them through childhood, reinforced by both adults and peers. According to the Advocates for Youth and The National Center for Transgender Equality (2018) students whose gender expression does not align with traditional expectations for their sex are at higher risk for experiencing bullying. This is particularly the case for male students; feminine and androgynous males are twice as likely as masculine males to be bullied (Advocates for Youth and The National Center for Transgender Equality 2018). In high school, boys who show vulnerability may be targeted with the insult that they are a “pussy”, a misogynistic insult that devalues women and emphasizes that boys are supposed to be stronger than girls (Fair 2011). Even at these young ages, the stereotypes and expectations are well understood: boys are strong, dominant, and powerful, while girls are pretty, emotional, and vulnerable. Furthermore, reactions to femininity in boys reinforce the idea that masculinity and maleness are better than femininity and femaleness.

The inequality and stereotypes continue from childhood into adulthood. Despite more women than men holding bachelor’s degrees, women are paid less and expected to focus on child-rearing rather than careers. Thirty-nine percent of women and 37% of men aged 25 and older have a bachelor’s degree in the US, a gap which grows when looking at people aged 25-34, where 46% of women and 36% of men have bachelor’s degrees (Parker 2021). Yet in the

workplace, American women make an average of 81 cents for every dollar a man makes (Payscale 2020). This gap grows for non-white women and women with children (Payscale 2020). Career advancement, which would come with better pay, is often more challenging for women than for men. Men are given promotions based on “potential” while women are required to prove their worth if they want to pursue those same promotions (Rivers and Barnett 2013). When it comes to raising children, working mothers face yet another roadblock: just 33% of American adults think that women should work full time when they have young children, compared to 76% who believe men should work full time when they have young children (Horowitz 2019). Yet maternity and a commitment to children, which afford a woman skills which could be transferred to benefit a workplace, do not necessarily benefit women in a professional sphere: women are more likely than men to be treated as though they are not committed to their work if they have children (Horowitz 2019). These examples illustrate that our ideas about what *a* woman or *a* man will be like are influenced by our ideas about what *women* and *men* are – or should be – like. These ideas, in turn, create and reinforce inequalities.

To understand these inequalities, one must examine the dominant beliefs about gender in recent history, and how those beliefs may persist or continue to change today. Tied to theories about gender are theories about masculinity and femininity. To be a “man” is not enough to be accepted by society, one must be a certain kind of man, who performs a certain kind of masculinity. Similarly, to be a “woman” is not enough; one must be a certain kind of woman, who performs a certain kind of femininity.

What is femininity and what is masculinity? Scholars have tried to define, categorize, and measure these dynamics in a variety of ways. For example, R. W. Connell and colleagues have done extensive work in defining a hierarchy of masculinities and the concept of hegemonic

masculinity, concepts which are widely taught and critiqued in studies of gender. According to Connell's theory, hegemonic masculinity is a normative form of masculinity in a given society and that which men and boys strive to emulate, while other forms of masculinity are considered lesser (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Following this theory, the boys in Fair's (2011) aforementioned study are emulating a normative form of masculinity characterized by dominance, and mocking those who they perceive as performing a lesser, more feminine form of masculinity characterized by vulnerability and submission. "Dominance" is not an inherently masculine trait, nor is "vulnerable" an inherently feminine trait, but the boys in this example have been socialized to view them as such, and react accordingly in order to prove themselves to be masculine men and attempt to socialize other boys into the same performance of masculinity.

In addition to theories accounting for the dynamics of gender, social scientists have created surveys and tools in an attempt to quantify and measure an individual's levels of masculinity and femininity. One such tool is the Bem Sex-Role Inventory.

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory

The Bem Sex-Role Inventory (BSRI) is a tool originally created in 1974 by Sandra Bem at Stanford University and further revised by her in the years that followed. Unlike other tools in use at the time, the BSRI treated masculinity and femininity as two independent co-existing dynamics rather than as two exclusive opposites. Bem (1974) created the tool in order to explore the concept of psychological androgyny and mental health. Psychological androgyny is a state of being both masculine and feminine, and possessing both traditionally masculine and traditionally feminine traits, rather than just one or the other. Bem (1974) hypothesized that individuals with greater levels of psychological androgyny would be healthier than those who rigidly conform to

gender stereotypes. To explore this hypothesis, she created the BSRI to measure the degree to which someone described themselves using masculine, feminine, or neutral adjectives.

The BSRI measures individual psychological androgyny by asking participants to rate the degree to which each of the traits on the inventory describe themselves. The response choices exist on a 7-point Likert scale where 1 represents “Never or almost never true” and 7 represents “Always or almost always true.” Points can then be translated into a Masculinity score, a Femininity score, and an Androgyny score. The Androgyny score is the *t* ratio difference between the two sex-typed scores. A high masculinity score and low femininity score, for example, would indicate that the participant is highly sex-typed as masculine, whereas similar scores in both masculinity and femininity indicate androgyny. Low scores in both masculinity and femininity is classified as “undifferentiated” rather than androgynous. Whether an individual scores high or low on the neutral items does not affect their sex-typed or androgynous score.

Traits that made it into the BSRI came from an initial pool of 400 traits that Bem and her students compiled. Half of these were gendered and considered positive, and the other half were gender-neutral traits, of which half were considered negative and half were considered positive. One hundred undergraduate students at Stanford University then served as judges who ranked the social desirability of these traits for either men or women (not both). The questions used to determine the desirability of traits were “how desirable is it in American society for a man to possess each of these characteristics” or “how desirable is it in American society for a woman to possess each of these characteristics” (Bem 1981a). A given trait qualified as masculine or feminine after this stage if both male and female judges had ranked it as significantly ($p < .05$) more socially desirable for a man or for a woman. Of the traits in the initial pool, 60 ended up being included in the BSRI, of which 20 were masculine, 20 were feminine, and 20 were neutral.

Along with exploring the hypothesis of psychological androgyny, the BSRI helped Bem explore and shape her theories about gender schema and sex-typing. According to Bem (1981b) “sex typing is derived, in part, from gender schematic processing, that is, from the readiness of the individual to encode and organize information—including information about the self—in terms of the cultural definitions of maleness and femaleness that constitute the society’s gender schema.” In other words, individuals construct a gendered sense of self based on their internalization of society’s definitions of what it means to be male or female. Bem (1981b) hypothesized that some individuals are more inclined to engage in encoding information about who they ought to be as a man or as a woman than others. For this hypothesis, she used the BSRI to identify sex-typed individuals—masculine men and feminine women—who would theoretically be the ones more inclined to engage in gender schematic processing as she defines it (Bem 1981b).

Subsequent studies confirmed the relevance and validity of the scale a generation after it was first constructed (Allen 1994; Holt and Ellis 1998). Some studies, such as Holt & Ellis (1998), followed Bem’s sampling method and surveyed university students. Others, like Allen (1994) used different samples with demographics that varied from Bem’s, indicating that the scale remained valid across different groups in America, with some variation in the relevance of specific traits. Despite these studies, the BSRI has also received some criticism. Allen Harris (1994) critiqued the BSRI as representative of white Americans. In a replication study of the BSRI item selection, Harris (1994) found that while the items on the BSRI were still relevant and representative of American values, the validity of the scale weakened among African American and Hispanic American subjects. He pointed out that desirability of traits is dependent upon the culture that individuals are socialized into, and that differences in culture among different ethnic

groups in America will inevitably lead to different ideas about what is desirable for men or women. The differences were not enough to invalidate the BSRI entirely, but Harris (1994) recommended the development of culture-specific scales as more accurate measures.

Both the praise and criticism of the BSRI create the opportunity for the BSRI to be examined as a measure of perceptions of society. The question “how desirable is it in American society for a man/woman to possess each of these characteristics” can reveal what participants perceive as socially acceptable or unacceptable for people of a certain gender. Replicating Bem’s trait selection process among different populations using the 60 traits on the BSRI would create a pool of data that may reveal differences in the perceptions of different groups, as well as how people perceive gender stereotypes at different points in time. This method allows researchers to examine what people think society’s attitude is towards men or women possessing a given trait and how those perceptions have changed over time and across decades.

Twenty years after Bem established the BSRI, Holt and Ellis (1998) reassessed the relevance of the scale. They hypothesized that perceptions of gender roles had shifted between the time that the BSRI was established and the time they were conducting their research, and that the sex-typed masculine and feminized words on the BSRI may no longer be representative of gender stereotypes. Holt and Ellis (1998) replicated Bem’s (1974) trait validation method using the 40 out of the 60 traits included in the 1974 version of the BSRI. They distributed surveys containing both the masculine and feminine traits from the BSRI and asked participants to rank the desirability of the traits for either men or for women (not for both). Holt and Ellis (1998) did not include the 20 neutral traits from the BSRI, as they thought the perceptions of the neutral traits would have stayed the same. Like Bem (1974), they used a 7-point Likert scale with the question “how desirable is it in American society for a man/woman to possess each of these

characteristics” (Bem 1981:17) with anchors of “not at all desirable” (1) and “extremely desirable” (7). The participants were 138 psychology students ages 18-52 enrolled in summer courses at a Southern university. Holt and Ellis considered socioeconomic status and geographic area to be the main ways that this sample differed from Bem’s (1974) sample, since Bem’s (1974) sample consisted of students at Stanford University in California, while Holt and Ellis’ (1998) sample consisted of students from a Southern university.

Holt and Ellis (1998) found that two of the feminine adjectives, “loyal” and “childlike”, were ranked as only marginally more desirable for women than men. Since the BSRI traits depend on a significant difference in desirability in order to be considered reliable measures of masculinity or femininity, these two traits may no longer be valid measures. However, Holt and Ellis (1998) felt that the two traits should still be included in the BSRI since there was still marginal statistical significance in the predicted direction.

The rest of the traits were significantly more desirable with the hypothesized valence, but Holt and Ellis (1998) found that there was a lower magnitude of difference than in Bem’s (1974) sample, particularly with the masculine traits. The change in difference scores for all of the masculine traits and all but four of the feminine traits were significant at $p < .001$. Some of the masculine traits had a difference score of half or almost half of what it was in 1974. For example, the masculine-typed trait “individualistic” had a difference score of 2.06 in 1974 and only 0.96 in 1997, a change of 1.10. This indicates that the stereotypes associated with the adjectives on the BSRI weakened between 1974 and 1998 and that validity of the BSRI may be decreasing, though it had not decreased enough to be considered an invalid measure at the time of the 1998 study. Holt and Ellis (1998) predicted that “it is possible that if the present study were to be replicated twenty years from now, it would be concluded that the BSRI is no longer a valid measure of

gender role perceptions” (Holt and Ellis 1998:939) as well as “by the mid twenty-first century the BSRI might be completely outdated, reflecting further changes in gender role perceptions” (Holt and Ellis 1998:940).

Accordingly, the purpose of the present study is to further the research conducted by Holt and Ellis (1998) and explore whether their predictions came to pass. I approached this study with three main research questions:

1. How have trends in the perceived societal desirability of traits changed for men and for women?
2. Have the difference scores continued to fall as Holt and Ellis (1998) predicted, leading to the invalidation of the BSRI and reflecting changing perceptions on gender roles and stereotypes?
3. Have the difference scores increased for any traits, indicating the strengthening of gender stereotypes?

METHODS

Participants and Procedures

In accordance with Bem (1974; 1981a) and Holt and Ellis (1998), I created two surveys to distribute to participants. One asked participants to rate the desirability of traits “for a man” and the other “for a woman.” The items contained on each survey were the same. I recruited participants from two introductory sociology classes at a New England public university in March 2022. This aligns with both Bem (1974) and Holt and Ellis (1998) whose participants were also undergraduate students. Students earned in-class activity credit for participation in the study, and students who did not wish to participate were provided an alternative method of

earning equal credit. Participants were randomly assigned to each survey and given access only to the survey to which they were assigned. Participants completed their assigned survey online, and were given 15 minutes to do so.

Fifty-six individuals participated in this study, 30.36% of whom were men and 64.29% of whom were women; 3.58% of participants self-identified as non-binary, and 1.79% did not disclose a gender identity. Given the nature of this study and the small number of non-binary participants, their responses could not be used in the study. The participants were all students in introductory sociology courses. The majority (62.50%) of the students were from the College of Liberal Arts, and the rest were fairly evenly spread through the remaining colleges at the university. The majority of the participants were underclassmen (39.29% freshmen, 23.31% sophomores, 28.57% juniors, and 8.93% seniors).

Measures

The two surveys replicated the trait validation procedure used by Bem (1974; 1981) and by Holt and Ellis (1998). Surveys contained an informed consent page, questions about demographics, and all 60 adjectives from the BSRI with root questions of “How desirable is it in American society for a man to possess each of these characteristics” on the first survey and “How desirable is it in American society for a woman to possess each of these characteristics” on the second version. This procedure differs from Holt and Ellis (1998) who used only the 20 masculine items and 20 feminine items in their study. I included the 20 neutral traits in addition to the sex-typed traits in order to further explore how perceptions of various traits have changed. The purpose of this study was to explore how perceptions of gender have changed, and with that I accepted the possibility that I might find that some traits have become more gendered rather

than less gendered. Including the neutral traits provided another opportunity to explore these potential changes. Participants ranked the desirability of each trait “for a man” or “for woman” on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being “not at all desirable” and 7 being “extremely desirable.”

RESULTS

Using two-tailed t-test, I found that the majority of masculine traits (14 out of 20 total traits) were ranked as significantly more desirable for a man than for a woman at a level of $p < .001$. These traits were: “acts as a leader”, “aggressive”, “assertive”, “athletic”, “competitive”, “dominant”, “forceful”, “has leadership abilities”, “masculine”, “self-reliant”, “self-sufficient”, “strong personality”, “willing to take a stand”, and “willing to take risks” (see Table 2). One trait, “ambitious”, had significance at a level of $p < .01$, and two (“defends own beliefs” and “independent”) at $p < .05$ (see Table 2). Similarly, the majority of feminine traits were ranked as significantly more desirable for women than for men. Eleven traits at $p < .001$, five at $p < .01$, two at $p < .05$; at the $p < .001$ level were “affectionate”, “cheerful”, “childlike”, “feminine”, “flatterable”, “gentle”, “gullible”, “shy”, “soft spoken”, “tender”, and “warm”; at the $p < .01$ level were “compassionate”, “eager to soothe hurt feelings”, “sensitive to needs of others”, “sympathetic”, and “understanding”; and at the $p < .05$ level were “does not use harsh language” and “yielding” (see Table 4). However, a handful of traits from each set were no longer significantly more desirable for one gender over the other. From the masculine trait set, “analytical”, “individualistic”, and “makes decisions easily” were rated only marginally more desirable for a man than for a woman, and thus no longer hold the statistical significance necessary to classify them as masculine traits (see Table 2). From the feminine trait set, “loyal” and “loves children” were rated only marginally more desirable for a woman than for a man (see

Table 4). Participants in this study rated all the sex-typed traits at least slightly differently than participants did in 1998, whether they rated them as less gendered or more gendered.

Two-tailed t-tests revealed that the majority of neutral traits continued to hold no statistically significant difference between their rating for men vs for women. However, I also found that four of the traits had become gendered. The traits “conceited”, “jealous”, “solemn”, and “unpredictable” were rated significantly more desirable for a man than for a woman. They should therefore now be categorized as “masculine” traits rather than neutral traits.

Of further interest is the way in which the difference scores of various traits changed from 1974 to 1998 to 2022. Holt and Ellis (1998) found that the difference scores for most traits had decreased from 1974 to 1998, and predicted that the scores would continue to fall over time. This study revealed that while some difference scores continued to fall, many traits changed in other unpredicted directions. Scores for the traits “assertive”, “athletic”, “dominant”, “forceful”, “masculine”, “self-sufficient”, “strong personality”, “willing to take risks”, “cheerful”, “childlike”, “gentle”, and “shy” are higher in 2022 than they were in 1998, with some returning almost to the same level of difference they had in 1974, after Holt and Ellis found them to be much lower in 1998 (see Table 7 and Table 8). These traits demonstrate a boomerang-like effect.

DISCUSSION

How have the traits on the BSRI changed in their perceived desirability for men vs for women, and have the traits continued to become less gendered as Holt and Ellis (1998) predicted? The findings in this study differ somewhat from Holt and Ellis (1998) who found that all of the masculine traits were significantly more desirable for a man than for a woman, and found that only “loyal” and “childlike” were marginally more desirable for a woman than for a

man. While the trait “loyal” continued to be only marginally more desirable in the predicted direction, I found “childlike” to once again be significantly more desirable for a woman than for a man, while “loves children” was no longer significantly more desirable for women than for men. This both supports and contradicts Holt and Ellis’ (1998) prediction. An additional trait became neutral, but one that they previously found to be neutral has once again become gendered. I also found that three of the masculine traits are only marginally more desirable for a man than a woman, which would allow those traits to be classified as neutral, and supports Holt and Ellis’ (1998) prediction that more traits would become neutral.

Of interesting note is that while Holt and Ellis (1998) elected not to include the neutral traits as they saw no reason that they should have changed, I found that four of the traits had become gendered. This is in direct opposition to Holt and Ellis’ (1998) prediction that traits should become less gendered over time. The gendered traits that “boomeranged” and I found to be more gendered (indicated by the increased difference scores) than Holt and Ellis found in 1998 also follow this trend. This could indicate that rather than decreasing difference scores indicating a general societal shift towards anything being acceptable for anyone, the definitions of what it means to be a man or a woman are simply changing while remaining binary. It is possible that future studies may find that while some of the current sex-typed traits become neutral, more of the currently neutral traits become sex-typed as societal expectations for men and women change.

To further explore the ways that societal expectations for men and for women may simply be changing while remaining binary, one could examine the specific traits that participants ranked more or less desirable for men and for women. For example, by comparing the mean desirability scores of the present study to those of Holt and Ellis’ (1998) study, I found that

participants in the present study ranked the trait “loyal” as less desirable for women and more desirable for men than participants did in 1998. This led to a loss of statistical significance, with the trait no longer being significantly more desirable for women than for men. That would lead to the trait being classified as a neutral trait, but it is possible that rather than the trait simply becoming equally desirable for both men and women, the trait is on a trend to becoming a masculine trait. Similarly, the masculine trait “analytical” is now only marginally more desirable for men than for women and thus neutral, as a result of a decrease in perceived desirability for men and an increase in perceived desirability for women. This trait could settle as a neutral trait, or it could continue with those trends and become a feminine trait. Further examination of each trait and the change in desirability for men vs for women (and even by gender of the participant) could indicate specific changes in perceived societal ideas about gender.

The majority of the gendered traits are still significantly more desirable for men or for women in the same direction Bem (1974) found, indicating that the BSRI is still a valid measure. The results of this study do not support Holt and Ellis’ (1998) predictions that “it is possible that if the present study were to be replicated twenty years from now, it would be concluded that the BSRI is no longer a valid measure of gender role perceptions” (Holt and Ellis 1998:939) and “by the mid twenty-first century the BSRI might be completely outdated” (Holt and Ellis 1998:940). Furthermore, the change in some neutral traits to being significantly more desirable for a man than for a woman indicates that some stereotypes about gender are evolving rather than disappearing.

The change in some traits towards being more gendered, rather than less gendered as Holt and Ellis (1998) predicted, could also indicate that Northeastern college students today perceive general American attitudes towards gender roles are more conservative than Southern students in

1998 perceived them to be. A potential explanation for this shift in perception could be the influence of social media. Students today have extensive access to a constant flow of information. Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and other social media sites feed users apocalyptic headlines and news of varying qualities. Social media algorithms create echo chambers in which individuals continually hear their own beliefs repeated and hear the worst about people with differing beliefs. In general, the political climate in the US has become more polarized over time, with young people in particular resistant to finding common ground with people who think differently from them. The constant flow of political information encourages young people to take an active interest in politics, perhaps more so than they did in the 70s-90s. It could be that young people are more aware of and invested in political issues than they used to be. Or, the political polarization may give young people the impression, accurate or inaccurate, that gender roles are more rigid in some ways than they used to be. Thus, more liberal-leaning students in the Northeast may be seeing a lot of news about pushback against changing gender roles, and therefore may be under the impression that gender roles are becoming stricter rather than more lenient. Conversely, if I had surveyed students in a more conservative area, it is possible that those conservative students might have been seeing material that declares that gender roles have become too loose and lenient in America, and therefore ranked the traits from that perception.

Another potential explanation is the conservative pushback against the LGBTQ+ movements. The US has seen the recent passing of several bills in various states restricting LGBT rights, and social media gives anti-LGBT conservatives a platform to stir up fear and push for a return to conservative family values. This again may indicate to young people, particularly more liberal-leaning young people, that attitudes towards gender have become more rigid.

Despite the increase for some traits becoming more gendered between 1998-2022, the overall trend from 1974-2022 is that all the traits on the BSRI have become less gendered. Change happens gradually, and it is not completely surprising that there may be some ups and downs throughout time while the trends continue to slowly fall. Attitudes towards some traits may be more deeply ingrained in American culture than others, and thus may take more time to change and may face more resistance to change. It is possible that, rather than gender roles being particularly rigid in 2022, events in the 1990s led to students having the impression that attitudes towards gender had changed more than they actually had. The drastic changes in 1998 may be an anomaly in the otherwise slow and steady decrease in rigidity of gender roles.

CONCLUSION

My research found that all the traits on the BSRI have become somewhat less gendered over time, but not as drastically as Holt and Ellis (1998) predicted. While all the traits have become less gendered between 1974-2022, I found some to be more gendered than Holt and Ellis found them to be in 1998, which could either indicate that the traits are on an upward trend of becoming more gendered, or it could indicate that they are still on a gradual decline with a brief moment of sharper decline.

Limitations of this study include the small sample size and the demographics of participants. While the demographics of this study align with those of previous studies, with participants being undergraduate students, one of the criticisms of the BSRI is that it is only representative of White college age individuals within liberal arts programs and not necessarily representative of other ethnic groups and generations. To further explore the relevance of the BSRI, future studies should compare results across demographics.

Of interesting note is that Holt and Ellis (1998) stated location of the university at which they did their study as a limitation, stating that students in the South may be more conservative than other regions of the US. The present study surveyed college students in the Northeast, but did not find that participants ranked traits drastically more neutrally than Holt and Ellis' (1998) sample, despite taking place 20 years later in an area of the US that is considered to lean more liberal. It would be interesting to survey Southern students and compare their perceptions of gendered traits to those of Northern students within the same timeframe, to examine whether their perceptions of American attitudes towards gender are different.

The present study shows that ideas about gender are continuing to change, albeit slowly. The traits on the BSRI are gradually becoming less gendered over time, possibly indicating that differences in what is acceptable for men vs for women are decreasing. Future replications of this study could be used to track the continuing changes about what traits are desirable for men and for women and how the United States views gender differences and similarities.

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Table 1. Means and Standard Deviations for BSRI Masculine Items

Masculine Item		Desirability for Males			Desirability for Females		
		Respondent Gender			Respondent Gender		
		Male	Female	Combined	Male	Female	Combined
Acts as a Leader	MN	6.22	5.76	5.94	4.38	4.47	4.50
	SD	0.83	1.14	1.06	1.41	1.41	1.38
Aggressive	MN	3.67	3.43	3.45	1.88	1.60	1.67
	SD	1.32	1.47	1.42	0.83	0.83	0.17
Ambitious	MN	5.78	5.76	5.67	4.75	4.53	4.71
	SD	1.09	1.34	1.29	1.28	1.36	1.37
Analytical	MN	4.00	4.76	4.36	4.50	3.87	4.08
	SD	0.50	1.34	1.32	1.07	2.91	1.50
Assertive	MN	5.11	5.43	5.36	3.25	3.07	3.17
	SD	1.27	1.60	1.45	1.28	2.05	1.76
Athletic	MN	5.56	6.43	6.06	5.43	4.47	4.74
	SD	1.13	0.81	1.20	2.07	1.25	1.54
Competitive	MN	5.25	5.48	5.44	4.14	3.60	3.70
	SD	1.49	1.47	1.44	2.04	1.68	1.77
Defends own beliefs	MN	5.22	5.52	5.15	4.50	4.00	4.21
	SD	1.64	1.40	1.70	1.77	1.51	1.56
Dominant	MN	4.78	5.86	5.55	2.50	2.07	2.25
	SD	1.48	1.28	1.39	0.53	1.44	1.19
Forceful	MN	3.44	3.76	3.85	2.25	1.67	1.83
	SD	2.01	1.70	1.80	0.71	0.92	1.17
Has leadership abilities	MN	5.89	5.71	5.72	4.38	4.20	4.33
	SD	1.00	1.55	1.40	1.19	3.28	1.49
Independent	MN	5.00	5.81	5.55	4.88	4.40	4.67
	SD	1.32	1.44	1.37	1.81	1.76	1.79
Individualistic	MN	4.89	5.19	5.09	4.88	4.67	4.79
	SD	1.54	1.63	1.53	1.36	1.72	1.56
Makes decisions easily	MN	4.78	5.33	5.18	5.25	4.80	5.00
	SD	0.83	1.39	1.26	1.16	1.37	1.29
Masculine	MN	5.89	6.24	6.18	1.50	1.53	1.54
	SD	1.05	1.18	1.10	0.53	0.74	0.66
Self-reliant	MN	5.44	5.90	5.75	4.38	4.33	4.38
	SD	1.01	1.21	1.14	1.51	1.54	1.47
Self-sufficient	MN	5.56	6.19	5.97	4.25	4.40	4.38
	SD	0.88	0.98	0.98	1.58	1.40	1.41
Strong personality	MN	5.67	5.67	5.64	4.50	3.67	4.00
	SD	0.71	1.15	1.06	0.93	1.88	1.61
Willing to take a stand	MN	5.45	5.57	5.45	4.13	4.00	4.08
	SD	1.13	1.33	1.33	1.36	1.77	1.59
Willing to take risks	MN	5.33	5.67	5.58	4.50	3.93	4.04
	SD	1.22	1.24	1.30	1.07	1.39	1.33

Table 2. Combined Means and Standard Deviations for BSRI Masculine Items

Masculine Item		Desirability for Males		Desirability for Females	
		Combined		Combined	
Acts as a Leader	MN	5.94	***	4.50	
	SD	1.06		1.38	
Aggressive	MN	3.45	***	1.67	
	SD	1.42		0.17	
Ambitious	MN	5.67	**	4.71	
	SD	1.29		1.37	
Analytical	MN	4.36		4.08	
	SD	1.32		1.50	
Assertive	MN	5.36	***	3.17	
	SD	1.45		1.76	
Athletic	MN	6.06	***	4.74	
	SD	1.20		1.54	
Competitive	MN	5.44	***	3.70	
	SD	1.44		1.77	
Defends own beliefs	MN	5.15	*	4.21	
	SD	1.70		1.56	
Dominant	MN	5.55	***	2.25	
	SD	1.39		1.19	
Forceful	MN	3.85	***	1.83	
	SD	1.80		1.17	
Has leadership abilities	MN	5.72	***	4.33	
	SD	1.40		1.49	
Independent	MN	5.55	*	4.67	
	SD	1.37		1.79	
Individualistic	MN	5.09		4.79	
	SD	1.53		1.56	
Makes decisions easily	MN	5.18		5.00	
	SD	1.26		1.29	
Masculine	MN	6.18	***	1.54	
	SD	1.10		0.66	
Self-reliant	MN	5.75	***	4.38	
	SD	1.14		1.47	
Self-sufficient	MN	5.97	***	4.38	
	SD	0.98		1.41	
Strong personality	MN	5.64	***	4.00	
	SD	1.06		1.61	
Willing to take a stand	MN	5.45	***	4.08	
	SD	1.33		1.59	
Willing to take risks	MN	5.58	***	4.04	
	SD	1.30		1.33	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table 3. Means and Standard Deviations for BSRI Feminine Items

Feminine Item		Desirability for Males			Desirability for Females		
		Respondent Gender			Respondent Gender		
		Male	Female	Combined	Male	Female	Combined
Affectionate	MN	4.78	4.76	4.61	6.38	5.93	6.13
	SD	1.09	1.73	1.58	0.74	1.10	0.99
Cheerful	MN	4.67	4.71	4.54	5.88	5.87	5.92
	SD	0.71	1.52	1.37	0.64	0.83	0.78
Childlike	MN	2.00	1.90	2.03	3.25	3.33	3.25
	SD	1.22	1.07	1.12	2.12	1.63	1.75
Compassionate	MN	5.78	4.62	4.82	5.75	5.93	5.92
	SD	1.20	1.77	1.70	0.71	1.03	0.93
Does not use harsh language	MN	3.56	4.10	3.85	4.63	4.67	4.58
	SD	1.24	1.09	1.20	1.30	1.72	1.56
Eager to soothe hurt feelings	MN	4.56	4.38	4.24	6.00	5.33	5.50
	SD	1.42	1.77	1.70	0.76	1.68	1.44
Feminine	MN	2.22	2.00	2.00	6.00	5.93	5.92
	SD	1.09	1.48	1.32	0.53	1.033	0.88
Flatterable	MN	3.67	3.52	3.42	5.63	5.67	5.58
	SD	1.00	1.60	1.46	0.74	1.18	1.06
Gentle	MN	4.56	3.52	3.67	5.63	5.80	5.63
	SD	0.73	1.83	1.67	0.92	1.37	1.31
Gullible	MN	2.00	2.33	2.21	3.50	3.67	3.50
	SD	0.87	1.32	1.17	2.07	1.23	1.59
Loves children	MN	5.00	5.48	5.12	5.50	5.93	5.71
	SD	1.00	1.40	1.47	1.60	1.53	1.55
Loyal	MN	6.33	6.10	5.97	5.63	6.33	6.13
	SD	0.71	1.41	1.49	1.19	0.82	0.99
Sensitive to needs of others	MN	4.89	4.90	4.70	5.63	6.00	5.83
	SD	0.60	1.87	1.69	0.92	1.36	1.20
Shy	MN	2.11	2.43	2.30	4.25	3.33	3.54
	SD	1.05	1.36	1.24	0.89	1.05	1.18
Soft spoken	MN	2.67	2.29	2.36	4.38	4.07	4.04
	SD	1.22	1.35	1.27	1.19	1.62	1.57
Sympathetic	MN	5.11	4.38	4.33	5.63	5.47	5.50
	SD	0.93	1.77	1.76	0.74	1.13	0.98
Tender	MN	3.67	3.90	3.67	5.25	5.40	5.38
	SD	1.50	1.67	1.63	1.39	1.30	1.28
Understanding	MN	5.33	4.95	5.00	6.00	5.93	5.96
	SD	1.12	1.72	1.54	0.76	1.10	0.95
Warm	MN	5.00	4.86	4.67	6.00	6.13	6.13
	SD	1.22	1.68	1.69	0.76	0.99	0.90
Yielding	MN	3.33	3.76	3.51	4.50	4.67	4.50
	SD	1.12	1.76	1.58	1.69	1.80	1.77

Table 4. Combined Means and Standard Deviations for BSRI Feminine Items

Feminine Item		Desirability for Males	Desirability for Females	
		Combined	Combined	
Affectionate	MN	4.61	6.13	***
	SD	1.58	0.99	
Cheerful	MN	4.54	5.92	***
	SD	1.37	0.78	
Childlike	MN	2.03	3.25	***
	SD	1.12	1.75	
Compassionate	MN	4.82	5.92	**
	SD	1.70	0.93	
Does not use harsh language	MN	3.85	4.58	*
	SD	1.20	1.56	
Eager to soothe hurt feelings	MN	4.24	5.50	**
	SD	1.70	1.44	
Feminine	MN	2.00	5.92	***
	SD	1.32	0.88	
Flatterable	MN	3.42	5.58	***
	SD	1.46	1.06	
Gentle	MN	3.67	5.63	***
	SD	1.67	1.31	
Gullible	MN	2.21	3.50	***
	SD	1.17	1.59	
Loves children	MN	5.12	5.71	
	SD	1.47	1.55	
Loyal	MN	5.97	6.13	
	SD	1.49	0.99	
Sensitive to needs of others	MN	4.70	5.83	**
	SD	1.69	1.20	
Shy	MN	2.30	3.54	***
	SD	1.24	1.18	
Soft spoken	MN	2.36	4.04	***
	SD	1.27	1.57	
Sympathetic	MN	4.33	5.50	**
	SD	1.76	0.98	
Tender	MN	3.67	5.38	***
	SD	1.63	1.28	
Understanding	MN	5.00	5.96	**
	SD	1.54	0.95	
Warm	MN	4.67	6.13	***
	SD	1.69	0.90	
Yielding	MN	3.51	4.50	*
	SD	1.58	1.77	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table 5. Means and Standard Deviations for BSRI Neutral Items

Neutral Item		Desirability for Males			Desirability for Females		
		Respondent Gender			Respondent Gender		
		Male	Female	Combined	Male	Female	Combined
Adaptable	MN	5.11	5.14	5.03	5.13	5.27	5.21
	SD	0.93	1.31	1.23	0.99	0.96	0.93
Conceited	MN	3.33	2.71	2.88	3.00	1.73	2.25
	SD	1.00	1.42	1.34	1.86	0.80	1.40
Conscientious	MN	4.67	4.48	4.44	4.88	4.67	4.67
	SD	1.12	1.25	1.24	1.46	1.11	1.24
Conventional	MN	5.00	4.24	4.34	4.38	4.60	4.42
	SD	0.87	1.37	1.38	1.06	1.06	1.14
Friendly	MN	5.89	5.67	5.56	5.50	6.27	5.96
	SD	0.78	1.46	1.44	0.93	0.80	0.91
Happy	MN	5.67	6.05	5.72	5.75	6.47	6.17
	SD	1.12	1.28	1.51	0.71	0.64	0.76
Helpful	MN	5.78	6.14	5.88	5.25	6.13	5.83
	SD	0.97	1.01	1.16	1.16	0.74	0.96
Inefficient	MN	1.89	1.90	1.84	2.38	1.73	1.92
	SD	1.05	1.37	1.25	1.77	1.10	1.35
Jealous	MN	1.78	3.38	2.84	1.63	1.60	1.58
	SD	1.30	1.86	1.82	0.92	0.99	0.93
Likeable	MN	6.11	6.00	5.91	5.75	6.07	6.00
	SD	0.60	0.95	1.09	1.16	0.96	1.02
Moody	MN	1.78	2.33	2.09	1.75	1.47	1.54
	SD	0.83	1.56	1.38	1.75	0.83	1.18
Reliable	MN	6.44	6.00	6.19	6.00	6.13	5.96
	SD	0.73	1.22	1.09	1.07	0.74	1.04
Secretive	MN	2.00	1.95	2.03	2.13	1.40	1.63
	SD	1.12	1.36	1.36	1.64	0.63	1.10
Sincere	MN	5.78	5.24	5.31	4.88	5.67	5.38
	SD	0.83	1.64	1.47	1.36	1.11	1.21
Solemn	MN	3.67	3.24	3.41	2.13	2.67	2.42
	SD	1.73	1.55	1.56	0.99	1.99	1.69
Tactful	MN	4.67	4.38	4.50	3.50	4.27	4.04
	SD	0.87	1.40	1.22	1.93	1.67	1.73
Theatrical	MN	3.22	3.10	3.03	2.75	2.73	2.79
	SD	0.83	1.67	1.47	1.16	1.53	1.38
Truthful	MN	6.00	5.71	5.66	5.75	6.00	5.96
	SD	1.00	1.27	1.33	1.04	1.00	1.00
Unpredictable	MN	2.56	3.19	3.00	2.25	2.40	2.29
	SD	1.42	1.54	1.46	1.39	1.68	1.55
Unsystematic	MN	2.67	2.90	2.84	2.25	2.33	2.33
	SD	1.12	1.45	1.30	1.04	1.68	1.43

Table 6. Combined Means and Standard Deviations for BSRI Neutral Items

Neutral Item		Desirability for Males		Desirability for Females	
		Combined		Combined	
Adaptable	MN	5.03		5.21	
	SD	1.23		0.93	
Conceited	MN	2.88	**	2.25	
	SD	1.34		1.40	
Conscientious	MN	4.44		4.67	
	SD	1.24		1.24	
Conventional	MN	4.34		4.42	
	SD	1.38		1.14	
Friendly	MN	5.56		5.96	
	SD	1.44		0.91	
Happy	MN	5.72		6.17	
	SD	1.51		0.76	
Helpful	MN	5.88		5.83	
	SD	1.16		0.96	
Inefficient	MN	1.84		1.92	
	SD	1.25		1.35	
Jealous	MN	2.84	**	1.58	
	SD	1.82		0.93	
Likeable	MN	5.91		6.00	
	SD	1.09		1.02	
Moody	MN	2.09		1.54	
	SD	1.38		1.18	
Reliable	MN	6.19		5.96	
	SD	1.09		1.04	
Secretive	MN	2.03		1.63	
	SD	1.36		1.10	
Sincere	MN	5.31		5.38	
	SD	1.47		1.21	
Solemn	MN	3.41	**	2.42	
	SD	1.56		1.69	
Tactful	MN	4.50		4.04	
	SD	1.22		1.73	
Theatrical	MN	3.03		2.79	
	SD	1.47		1.38	
Truthful	MN	5.66		5.96	
	SD	1.33		1.00	
Unpredictable	MN	3.00	*	2.29	
	SD	1.46		1.55	
Unsystematic	MN	2.84		2.33	
	SD	1.30		1.43	

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Table 7. Difference Scores for Masculine Items 1974-2022

Masculine Items	1974	1998	2022
Acts as a leader	3.35	1.79	1.44
Aggressive	2.60	1.80	1.79
Ambitious	2.64	1.48	0.96
Analytical	2.06	1.40	0.28
Assertive	2.37	1.72	2.20
Athletic	2.02	0.99	1.32
Competitive	2.76	1.75	1.74
Defends own beliefs	1.50	1.26	0.94
Dominant	3.63	2.29	3.30
Forceful	2.38	1.25	2.02
Has leadership abilities	2.50	1.84	1.40
Independent	3.06	1.63	0.88
Individualistic	2.06	0.96	0.30
Makes decisions easily	1.30	0.92	0.18
Masculine	5.25	4.47	4.64
Self-reliant	2.26	1.56	1.38
Self-sufficient	2.74	1.41	1.59
Strong personality	2.25	1.12	1.64
Willing to take a stand	1.98	1.47	1.37
Willing to take risks	2.00	1.29	1.53

Table 8. Difference Scores for Feminine Items 1974-2022

Feminine Items	1974	1998	2022
Affectionate	-1.70	-1.52	-1.52
Cheerful	-1.08	-1.06	-1.37
Childlike	-1.84	-0.41	-1.22
Compassionate	-1.78	-1.59	-1.10
Does not use harsh language	-1.98	-0.80	-0.73
Eager to soothe hurt feelings	-1.70	-1.72	-1.26
Feminine	-5.38	-4.52	-3.92
Flatterable	-1.94	-2.14	-2.16
Gentle	-2.24	-1.84	-1.96
Gullible	-1.86	-1.37	-1.29
Loves children	-1.72	-1.14	-0.59
Loyal	-1.12	-0.32	-0.16
Sensitive to needs of others	-1.26	-1.46	-1.14
Shy	-1.38	-0.96	-1.24
Soft spoken	-1.90	-1.74	-1.68
Sympathetic	-1.44	-1.34	-1.17
Tender	-2.48	-1.88	-1.71
Understanding	-1.24	-1.21	-0.96
Warm	-1.88	-1.46	-1.46
Yielding	-1.94	-1.43	-0.98